



# RFCI

December 2016

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

<http://www.rarefruit.org>  
[Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)  
<http://www.facebook.com/TampaBayChapterRareFruitCouncilIntlInc>

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

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞



## *2016 Holiday Social*



*Please join us for the annual RFCI Holiday Social.*

*Sunday, December 11, 2016*

*1:00 P.M.*

*Please note the different start time.*

*Please bring a covered dish (salads, vegetables, desserts, etc.)*

*The Club will provide the turkeys, ham, tableware and drinks.*

*Please bring an item to donate to the free raffle (such as plants, small gifts - perhaps an item you received but can't use).*

*Several volunteers are needed to help set up.*

*If you are available to help, please arrive about 11:00 A.M.*

*You may bring your own place setting (plate, utensils, glassware). This effort will help reduce waste, and be sturdier than paper plates so you can really load that plate up!*



President: Sandra Kischuk; Program Manager: Tom Schaefer; Secretary: Fred Engelbrecht, Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher; Photographs: Fred Engelbrecht

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## ∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Marian Cirello Largo  
 Donna King Plant City  
 Alfred & Gail Williams Seffner  
 Loretta Buckner Palm Harbor  
 Liza Paul Brooksville  
 Zaida Gutierrez Clearwater  
 Linda & Chris Holt Lakeland  
 Margie Campbell Tampa  
 Maria Male-Basil

Sandy & Paul McHenry Venice  
 Jennifer & John Thomas Spring Hill  
 Vickie & David Geuther Plant City  
 Anthony Pino Dover  
 Trudy Erwin Riverview  
 Donna McAvene Sun City Center  
 William Zibell  
 Ivan Sprague

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### Are you ready for the cold?



Tom Schaefer gave a timely and very comprehensive presentation on cold protection at November's meeting. Rochan Premraj, Paul Zmoda, and Paul Branesky also served as a question/answer panel to members with questions. Anyone new to the Tampa area may not realize how cold it does get in this part of Florida. In January of 1977, there was even snow in Tampa! The prediction for this winter is for colder than normal weather to start the winter season, but then warmer overall. If you live north of Tampa, you may have already had your first frost and 32 degrees or below readings on November 21st and 22nd of this year! Remember, in Florida the difference of just 1 or 2 degrees can mean life or death for some of your plants!

There are many facts about the land you garden on that will be very helpful to you in preventing cold damage, such as:

Your gardening zone - in the Tampa area ranges from 8B to 10A.

The number of winter chill hours your area receives - a Chill hour is when the temperature is between 32 - 45, with hours over 60 degrees subtracted.

Your yard's microclimates - such as under trees, along southern walls, proximity to water.

How badly a cold weather event may affect your plants depends on:

Duration of the cold

Wind

Precipitation

Humidity

Health of a particular plant

Variety and cold hardiness of plants

The quickness of the cold is a major factor too. Unlike other parts of the country that experience a slow progression of cold onset, that allows plants to slow down and go into a more dormant state, we can have 80's and then a very sudden drop down into the 20's or 30's. This type of cold event catches plants, and often people, unprepared, and can result in massive damage.

There are many types of protection to consider:

Locating tender plants in the warmer micro climates of your yard.

Moving them into a protected area such as a garage, carport, porch, greenhouse.

Chemicals, such as foliar sprays (ex: FreezePruf), or foams.

Providing heat from electric or propane heaters, smudge pots, kerosene, or light bulbs.

Wrapping graft unions and trunks with blankets, or heat cables.

Providing coverings such as frost cloth, or building a cube over the plant and wrapping it in frost cloth or plastic.

Watering before expected cold. Our ground water is about 70 degrees, and as it evaporates, it will create 1 - 2 degrees of heat energy.

There are many good thermometers and weather instruments available to homeowners to assist in monitoring temperature and other weather conditions. Get a good quality one. Digital ones are more accurate. Many have alarms that can alert you to temperature drops that require action before damage occurs. These items are not expensive and you will be glad to have them.

If frost does get on your plants, rinse it off before the sun hits it, as when the ice is melting is when the most damage will occur. And remember, it's the coldest just before the dawn!

