



RFCI

November 2020

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

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

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

Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.
at the American Legion Post 111,
6918 N. Florida Ave, Tampa 33604

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

November 8th – Club Plant Sale! 9 – 1pm at the American Legion Parking

Lot. The Club is having a plant sale open to the public. Members can sell their own grown fruits and produce, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs, edibles, plants, butterfly and bee plants, tools, gardening books, pots, grafting supplies, yard art, etc. at the sale; any garden items they would like to share with members and others. So, get your items ready! Each member is responsible for pricing, labeling, and selling their own items. No manifest is needed. Bring your own lawn chair, and a table and umbrella if you have one. You are encouraged to bring your own food and water. Looking for plants? Definitely stop on by.

Masks are required. Gloves or sanitizer are recommended for handling cash. Cash only. Bring small bills!



November 14th, The Club's Memorial Garden at the USF Botanical Garden needs some refurbishing. If you would like to volunteer for this event, please contact Cora (call/text) 727 403-1756. New trees will be planted, others pruned, others removed. If you have tools such as pruners, shovels, etc. to help with this job, please bring them with you, as well as a lawn chair. Bring food and drink for yourself, and plan on staying for the picnic afterward.

Meetings in Person will hopefully resume in January 2021. Thank you everyone for bearing with us during this COVID-19 situation.

President: Fred Engelbrecht; Vice Presidents: Cora Coronel and Kenny Gil; Secretary: Jager Mitchell;
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

A special note from our President

To our members:

It is regrettable that we have been unable to have our regular meetings and social gatherings. The board was, and is, concerned with the safety of our members, especially because we have such a large group and a buffet would be out of the question. The other constraint was our meeting place, which was not allowed to have more than 10 people in the hall. In the past we have never had these restrictions on our meetings, but this is an unusual situation.

Indications are that there is an increase in infections, which we took into consideration and resulted in our cancellation of the planned November 8 meeting after the Plant Sale, and of our special Holiday Social in December.

Our plant sale on November 8 is still on and will be held in the parking lot of the American Legion facility.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to have our January meeting and Citrus Celebrations in February 2021. We are disappointed, as I am sure you are, that we are not able to enjoy our get-togethers and great speakers.

Let's hope that 2021 will be the turn around.

Stay well and be safe.

Frederic Engelbrecht

Rare Fruit Council of Tampa

President

☞ What's Happening ☜

by Paul Zmoda

Our jackfruits became over-ripe within a few days. I should have watched closer. We were able to get lots of edible material from four large specimens. The cooked seeds were pretty good, too.

Our persimmon crop is over the top this year. Branches are breaking from the weight. I can pick astringent varieties and let them ripen indoors until super soft, or I can cure them with vodka inside a container, and in four days have semi-soft, sweet, non-astringent fruits to feast on. Our Mexican limes ripened all at once, so I juiced and froze the juice for a pie at a later date.

While walking in our forest (to check on a banana crop I was sure to find) I stumbled across a huge crop of oyster mushrooms growing on a fallen oak tree. I had to return to collect a second basket full of fungi to cook for a few dinners. I did find a heavy rack of bananas also, and brought it back home to finish ripening.



Free Seeds that will available for members November 8th at the Plant Sale

Please note – the seed and membership table will be at the Plant Sale, but seeds will not be displayed due to the outdoor conditions. Simply ask for whichever ones you would like from the list below. First come, first serve. Supplies are limited.

Aegle marmelos – **Bael Fruit** – Bengal Quince – fruit of great cultural importance in Indian and SE Asia. Plant has been used for over 5000 years, and is a sacred tree. Fruit reaches the size of a pommelo or larger, the yellow pulp is sweet and aromatic, tasting like marmalade, and smelling like rose. Very hardy in our area. Fruit is eaten fresh, dried, or candied, made into a lemonade-like beverage, or otherwise traditionally prepared.

Akebia trifoliata – **Chocolate vine** - is a cold hardy, evergreen, climber with fragrant blooms and sweet purple fruit. It's native to Japan where it grows wild in the forest. In late spring, chocolate-pink blossoms bloom in clusters against delicate lacy foliage. In fall, fat lavender fruit appear. Fruits are sweet, with white flesh.

