



RFCI

May 2025

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Meetings unless otherwise noted are held at:
The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue.
13312 Cain Road Tampa, FL 33625

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com

<http://www.facebook.com/TampaBayChapterRareFruitCouncilIntlInc>

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

May 18th – John and Georgia of the Ylang-Ylang Tree will speak about rare Annona, Garcinia, Plinia, and Pouteria species.



Ylang-Ylang Tree is a small-scale Urban farm and nursery in St Petersburg, FL specializing in perfume flowers and rare fruit trees with a collection of over 300 species. Ylang-Ylang trees are known for creating the perfume Chanel no 5, which was the beginning of their garden journey. They have compiled a collection of highly rare, useful and valuable plants effectively turning their modest 6000 sq ft property into a cutting edge, beyond world-class collection and micro jungle. What sprouted is a new Eden, with some of the most rare and striking plants and fruits that are threatened with extinction due to habitat destruction from all corners of the globe.

NOTE: The Oaks venue was unavailable for this date, so we will be meeting back at the **Unity North Tampa Church**, 19520 Holly Ln, Lutz, FL 33558 for this meeting. Also please note the change in date to avoid conflict with Mother's Day.

∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Laura Robinson Riverview

Rita Early Tampa

Victor Griley III Lutz

Here is the Tampa Bay Chapter of the RFCI Board for 2025-2026

Chris Ramirez – President

Paul Branesky – Vice President

Hillary Cosenza – Secretary

Susan McAveety – Treasurer

Pujan Shaw

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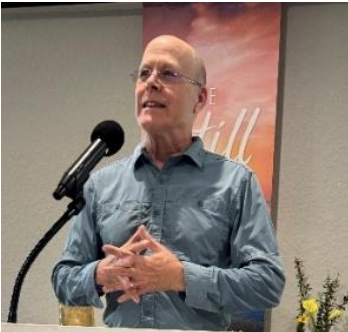
Avi Stern

Darren Osgood

President: Chris Ramirez; Vice President: Paul Branesky, Secretary: Hillary Cosenza;
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

Climate Change – Opportunities and Risks for Tropical fruit Production in Florida

With Speaker Jonathan Crane



Jonathan Crane, Tropical Fruit Crop Specialist at the UF/IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead, spoke about what we need to know about climate change and growing fruits.

The last 10 – 15 years have warmed considerably, and the last five years have seen significant acceleration of this warming. There has been a 40% drop in the number of freeze events in the time period from 1892 – 2022. The observed number of very hot days (90+ degrees) has stayed relatively the same, but the night time temperatures have shown a significant upward trend. The global sea surface temperatures have also dramatically increased.

What do all these changes mean for fruit growers, both commercial and backyard?

Subtropical and tropical fruits have been grown in Florida since the 1800's, especially in South Florida and some coastal areas. With warming, much of the Central part of the state is now showing potential for growing many more types of fruit that were considered unsuitable not too long ago. Lychee for example, does not get the necessary cooling period required to bloom in South Florida any more. It is now recommended to try growing this crop 200 miles north of where it was previously successful. This has been a developing trend commercially shown on the slides Jonathan had for the meeting.

For backyard growers, site selection for marginal fruit trees is a key to their survival. Tropical trees with a canopy cover, those grown in between buildings, or along a sheltered south wall, or south side of a body water for example, have added protection if a freeze occurs.

Of course, it takes only one freeze to kill a tropical tree. Tropical plants did not evolve to handle freezes. The temperature, timing, duration of the low temperature, maturity and cultivar of the tree, freeze preparations, and other factors will affect whether a tree can survive. During the 2010 freeze, the worst in recent years, 4 inch diameter limbs were frozen back on established mango trees. Even extended periods of just chilly temperatures (less than 55 degrees) can cause problems with tropical fruit, stopping the development of young fruit altogether, or slowing the ripening process. Bananas are an example of this problem.

One measure against a freeze that a home-grower can do when a freeze is expected is to heavily saturate the soil around the vulnerable tree 4- 5 days ahead of the forecast freeze. This must be done that far in advance in order to release the warmth from the evaporating water in the soil at the correct time that it is needed. Choose species cultivars that demonstrate some cold hardiness.

Flooding, drought, and heat stress are also conditions that our plants have to endure more of with climate change. It is helpful to match our plant choices with the new climate pattern, and type of planting sites you have available on your property. Deciding how much risk you wish to take growing the new opportunities that may be available, may open up new choices. The attached link was recommended for finding all kinds of data regarding climate. It is useful for commercial and backyard growers alike.

<http://agroclimate.org/>

If you missed this speaker, check the Club's Facebook page where the lecture can be viewed in its entirety.

The April Meeting – Photos by George Campani



∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

“What’s Happening” is now into thirty-three years!

Drought season is upon us; we hope it isn’t too severe this year, and that our well holds up. Loquat fruits are done, as well as jaboticabas and the first of the starfruits. Macadamia nuts are flowering as are the Surinam cherries, which quickly set fruit.

I planted yard-long bean seeds and several containers of loquat seeds. The last batch of loquat seedlings got either sold or grafted with good varieties when I was top-working a large loquat tree.

I also grafted a few persimmons while I was at it. After cold-stratifying them for several months, I planted several dozen each of persimmon seeds for rootstocks and Northern pawpaw seeds from Maryland.

One of our exotic passionflowers set many fruits – some getting to be as large as chicken eggs. This *Passiflora serratifolia* fruit may be good tasting – or not. We’ll have to wait and see.

New plantings; moringa and *Passiflora morifolia*



**Wayne Boynes – excited winner of a papaya at a recent plant raffle.
Photo: Julene Clark**



The March Field Trip to Orlando

Text and Photos by Darren Osgood

This is the first installment of a two-part article on the field trip to three private gardens in Orlando taken by Club members on March 29, 2025.