Very important - do not trim your damaged plants until spring when new growth returns. It is tempting to do it right away, but this could cause more damage. Waiting will allow you to see what areas are really dead, and allow for a more productive pruning.

### **More information:**

Interactive Florida Gardening Zone map, plus highest/lowest temperatures ever recorded, drought monitoring maps, first/last frost maps, heat zones, eco-regions, plug in your zip code:

<http://www.plantmaps.com/interactive-florida-usda-plant-zone-hardiness-map.php>

Florida Chill Hours Map:

University of Florida - map shows chill hours for different parts of the state.

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/fruits/chill-hours.html>

This map keeps track of accumulated chill hours, plug in zip code:

<http://agroclimate.org/tools/Chill-Hours-Calculator/>

Different types of winter protection products for plants - non-toxic, biodegradable:

<http://www.polymerag.com/>

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## ❁ Garden Spotlight ❁

Text and Photos by Denise Provencher

This is the fourth in a series of articles that will describe visits to the gardens of members who are opening their gardens for other members to visit and to enjoy a wonderful opportunity to learn more about growing fruits in the Tampa area.

This visit was to Bill Vega's garden. Bill is a long time member of the Club, and is very active with Club activities on many levels. His gardening area reflects his passion for growing and sharing with others. He has been gardening here for 20 years.



To reach the backyard we passed through a covered area with the most amazing collection of birdhouses you may ever see. Bill is an avid collector of birdhouses. Once you enter the gardening area it will be quickly clear that not a bit of space is wasted. It is hard to imagine there was nothing on the lot when he arrived here. This is intensive use of space. Despite the smaller lot size, the

yield is high. There is a plethora of containers with young plants, as well as some larger plants and trees. There are benches full of seedlings that Bill shares with the Club plant raffles, and with the local school children. Realizing the importance of getting kids interested in gardening while young, he enjoys sharing his plants and skill with the youngsters.

There are many peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants, including varieties from his native Puerto Rico. The "Everglades" tomato produces very well. You will see offerings of seedlings of this tomato at future plant raffles.

There are many types of containers, recycled barrels, half barrels, plastic tubs, anything that will grow a plant might be found here. A huge mango tree resides in the side



yard. Back in 2006, Bills says the tree took a very hard hit with a freeze that year. Just one night was all it took to set the tree back. Mangoes are pretty tough, though. This year it produced 30 fruit. The tree is now quite tall again, once more pushing out of its protected area.

Rounding the corner to the back yard area is an elaborate water system. Anyone wanting to know about recycling methods for saving the free water your gutters supply, should take a look at this set-up. Fertilizer can be added to the saved water to make feeding the plants easier too. In addition, water pumps can retrieve water from the pond area at the back of the property to act as an additional source of water.

In the backyard are a number of larger trees in the ground. Citrus trees are benefiting from use of the Bayer Citrus product recently discussed at one of the Club's meetings. This



product really improves the health of the trees.

A pink guava produced 500 fruit this season, and the Flordaglow peach produced 100 pounds of fruit. Numerous avocados produce well here. The custard apple (Atemoya) is producing now. It took 7 years to have fruit, but was definitely worth the wait.

Lady Finger Bananas have escaped their original planting area, and now line the pond area, enjoying the extra moisture they get there.

Bill brought the original offsets from Puerto Rico.

An enormous, very productive passionfruit vine resides in the backyard. It was even larger until the dead tree it was growing on had to be removed. Another passionvine, "Sunrise", a gift from past Club member and president Thom Scott, has oblong fruit.

Red jaborcaba, starts from a previous speaker at a Club meeting, are now producing fruit. A lengthy yellow chayote vine from Puerto Rico climbs along the side border of the property. The fruit is wonderfully tasty.

A dwarf coconut from Miami sits in a large pot. This one will need to be protected in a freeze. However, the dwarf variety is hardier than the tall ones, so this will be a test.

As to the reasoning for all the containers,

there are many good reasons. The extra height saves wear and tear on your back, which in itself is pretty important. Also, it makes weeding and harvesting much easier. The plants can be moved around as needed, such as when there is going to be a freeze, they can be put under protection. Keeping trees in containers also keeps them smaller, making them more manageable.



