



RFCI

July 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

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

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

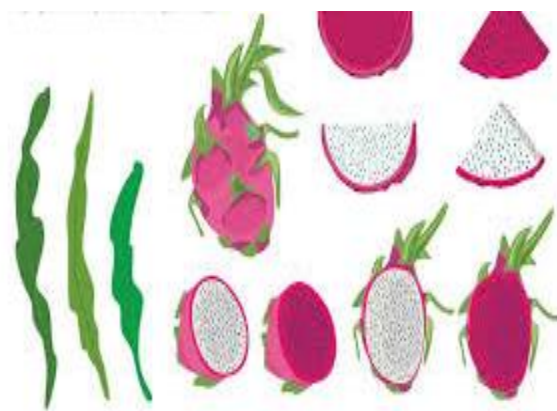
July 13th - Ko Chang returns to discuss hybridizing and grafting dragonfruit; the many colorful varieties, and how to grow them successfully. Cuttings will be available for purchase.

Social hour - 1:00p-2:00p

Potluck - 2:00p - 2:30p

Introduction/Speaker - 2:30p-3:30p

Raffle/Closing: 3:30p-4:00p



∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Virginia Griffith
Kirk England
Nilesh Pancholi
Kishor Patel
Tulsi Patel
Richard Pierre
Jenny Clarke
Darren Nuznoff
Anita B Desousa
Aaron Hintze
Yvonne Cabrera
Lillian Brown

Tampa
Plant City
Auburndale
Auburndale
Auburndale
Wesley Chapel
Tampa
Tampa
Lutz
Riverview
Tampa
Safety Harbor

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

2025 Mango Tasting Event

Photos provided by George Campani

Another great mango tasting event is in the books! This year the different varieties of mangoes were numbered. Tasters made their comments on the mango list, and found out after the tasting what the names of their favorites were. This allowed for a less biased tasting experience based preconceived expectations based on the name of the mango. Seventy participants enjoyed the tasting event. **(See the list of numbered fruits sent as an additional attachment with this newsletter).**





☞ What's Happening ☞

by Paul Zmoda

Our rainfall deficit is being erased and we are rejoicing. Standing puddles of water show that the water table here is catching up to levels prior to the drought.

Mangoes are ripening and are so welcome. Who could get tired of eating them on a daily basis? Our 'Guthrie' plums ended their season with at least thirty pounds from only two trees. So juicy and delicious eaten out of hand. I cooked some down with brown sugar and used it to top meats and breakfast toast.

I underwent cataract surgery on both eyes, and what a difference it made. Before was like looking through saran wrap smeared with Vaseline. Now I can see details needed when identifying insects, pollinating various flowers, and even writing 'What's Happening'!

Luisa and I presented our Passiflora presentation via Zoom to the Broward County Rare Fruit Council. We have almost a full hour of data now (including the requested tips on growing them as well as pests). It went very well. Lots of pruning and fertilizing getting done currently as growth speeds up with the rain's return.

New plantings: tropical corn, okra, long beans, passion vines, and *Crataegus flava*, a native, yellow mayhaw.



Guthrie plums: photo Paul Zmoda

2025 Stone Fruit Field Day

By Denise Provencher

On May 7th, Bryon and I attended the Stone Fruit Field Day at the Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Plant Science Research and Education Unit in Citra, Florida. This was a heavily attended and very successful day teaching attendees on the high-density method of growing stone fruits. There were commercial growers, home growers, teachers, students, and others all eager to learn about pruning fruit trees for maximum production.

Our day started with plenty of snacks and coffee, before 3 bus loads of attendees were driven out to the stone fruit orchards. We drove past so many types of fruits, some bursting with fruit. Arriving at our destination, speaker Ali Sarkhosh spoke about the various ways of pruning fruit trees, from open center, flat-topping, and the high-density planting. There were very old trees pruned in the flat-top manner, others with open crowns, and the newly planted rows of high-density trees for comparison.

The infrastructure for the high-density planting was amazing. Each row of trees was being wire trained, almost in an espalier fashion, allowing them to grow length ways. The wires were attached at the ends of the rows to phone pole size posts. Machines can then prune the growth

not growing along this line. This design allows for more trees per acre, increased yields, and allows for automation to handle more manual labor tasks associated with peach production, specifically pruning. High labor costs are associated with traditional pruning and thinning, and research is showing promise that the high-density method is helpful to reduce those high costs. High-density orchards allow for 280 trees per acre at a spacing of 12×13 feet, compared to traditional orchards that allow for 136 trees per acre at a spacing of 16×20 feet. The finer pruning and work is still done by hand.

At the end of the lecture all participants were allowed to fill bags with fruit from many varieties of peaches and plums to take home to enjoy. Returning by bus to the lecture hall, we enjoyed a slide show and discussion on the many varieties of peaches specifically that are suitable for home growers as well as commercial growers. One of the noted speakers was Jose Chaparro, associate professor in the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences UF/IFAS. Peaches are one of the stone fruits that has varieties that will grow in all parts of Florida, from the Panhandle down to South Florida. Peaches are an excellent choice for the home-grower as there are so many to choose from.

Next was an amazing tasting with dozens of varieties of peaches. Attendees were asked to select their favorites, which not an easy task by any means, and rank them for various qualities such as taste and texture.

Lastly, came a full lunch with all trimmings, leaving us full of peaches and a country style meal. What an excellent, informative, and enjoyable day!



Picture on left shows the huge telephone pole supports at the ends of the rows. Next is the very heavy duty steel cables used to support the tree growth. Next pics show the row of trees and poles, and support cabling.



Picture on the left show the traditional open crown method of pruning fruit trees, the picture on the right shows the old trees trimmed to a uniform height (best visible on the row in the right side of the picture).



Picture on the left shows rows of traditional spacing of the fruit trees, compared to the picture on the right showing the high density plantings.



Top seven pictures show the selection of fruits on display. The last two pictures show the tasting plates. It was impossible to choose a favorite amongst dozens of delicious choices.

⌘ 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 Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **July 22nd**.

⌘ Fruit Events ⌘



Want more mangoes? Don't we all!

Head on down to Pine Island and join Mango Mania, and help these folks as they recover from the hurricanes, and get plenty of tasty fruit.

July 12th Bok Tower, Lake Wales, Fruit Fest – 9am – 2pm From 9 -12 catch great speakers like Josh Jamison of Cody Farms talking about Fast-Growing Fruits for the Florida Home Garden, Taylor Walker on Growing Subtropical Fruits in Central Florida, and Raleigh Barnes talks about Edible Landscape Design with Third Insight Design. The fun continues as you sip, sample, and delight in a bounty of fruits and gourmet dishes from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. The margarita bar will stay open as long as drinks are available.

Admission is free for members / \$20 non-member adult, \$10 kids (ages 6-17), Kids 5 and under are free

⌘ Membership information ⌘



Both new and renewing members can make quick, secure credit card payment using Square. Use this QR code

Check your newsletter email or address label for your membership renewal date.

Prefer paper mail? No problem.

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



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
12722 Prosser Rd.
Dade City, FL 33525