



# RFCI

June 2025

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

Meetings unless otherwise noted are held at 2:00pm:  
The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue.  
13312 Cain Road Tampa, FL 33625

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

[Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)

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

### ⌘ Upcoming Programs and Events ⌘



**June 22<sup>nd</sup> – The Great Annual Mango and Fruit tasting** – The annual fruit tasting of mangoes and other delectable in-season fruits. Several Club members will once again travel to locations across south Florida to procure an excellent selection of fruits for your tasting perusal. This is always an excellent opportunity to taste and decide which mango varieties, and other fruits you may be interested in growing in your own garden. If you have any type of fruit in season you would like to share, feel free to bring it. **Please do not bring plants, there is no plant raffle or seed table.**

**This event is open only to members and their immediate household please.**

The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue.  
13312 Cain Road Tampa, FL 33625

#### **Schedule for the Tasting:**

**12:00 – 25 volunteers are needed to cut and the fruit and prepare everything for the tasting. For fruit prep, please bring a cutting board and suitable knife to cut the fruit.**

**3:00pm – Tasting event begins. Let us know how many people you are bringing.**

**5:00 – Cleanup and breakdown – 25 volunteers needed.**

**Please use the Sign-up link below to sign up for fruit prep, attendance - (number of persons you are bringing), and clean up. Also note if you are bringing a potluck dish.**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B4FA4AE23ABFD0-57045819-2025>

### ⌘ Welcome New Members ⌘

Kate Bosse      Temple Terrace

Surendra Gona      Tampa

Maggy Rodriguez      Kissimmee

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

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## Rare Annona, Garcinia, Plinia, and Pouteria Species

Jon and Georgia Irion, owners of The Ylang Ylang Tree in St. Petersburg, FL spoke at the May meeting about the incredible variety of tropical trees they have encountered during extensive traveling, and the many plants they raise on their 6000 square foot lot in St. Pete. This pair has traveled the world learning about the plethora of tropical plants not only for their fruits, but also for their medicinal benefits, fragrances, and their potential for growing in Florida.

An extensive slide show showcased the many varieties of Annona (sugar apples), Duguetia, Garcinia, Plinia, Jaboticaba, Sapote and others. He presented many interesting facts about many, many different fruits.

Some facts you may not know:

The flavors of these tropical fruits are incredibly diverse, from berries, bubblegum, coconut, pumpkin candy, and so many wonderfully pleasant flavors, all the way to the unpalatable soapy flavor of the Soncoya.

The cherimoya was Mark Twain's favorite fruit, and is also the origin of the tutti-frutti flavor that is used in many products.

Rollinia tastes like lemon meringue pie with soft silky textured fruit. Rollinia fruit can weigh up to 12 pounds!

Annona crassifolia has a taste that will linger in your mouth all day.

### Some fruits showing great promise for growing in Central Florida and may be worth searching for are:

Annona cornifolia can take temps to the upper 20's, a good choice for central Florida. It's orange/red fruits taste like sweet pumpkin candy. It can grow easily in a pot. Annona montana, Annona rugulosa, Duguetia furfuracea and Duguetia phaeoclados are also reportedly able to take temps in the 20's.

The purple star apple (Chrysophyllum caimito) is quite cold hardy, and is known to grow as far north as New Port Richey.

The Duguetia Dinantha (also called Stenantha) "Mano de Tigre) has fruit that taste like pralines, and could possibly grow as far north as Gainesville, even coastal Georgia.

The Pouteria torta gallifruta has fruit that look like rambutan, and taste like brown sugar caramel. This one is hardy to the 20's and can be grown as far north as Ocala and Gainesville.

To reach Jon or Georgia:

The Ylang Ylang Tree

727-385-5718

[info@theylangylangtree.com](mailto:info@theylangylangtree.com) - email

TheYlangYlangTree.com – website for shopping plants, seeds, tinctures, extracts, syrups, perfume, and scions for grafting.

[www.youtube.com/@Theylangylangreenursery](https://www.youtube.com/@Theylangylangreenursery) - videos

<https://www.airbnb.com/experiences/2365989> to sign up for tours of the gardens, learn growing tips, explore perfumes and resins.



Speaker Jon – Photo George Campani

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## Pictures at the May Meeting

Photos: George Campani







Photo: Pujan Shah

## ∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

Yay! The drought has been broken, if only for a while. We got 4.8 inches of rain over a forty-eight-hour period, and it all soaked in. So much to do these days, such as thinning the grape crops to promote better quality of what remains. I potted up lots of rooted grape starts and already have a wholesale buyer. I rooted a bunch of rare grapes that I had never seen before such as Tamiami, Aurelia, Largo, and Carolina Black Rose. I also grafted some grapes.

Our two large 'Guthrie' plums gave us over ten pounds of fruit in a short period of time. They are as sweet as candy. The tall canistel tree is making flower buds, while a big white sapote has set its second crop of fruit.

My sister-in-law gave me packs of heirloom tomato seeds. I gave some a try and they turned out pretty well. Best was 'German Pink', a large, sweet slicer. 'Moonglow' was attractive in salads as it was a large, yellow tomato. 'Salvaterra's Select' is a medium sized, pointy paste type.

