



RFCI

September 2021

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

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com

<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 ∞

September 12, 2:00pm. Apocalypse Gardening. Will Wright will speak on a very timely topic; gardening when life in the world as we know it can change dramatically. Climate, pandemics, and many other powerful, and unstoppable natural influences are the rule, not the exception, and are happening now. This talk will provoke the audience to pause, reflect, and think. The audience will also realize that there are more reasons than ever to become a passionate gardener. Will has spoken for the Club previously, and he has much to share!



Please use the front entrance of the building for entry, as there could be another group using the side room.

Message from President Mike Sweet to all Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Club members:

As you all know, the Delta Covid strain has been affecting many people here in Tampa Bay. The board has decided to still have our meeting this Sunday, September 12. The CDC recommends that everyone who attends an indoor meeting wear a face mask. We would prefer for everyone who attends to follow this guidance. There will not be a buffet potluck at this meeting. It would be better if everyone ate before they came to the meeting. If you do not feel well or have a fever please stay home.

Good luck to everyone,
Mike Sweet, President

∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Arun Pitchai Tampa

President: Mike Sweet; Vice Presidents: Cora Coronel and Paul Branesky; Secretary: Jager Mitchell;
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

Blueberries with Doug Phillips

Doug Phillips, coordinator with the UF/IFAS Blueberry Extension Program, discussed the popular and versatile blueberry at August's meeting. Doug is the primary contact for commercial blueberry growers in Florida, and is liaison between the growers and the researchers at the University of Florida, handling issues with pests, diseases, production, and trial selections for new varieties.



There are 3 types of blueberries grown in America, northern highbush, rabbiteye, and southern highbush. The southern highbush is most grown in Florida. There are many, many varieties selected for growing commercially in Florida, with Emerald, Jewel, Millenia, Star, and Windsor being amongst the most planted.

Many home gardeners enjoy growing their own blueberries too. Here are some tips for success. Blueberries need an acidic environment, so growing in 12-18" deep raised beds with 100% pine bark mulch to keep the acidity at a 4.5 – 5.5 range works well. At home you can add sulphur to lower the PH of the growing medium if needed.

Do not plant blueberries too deep.

Provide 4-5 hours of full sun.

Blueberries are self-fertile, but growing 2 different varieties may provide a better crop.

Blueberries prefer 1 – 1.5" of water per week, with the most critical time for regular watering being during fruit set, so be sure to keep well-watered then.

Provide light, frequent fertilizing of ammonium sulfate, rated for blueberries. Do not use ammonium nitrate fertilizer, as this is toxic to blueberries and the plants could be severely burned.

Planting companion plants that attract bees is very helpful in fruit set.

As plants mature, pruning away up to 20% of old growth will help rejuvenate the plants, and keep lush, new growth coming in.

Keeping plants healthy helps to keep insects and disease at bay.

To contact Doug with your questions about blueberries:

Doug Phillips

Rm. #148

Gulf Coast Research and Education Center

14625 CR 672

Wimauma, FL 33598

813-419-6597

Email:

dal64372@ufl.edu

Check out Doug's blueberry blog, pictures of diseases and pests, variety list, and lots of other information.

<https://www.blueberrybreeding.com/blog>

☞ What's Happening ☞

by Paul Zmoda

We are eating our avocados on a daily basis now. No complaints. 'Brogdon' (my favorite) and 'Fantastic' are heavy, reliable producers. Texas Black Persimmons have begun to ripen a few at a time. These are very dark brown inside, seedy, and have a sweet flavor. The next persimmon to ripen is 'John Rick'. This astringent American variety is a dark orange in color and is of good quality when soft-ripe.

'Barbie Pink' is the large, tropical guava that we grow. You have to watch them daily because they ripen so quickly and will fall and smash on the ground. I did not bag these aromatic fruit, so every one has fruit fly larvae within. I was still able to make a half gallon of thick, pink juice.

One day I got a call from a neighbor. New member Pat Dodson gifted me with a ripe fruit she had grown – *Theobroma cacao*, cacao! I was struggling to grow this plant for seven years but she had success in only three years. This is the tree whose seeds are used to make chocolate. Ninety five percent of the seeds came up in only ten days and are growing well.



Photo: Paul Zmoda

Drink your OJ!



New research has found that a glass of citrus juice has key nutrients and bioactive substances that help the human immune system to work efficiently. Scientists examined evidence from almost 200 studies and reports and concluded that vitamin C, folate, and polyphenols in citrus juice improve immune health, fight inflammation, and defend against bacteria and viruses. Besides all these benefits, citrus juice provides potassium, can help lower blood pressure, and reduces the risk of stroke. So, drink up! *Source: The Fruit Juice Science Centre*

∞ Q & A ∞

After the Mango tasting in July, our long-time Club experts answered questions from members. Here are some of the questions and answers.



