



RFCI

August 2015

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

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Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.
at the Christ the King Church, 821 S. Dale Mabry,
Tampa

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

August 9th, Preserving the Harvest. The speaker is Mary Keith, a retired Hillsborough County Extension Agent. She will be presenting a talk about canning and preserving.



September 13th, 50 Unusual Edible Plants for Florida, Andy Firk, naturalist, and owner of Bamboo Grove, in Arcadia, will speak on some unusual edibles you can grow in Florida. Andy has a variety of fruits, bamboos, nuts, grasses, and unique items on his farm, some from far corners of the globe.

∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Nancy and Matt Neal

Clearwater

Yvonne Deming

Odessa

President: Fred Engelbrecht; Editor: Denise Provencher; Photographs: Fred Engelbrecht
Membership: Bryon Provencher; Production/Distribution: Denise Provencher

Pictures from the Fruit Tasting and member plant sale.

Many, many thanks to everyone who helped make this a fun and delicious event, with a special thank you to all the ladies who helped prepare all the fruit. Thanks to all who came early and stayed late to help with set up and clean up. Finally, thanks to the special committee who put everything together for this event and carried it through!

The selection of fruit was extensive and diverse, providing a tasty opportunity to try something new. There were many plants sold as well.







∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

Lots has been happening since last time. The weather has been so tropical lately - rain, heat, and high humidity. Perfect. In other words, propagating via cuttings, air layering or by seeds seems too easy at this time of year.

Luisa came back from a vacation in Puerto Rico with fresh, clean, cacao seeds, which I promptly planted in a seed box. The soursop seeds, planted in early May are already potted up.

My poor Ilama fruits are succumbing to a fungus which starts on the peduncle and proceeds to infest the fruits, turning them black and hard. By spraying with Dithane and copper, I'm down to one healthy one. I just hope to get some fresh seeds. My Ilama seeds from 2013 and planted in early 2014 are just now coming up!

Our bunch grapes are ripening quickly - I harvest often and then freeze them until I'm ready to make wine. We picked a large dragonfruit to enjoy. Beet red inside and oh, so sweet. It was grown from seed. We ate the last Glenn mango sliced and served with homemade yogurt, a great combination.

All this rain is bringing bounties of wild mushrooms. Some I dehydrate for later like the Boletes and Tylopilus. Others such as Lactifluus, Neolentinus and Russulas get sautéed in butter right away.

New planting: Orinoco banana, and an Fl13c-12 grape, bred at the University of Florida in 1961.



"The greatest contribution one can make to a country is to introduce a new plant to its culture." Thomas Jefferson

What's Growing in My Garden

By Steve Lohn

It's the end of June and my garden is growling like crazy. Between the hot weather and all the rain, everything is blooming. I have fruit on my trees that shouldn't be here yet. My Avocados are almost ready for picking. I've had Bananas to eat all year. I have another bunch I expect to be picking in about a week or two. Pears are growing; I'll be picking them soon. Pomelo seems to always be growing. I planted two more Pomegranate trees, so I have four trees now. In a couple of years I'll have lots of Pomegranates, which I'll turn into juice after I tired of eating them. I'm picking my Persian Limes now, and expect my Key limes a little later. Valencia Orange tree, full of fruit, will be ready later. Same for my grapefruit. The Lychee tree that I bought at the Manatee sale is looking good, and I'm looking forward to when it fruits. In a few months I will have a couple of Neem trees for sale. If you are interested you can reach me at: sl.rainforest@gmail.com

In Zephyrhills

Denise Provencher

After a mild and wonderfully wet winter, with only one late season freeze night - just enough to wipe out an early ripening crop of Tropic Beauty peaches - we are off to a dry start to summer. Until the second half of July, our address missed the showers that too many other addresses in the Tampa area would say have been too abundant! Well, I'm sure it will all balance out on its own. The Flordagrande and Flordacrest peaches made up for the earlier loss. The Centennial variegated kumquat puckered us up with its beautiful, tart, juicy fruits, which are several times the size of the other kumquat varieties.

This spring we were thrilled when our cocoa plant, now 6 years old, put out its first successful fruit. When it turned yellow, we picked it and sliced it open to see all the seeds inside. If only we had a way to process it for chocolate!

Our 24 Sunshine Blue blueberry plants purchased last year gave us a respectable crop of berries this year. The Dwarf Mulberry planted two years ago, and not so dwarf anymore, had a heavy crop, even though the first flush of fruits had been frozen on that one cold night. One tree of Mexicola avocado is simply not enough! The smoky, nutty flavor is perfect for fresh eating. The Brown Turkey fig is fruiting non-stop.

Squashes seem to be having difficulty this year, as there seems to be only male flowers. This is also the case with the papayas. The boys are here, but where are the gals?

We've enjoyed quite a few pineapples, and bananas, both plants having, in many cases, come from plants obtained at the plant raffles at our meetings. Homestead, Heatmaster, and Husky Cherry tomatoes are producing well all summer with no damaging signs of disease.

The ylang-ylang tree flowers dazzled us with fragrance this summer. Ylang-ylang is used to make Chanel #5, the perfume. In 1921, Coco Chanel created a mixture of rose, jasmine, and ylang-ylang that then became the famous fragrance.



∞ Club Notes ∞

Paul Branesky was given a Certificate and Life Membership in our Club. We don't have a photo of him receiving this award, but we do want to share his life membership event with other members. Paul has been a member for a very long time, served as President, and is known for hosting the citrus washing at his home.

The Club is lucky to have received a laptop computer from Club member and Board member, Jim Porter, This wonderful donation will help greatly with speaker presentations.

In future meetings, starting about 1:00pm (before our regular Club meetings start), we plan to offer occasional videos and other special presentations to give members additional opportunities to learn such skills as grafting techniques. If there are special skills you are interested in seeing via video, please let us know! Also, look for a table with Tampa Bay RFCI News and Current Events at our meetings now. We will also have a suggestion box for members ideas how to help the club or suggest new topics.

Please remember to sign in the meeting attendance sheet when you pick up your badge at the meetings. The badges are located just inside our regular meeting room on the table.

We welcome your submissions for the newsletter, please send them to bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com Submissions for September newsletter due by: August 21.

∞ Member Questions ∞

Can I get a productive avocado tree by planting the seed? Planting the large, easy to handle seeds of avocados is very tempting, and is a fun learning experience for children. Most of us have surely seen the instructions for using a cup holding an avocado seed on toothpicks just above the water. The idea is to keep the base of the seed moist so the roots will grow into the water, and the plant will begin to grow. This is fun to do, but the seeds will generally grow just as well planted in a pot of soil.

As far as getting a productive tree from seed, this may take a while. Avocadoes propagated from seed take 8 - 20 years to bear fruit. On the other hand, a grafted variety will bear in 3 - 5 years from the time of the grafting. Also, keep in mind that any fruit you do get may not be like the tree that bore the fruit in the first place. Avocadoes are cross pollinated, making genetic control difficult. The flowers of the avocado promote cross pollination by making the stigma of the flower receptive to pollen prior to the pollen being released from that same flower. Only about 1 in every 5000 flowers sets a fruit that will grow to maturation.





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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