Having filled every inch of the back and side yard, the front yard is now under development. Bill says "You can't eat grass", and it is hard to grow there anyway, so filling in the area with fruit producing trees just makes a whole lot more sense.

To make an appointment to view Bill's garden, contact him at [vega846@aol.com](mailto:vega846@aol.com), or 813-300-7597.

## ☞ What's Happening ☞

by Paul Zmoda

Cooler weather means being prepared for possible freezes in our future. I've rebuilt the roof slats on our mango "cube" house. This helps support the annual skin of plastic sheeting. The "Glenn" mango, planted inside, should be ok. The cacao tree, also in the ground inside, will be a learning experience. Our fruit-bearing Guanabana, or soursop tree, has been banished to the laundry room until March. Soursops react badly to temperatures in the fifties by defoliating. They will usually re-grow new leaves quickly, but are then vulnerable to a subsequent cold induced defoliating which can easily kill the tree.

Future rootstocks for grafting persimmons are sprouting up in taproot pots now. Seeds from our Ilama fruit are coming up rather quickly thanks to a pre-treatment of gibberellic acid. Sugar apple seeds have also been sown in vermiculite.

I traded one of my Ilama seedlings for a Soncoya (*Annona purpurea*) seedling with a man from California. It's adjusting to our growing conditions here so I repotted it.

Thanks go to Ian Greig for providing all those pineapple suckers at our last meeting.

New plantings: oregano, avocado, onions, pineapples, and creeping fig.

## ☞ November Tasting Table ☞



*This is a sampling of the wonderful offerings at the buffet table. Thank you to the following folks for their tasty offerings and to all those who did not sign the sheet. Members who donate food receive a ticket for the plant raffle.*



Name	Item	Name	Item
Lohn	Black grapes	Vega	Pollo barbeque
Campani	Pumpkin bread	Evitt	Chocolate
Schumaker	Banana bread	Ferst	Candy
Geuther	Chocolate cake	Saceda-bigelow	Vegetable wraps
Branesky	Banana egg rolls	Branesky	Cucumber salad
Clarke	Green bean casserole	Clarke	Pumpkin cheesecake
Clarke	Sweet potato casserole	Conradt	Corn muffin
Phillips	Chips	Billiana	Chili
Paul	Papaya beet root	Hartzler	Deviled eggs
Aguire	Dessert	Kischuk	Coconut tapioca



## ☞ November Plant Raffle ☜



Here is sampling from the plant raffle table. Thank you to everyone who brought in plants to share at the raffle.

Plant	Donor	Winner
Moringa	Schaefer	
Dark star dragon fruit	Lohn	
Tabebuia	Zmoda	
Starfruit	Zmoda	
Dragon fruit	Premraj	
Moringa	Whitfield	
Red papaya	Clarke	
Bleeding heart	Saceda-Bigelow	
Holy basil	Hartzler	Black
Pruning saw blades	Zmoda	
Black surinam cherry	Provencher	Osterberg
Ylang ylang	Provencher	
Tomato - everglades	Vega	Petersen

## ☞ Club Notes ☜



**New Raffle!** Liza Paul was the very first winner of a new raffle that will be held at each meeting. Anyone bringing food for the buffet table will get a raffle ticket for a gift to raffled off later in the meeting.

Thanks to Ian Grieg, our Club's pineapple expert and industry scientist, for bringing in many offsets of varieties from his test beds. Some of these do not even have names. Ian says plant in a quality potting soil, rather than in the ground to avoid nematodes. Remember, it takes about 18 months to get fruit.

Sharon Baker, president of the Tampa Bay RFCI from 1993 to 1995, passed away on October 26th. Sharon served numerous official positions in the Club over the years, and her and her husband sold many plants for the Club at the Plant Sales.

**Got pics at the ECHO field trip? We'd love to see them.** We welcome your submissions for the newsletter, pictures, notes of interest, events in your area, tips you've tried or learned that you would like to share with others, or questions about growing fruits - please send them to [bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com) Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **December 22nd.**



***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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