Billardiera longiflora – **AppleBerry** – Evergreen perennial vine to 10', creamy colored flowers, brilliant purple edible fruits, will grow in a container. Likes moist soil, sun to part shade. Hummingbirds enjoy the flowers, provides year-round interest.

Carica papaya – **Mexican papaya**- this papaya is shades of orange when ripe, similar to melon, flesh is firm and juicy, is eaten fresh without the skin. Fruits can weigh 10 pounds. Very fast growing, fruit in 9 months from seed.

Cyphomandra betaceae – **Tamarillo Tree Tomato** – produces the distinct fruit of importance to many cuisines. Grow and utilize the egg-shaped fruit similar to tomato, but keep plants well-drained. Eaten fresh, boiled, pureed, remove the skin before eating as it is bitter. Can grow to small shrub, can grow in a container.

Diospyros kaki – **Japanese Persimmon** – one of the more widely cultivated persimmons, this long lived, incredibly beautiful tree is deciduous, producing 3-4" bright orange, delicious fruits in late fall into winter.

Feijoa sellowiana – **Pineapple guava** - Easy to grow, attractive, evergreen, small shrub, with edible flowers, and fruit. Flowers are showy, fruits produced in late summer into fall. Very hardy into teens.

Jalapeno Pepper – one of the most versatile of all “hot” peppers, popular in so many dishes from so many cuisines. Not too hot.

Malvaviscus arboreus *vr. Drummondii* – **Mexican Apple** – see description write-up page 84.

Passiflora edulis – **Purple Grenadilla** – easy to grow vine that produces spectacular flowers, and fruit that turn purple when ripe. This variety is quite hardy and vigorous.

Psidium cattleianum – **Strawberry guava** – this guava has dark red skin, and very juicy, with excellent strawberry flavor. Hardy to low 20's without protection. Fruits in a container.

Psidium guajava – **guava** – **Lemon guava** – small tree or shrub, produces yellow fruits that can be eaten fresh or cooked, or made into a delicious beverage.

Solanum quitoense – **Naranjilla** – **lulo** – esteemed fruits of Andean South America, tastes like rhubarb and lime, delicious, makes an excellent green juice. Protect from wind, likes part shade.

Ziziphus jujuba – **Chinese date** – easily grown, likes hot sun, takes dry conditions, has fragrant flowers, used in China for its fruit for over 4000 years. Large shrub if left unpruned. Fruit matures from green to red and has a crisp sweet flesh like an apple.



Most gardeners in Florida are familiar with Turk's cap mallow (*Malva discolor*), a Florida-Friendly shrub related to hibiscus. The bright orange downward facing flowers that look like they never finished opening are a favorite of hummingbirds and the shrub blooms most of the year.

There is a cousin of Turk's Cap mallow, Mexican Apple, (*Malva arborea* var. *Drummondii*) that has edible leaves, flowers, and fruit to add to the package. The flowers are upturned instead of downturned. In the spring, harvest the tender leaves and shoots as a fresh green. Enjoy the colorful burst of freshly picked flowers in your summer salad, or make a tea from them. Then enjoy the sweet, cucumber tasting fruits in the fall. Larger leaves can be used in making dolmas, or preserved like grape leaves. Plants are extremely easy to grow, and this Tex/Mex native can take the heat and drought easily.

Northern-type Cherries!? In Florida? Maybe, finally....

Many Floridians are familiar with tropical “cherries”, such as the Barbados Cherry (*Malpighia emarginata*), Cherry of the Rio Grande (*Eugenia involucrate*), and the Surinam Cherry (*Eugenia uniflora*). These are not the sweet cherries known in cooler climates, such as the Bing cherry. Northern cherries (*Prunus avium* sp.) required too many chill hours, (800 and up), to grow successfully in Florida. Plus, the bloom and fruiting times were often affected by the rainy season and fungus. Fruit flies, nematodes, and root rot from rainy wet soils also made for less than favorable conditions for growing cherries. Therefore, the University of Florida (IFAS) had not recommended growing them in Florida.