My old true cherimoya tree dropped all its leaves (and the only fruit) as it put out a flush of new leaves and lots of flowers, which I have been diligently pollinating.

New plantings: tropical corn and yard long beans.



Heirloom tomatoes – photo: Paul Zmoda

## The March Field Trip to Orlando

### Text and Photos by Darren Osgood

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



At Gilbert Rivera's garden, you see a super long Purple Possum Passion Fruit vine that extends all along the side of his property, which is just loaded with blooms and fruit. Of course there are Mangoes, Pineapples and Mexican Sunflower in every nook and cranny. He has trees in all kinds of sizes and shapes. The backyard rises quite steeply, which is sort of unusual to see in Florida, with the top of the property allowing you to see over his roof!

He worked very hard to terrace his back yard and it shows. He wastes no space. Since he is pretty much planted out, he has taken to grafting to bring in more varieties to his Food Forest. He delights in taking plants that most grow indoors and putting them in the ground outside. He

has an absolutely huge Malabar chestnut which is normally grown indoors as an ornamental plant, is also known as the Money Tree. As we worked our way through this dense food forest, there were a few opportunities to taste Gilbert's handiwork.

The couple from the Rare Fruit Network were very interested in Gilbert's Mulberry Tree and he graciously shared his fruit with all of us. Just as we were nearing what we thought was going to be the end of the tour, everyone quickly spied Gilbert's fruiting Red Jaboticaba. Again, Gilbert shared these fruit unselfishly with our group. For those of you that don't know, Jaboticaba is known as Brazilian Grape by some and it is a small tree that produces grape-like fruit directly on the bark of the tree.

These plants, even though having been known by collectors for quite some time, are only now starting to get widespread recognition from backyard enthusiasts. The downside of growing this plant is that many of them take years before they fruit. The red version can fruit within 5 years, whereas the black fruited ones can take 8 years or more. As we all thought the tour was again,



about to conclude, Gilbert's lovely wife put out a spread of food for lunch including iced drinks, that was most impressive.

As we all shared this wonderful surprise, Gilbert kept our group entertained by answering all kinds of questions regarding his plants and exhibiting his grafting skills.

Before we knew it, he was grabbing cuttings and young potted plants to share with our group. If that wasn't enough, his wife then brought out homemade flan for dessert.





The euphoric high continued as we made our way back to the tour coach. Our 3rd and last stop this day was just few miles down the road where we would meet Mr. “Good Morning” himself Kevin Williams aka Orlando Gardener on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/@orlandogardener> and his brother Derrick. Derrick and Kevin warmly greeted our group and we made our introductions. Kevin made sure we were all comfortable before starting his tour. Kevin shared a little history about his property and how he came to own it, being passed down from his Mother and Grandmother. As a side note, “Good Morning” is how Kevin starts all his videos on YouTube.

If you need to know about the characteristic of some of the more popular Mangoes, Kevin is one of Florida's authorities. He can tell you which ones will produce a lot of fruit, which ones are susceptible to disease, which ones will be easy to keep small, and most importantly which ones taste the best!

Kevin went into detail on how he keeps his Mangoes happy and



showed us around all his lovely trees. One thing that we couldn't miss was Kevin had buckets of fish parts strategically placed around his garden. They are used for fertilizing his trees but they also act as an attraction for the pollinators of Mangoes, which are flies. Kevin had other plants like lychee, loquats, sugar cane and such but the main focus was Mangoes. To say Kevin covets his tasty Mangoes is an understatement. Kevin went so far as to share a new hybrid Mango that was supposed to be quite special but not published yet nor widely known, so we will keep it that way out of respect. Upon concluding our tour, Kevin and Derrick offered us some

delicious freshly cooked BBQ Salmon, Ribs and Chicken along with sides.

We had no idea that this treat was going to be offered at the end of our tour and made for some extended fellowship with Kevin and friends. Before we could leave, I asked Kevin if he had one of his favorite mangoes, Peach Cobbler available and he shared a huge air layered plant with me that had 6 fruit on it! I've been on two tours now in this past year with the club and I can tell you, both were very memorable experiences where we made new friends and acquaintances. It has also given us the opportunities to get to know other club members a little better as well. If you get the chance to take a tour with TBRFCI, do it, you won't regret it.



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## ∞ Club Notes ∞

**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](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com) Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **June 22nd**.

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## ∞ Fruit Events ∞

**Online - Mango Grower's Summit – Tuesday June 10 from 1:30pm to 4:00pm** – Part of the Annual Florida State Horticultural Society meeting. **Free**, but you must register at:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Lbe1m2KSS5GbWOJXRRp\\_9g#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lbe1m2KSS5GbWOJXRRp_9g#/registration)



Topics covered include: Mango Cultivars, Zill cultivars, Exploring Unripe Mangoes, Anthracnose management, mango propagation, nutrition, marketing for farmers markets, and mango fruit drop. There are many notable speakers and experts on mangoes scheduled to speak.

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




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## ∞ 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

Check your newsletter email or address label for the due date for your dues.

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

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***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.*

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