Photo: Denise Provencher

Question: How many times will my banana fruit?

Answer: Banana stalks will fruit once and then die, but new “babies” will be forming at the ground level. Let these new stalks grow, as they will provide fruit in about 15 - 18 months. When the clump becomes too crowded, some of the new stalks can be dug and removed to share with others or start a new clump. Try to keep 3 or 4 of the younger stalks in a clump to grow to fruiting size.

Photo: Bananas in the Coronel’s garden.

Question: Can a fruit tree be kept smaller if it is in a container, as opposed to growing it in the ground?

Answer: Yes, the root ball will be limited as to how big it can be, thereby limiting the size of the tree’s canopy. Many fruit trees will adapt to container culture very well.

Question: How long does it take to mature a pineapple?

Answer: A pineapple fruit will mature in 15 – 24 months depending on the month it is planted in. December is best for planting. When the mother plant dies, new pups may form at the base of the plant that can be separated and planted up. Also, around the base of the fruit there may be pups as well as the crown on the top of the fruit itself. All will give you more plants and fruit.



Photo: Denise Provencher

Question: Why are my muscadine grape vines loaded with leaves, but no fruit or flowers?

Answer: This could be an issue of too much fertilizer, especially with a high nitrogen content that causes too much leaf growth. It could also be a lack of proper pruning. Pruning needs to be done annually.

Photo: perfectly pruned productive grapes in Paul Zmoda’s vineyard.

Question: My yard often holds water during the summer months with all the rain. My newly planted avocados are not doing well at all. What can I do?

Answer: The general premise is that avocados need drier roots. Mangoes can handle some wet better than avocados. If there is no area of your property that remains drier, you could move them into containers, or you could remove and replant them, using mounding to keep the roots above the water line. Example of raised plantings in the Coronel's orchard.



Photo: Denise Provencher

Question: What is the best potting mix for containerized fruiting plants?

Answer: Many of Club's experts mix their own with ingredients specifically aimed for the plants being potted. Any bagged mix available at the big box stores with good drainage and organic matter should be suitable, either straight from the bag, or mixed with compost, perlite, or other additives to achieve desired texture.

Question: What causes premature fruit fall from mangoes?

Answer: In Florida's wet, humid weather, a fungus could be suspect. Copper may help that. If sticky black residue is seen, and ants on the branches, it could be an insect. Neem, or soap oil will help with this.



Photo: Denise Provencher

Question: A few of my grape leaves have these structures on them. What are they?

Answer: These are tube galls caused by a midge. They are harmless, do not affect the fruit, and usually not many leaves. You may pick off and destroy the affected leaves, no other control should be necessary.

EDIBLES TO PLANT IN SEPTEMBER

	North	Central	South
 Easily Survives Transplanting	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Endive/Escarole, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Strawberry, Swiss Chard	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive/Escarole, Kale, Lettuce, Peppers, Strawberry, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes	Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive/Escarole, Kale, Lettuce, Peppers, Sweet Potatoes, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes
 Survives Careful Transplanting	Carrots, Celery, Mustard, Spinach	Carrots, Celery, Mustard, Spinach	Carrots, Mustard
 Use Seeds	Beans (bush, pole), Onions (bulb, green, shallots), Radish, Squash (summer, winter), Turnips	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cucumbers, Onions (green, shallot), Radish, Squash (summer, winter), Turnips	Beans (bush, pole, lima), Cucumbers, Okra, Onions (green, shallot), Peas (southern), Squash (summer, winter), Turnips



UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Gardening SOLUTIONS

For more information, please visit GardeningSolutions.ifas.ufl.edu

∞ Club Notes ∞



REMINDER OF DUES PAYMENT DATES

All members: During the Covid crisis, all memberships were extended for one year as the Club could not meet during that time. Your new due date for payment of dues membership is on the mailing label for your newsletter if you receive by mail, or is part of your email if you receive by electronic means. Please use this new date for your renewals. If you have any questions, please contact the membership chairperson at the meetings, or at bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com

There are several members looking for black Surinam cherry seeds, Roselle and green yard long beans. If anyone has any extra seeds available to share, please bring them to the seed table..

Seeking Citrus rootstock: need 2-3 rootstock suitable for citrus grafting. Contact: Louis Schulman schulman1@verizon.net

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: **September 22nd.**

∞ 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



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.
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