But, after decades of research and hybridizing, several new varieties have shown promise. There are now 3 varieties that need less than 400 chill hours and so are well suited to zone 9 temperatures: Lapins, Royal Lee & Minnie Royal. Since they are such low chill varieties, these 3 cherries should bloom out in February or early March at the latest, alongside the rest of the *Prunus* family in Florida: peaches, plums, and nectarines. And because February is usually much drier than April, that may take care of the fruit rot issue and the low chill issue at the same time. Ripening times are mid May & early June.



Lapins: known as "self-fertile Bing", requires approximately 350-400 chill hours to bloom. It is a large, firm, flavorful, dark red sweet cherry from Canada. Lapins chill hour requirements should be compatible with planting in the Ocala / Gainesville area of Florida, in a line southwest to Brooksville, and everywhere to the north and west of that line, with the possible exclusion of mild areas of Jacksonville along the St Johns River waterway. Lapins should bloom in February and ripen in late May to early June.



Royal Lee & Minnie Royal: need each other for pollination, and require approximately 250 chill hours to bloom. These two should bloom in February and ripen approximately mid-May in Florida.

Royal Lee produces a medium-sized red fruit with excellent flavor, and is a highly productive tree. Chill hours are officially listed as "200-300" total. It is pollinated by the Minnie Royal.



Minnie Royal produces a medium-sized firm red fruit also with good flavor, and is a highly productive tree as well. Chill hours are officially "200-300" total. The cross pollinator is the Royal Lee.

Planting zone for Royal Lee and Minnie Royal should include most of the northern half of Florida, from I-10 south to SR60, approximately. There will be questionable areas right on the coast where chill hours can be much milder, such as in Pinellas County (from Tarpon Springs to St Pete) or from Palm Bay / Malabar area south.

There is confirmation of these growing in the Lakeland area.



Royal Crimson is a self-fruitful, very low chill hour sweet cherry. With an estimated chill hour requirement of just 200 to 300 hours (below 45 degrees), Royal Crimson makes an excellent pollinizer for both the Royal Lee and the Minnie Royal, increasing harvest where sporadic winters may cause an inconsistent overlap of blooming times.

The tasty, large, crimson red fruit ripens early to mid-May. Suited to zones 8-10.

Source for these cherries:

<https://askthegreengenie.com/fruit-trees/low-chill-cherries/> There is lots more information on these cherries at this website.

Member Questions

Question: The pads on my Opuntia cactus are being destroyed from the inside by an orange and black striped caterpillar. What is happening?

Answer: The orange and black striped caterpillar is a distinctive giveaway that your cactus is being consumed by the Cactus Moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*. This pest arrived in Florida in 1989 in the Keys, and this invasive species is a serious threat to the Opuntia cactus in North America. It is endangering both wild and cultivated populations, and creating economic hardship for communities in Mexico growing and selling Opuntia.

The egg stick is another distinctive feature of this pest, see picture below. Remove these immediately and destroy if you see them on your cactus. Destroy any caterpillars. Remove and destroy any affected pads. Chemical controls are not recommended.



Egg stick on Opuntia Pad



Cactus Moth caterpillars



Cactus Moth



Cactus Moth Damage

∞ Club Notes ∞

All members: Please note all memberships have been extended to cover the loss of Club activity time since March. Your new expiration date is on your newsletter.

Contributing to the newsletter is 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 bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com

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

The Club would love to hear from anyone interested in joining the Board. It's a great way to learn the goings on within the Club and being involved in planning events, such as the plants sales, farmer markets, fruit tastings, and the Citrus Celebration at the State Fair.

Note: The election of the new Board members will be rescheduled when regular meetings resume. If interested, please come to the next meeting once meetings resume.

∞ Membership information ∞

NEW MEMBERS

Download and fill out a membership application from: <https://rarefruit.org/membership/>, and send with check or money order for \$20 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 \$20 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI and mail to: Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows. - Doug Larson



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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