The trip that almost wasn't. I was probably one of the first to sign up for this trip once it was announced and I was a little heartbroken when I learned that it may not occur. Luckily there was strong interest in the trip and Board Member Chris Ramirez stepped up and took the reins to ensure that it could happen. Unlike my first field trip with the club where I was late, I was the first to arrive at the designated pickup spot. Today was going to be a beautiful spring day and I couldn't think of a better way to spend the day with other like-minded individuals talking about plants, trees and more. We were quickly loaded with 4 members and two guests from St. Petersburg's Rare Plant Network. We made a 2nd stop in Temple Terrace to pick up one more member and then we were off to Orlando to the amazing garden of Andy Bayliss being our first stop.

Andy does not have a Youtube channel, so all I knew is what our flyer said he had, amazing orchids and many fruit trees. This was probably the one garden I was not so sure I was going to enjoy as I am not into orchids, unlike our other members, and I was unable to preview what to expect. Yes, we do create our own expectations before we go somewhere. Andy quickly greeted our group upon arrival with a big smile and explained he is not a conventional gardener. If someone tells him that it can't be done, he will endeavor to prove them wrong. Sound familiar? Yeah, our club has quite a few members like this.

One of the first amazing things we saw was a 14' tall soursop tree up against his house. Not supposed to grow in Orlando, but there it was. Before getting too far, we knew we weren't in just any gardener's sanctuary as we quickly spied air layers on the mango trees. Not that unusual you say, but these weren't your typical air layers, these were large branches that would make a tree unto themselves once removed from the parent!

The other thing that was apparent is that Andy is a bit of a purist in the sense he doesn't believe in using chemicals of any kind for the most part to maintain his plants. Of course, we know that some chemicals can build up in your soil and are not the best for your plants. Some of his plants were not as pristine in leaf color as many plants you will find in other gardens or a nursery, but not to worry, that doesn't affect the health nor productivity of his plants. Obviously if you have large trees, it is quite difficult to spray them with chemicals anyhow, so why bother? This was evident in Andy's garden and he explained what to worry about concerning mango trees. His trees were loaded with fruit and he had one most impressive tree, a Marc Anthony that had an absolutely huge trunk. Andy told us that he was harvesting 200 mangoes a day from his huge Marc Anthony tree last year! I'm not a good judge of size but it had to be every bit of 25' to 30' tall. Andy spent a quite a bit of time explaining what affects fruiting and flowering of mangoes. Before leaving, if someone spied something in his garden and he had some to share, he would. Several of us went home with variegated gingers and beautiful orchids. But before we would depart Andy quickly did a fantastic demonstration of how he goes about his air layering and what medium he uses as well as other tips to consider while performing an air layer. We all left his garden feeling a bit euphoric and delighted we had made his acquaintance. Andy genuinely enjoyed sharing with us his knowledge and garden.

Just a few miles down the road we would find ourselves quickly arriving at the amazing food forest of Gilbert Rivera and his lovely wife. Gilbert has a channel on Youtube called Orlando Backyard Gardening <https://www.youtube.com/@OrlandoBackyardGardening>. Here we would meet up with another one of our members, Ko Chang who also lives a short distance away. Ko would join up with the tour live streaming on Facebook. Gilbert's Food forest starts out with lush under foot natural mulch in the form of deep layers of oak leaves.



Huge mango branch being air-layered



Soursop Tree

Next month Part 2:

∞ Club Notes ∞

Long time Club member selling **home with established gardens and lots of fruit trees**. See link below for listing: https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/2107-W-Fore-Dr-Tampa-FL-33612/44906273_zpid/

From the seed chairman: I have managed to procure some more **Kei Apple** seeds! There were several of you wanting some last time and we ran out, so come get 'em! Also have a rare black bean from West Africa that grows underground like a peanut, really cool, and also some Sunberry and Purple Tomatillo seeds, great for summer planting. See you at the meeting!

Got a roll of **emitter irrigation**. It was in a crate of other garden items we purchased at an auction. We don't use this type of system. **Free to whomever can use it**. Let me know and I will bring it to the next meeting. beemail@tampabay.rr.com

Member contributions to the newsletter! What a great way to share what you are doing in your garden with other members, learn what other members are growing, and get your questions answered. Your submissions for the newsletter, pictures, notes of interest, events, tips, recipes, questions, etc. are especially needed - please send them to Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **May 22nd**.

∞ Fruit Events ∞



2025 UF Stone Fruit Field Day Join us for a fun-filled day at the 2025 UF Stone Fruit Field Day! This in-person event will be held at 2556 W Hwy 318, Citra, FL. This event is perfect for anyone interested in learning more about stone fruit cultivation. Come meet experts, participate in hands-on activities, and enjoy delicious stone fruit samples. \$10.00 registration at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-uf-stone-fruit-field-day-tickets-1254934596159>

The Florida Mango Festival – June 29th – West Palm Beach - check the link below for all the details, how to volunteer, where to stay, get tickets, etc.
<https://floridamangofestival.com/>



∞ Membership information ∞

NEW MEMBERS

Download and fill out a membership application from: <https://rarefruit.org/membership/>, and send with check or money order for \$25 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI to: Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

RENEWING MEMBERS

Send check or money order for \$25 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI and mail to: Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

Both new and renewing members can make quick, secure payment using Square. See the October posting link on our Facebook page, or the link on our Website.



The objectives of The Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council International:

To inform the public about the merits and uses of fruits common to this region and encourages the cultivation, collection, propagation and growth of fruits that are exotic or unusual to west central Florida. The club also encourages the development of new fruit varieties, cooperating with local and foreign agricultural agencies.

Tampa Bay RFCI
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