



RFCI

April 2022

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 ∞

Plant Sale



April 9th and 10th: USF Plant Sale – The University of Florida Spring Plant Sale is here, and our Club will have a booth there selling plants. This event has always been a great fund-raiser for the Club, and a great opportunity to meet other fruit lovers, and pick up some plants for your garden. Volunteers are needed!!! **See next page for more information.**

Note: There is no regular meeting in April at the American Legion.

∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Maria Marcet Tampa

Bud Mucha St. Petersburg



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

More information on the plant sale:

Volunteers are needed!!



Friday October 8th - Please arrive at the USF Gardens for 1:00pm to help set up our booth. We need help with unloading and inventory of incoming plants, setting up tables, installing the canopy and fence, as well as the Club's beautiful display and sign.

Saturday October 9th, and Sunday October 10th, please arrive early, before the 9am opening time, to ensure everything is ready for the sale. During the sale hours, help is needed to assist in sales, answering questions, manning the new membership table, manning the display, selling juice, and just chatting with customers.

Sunday October 10th, help is needed to dismantle the set-up, load the trailer, inventory remaining plants, and clean up the area.

After the sale, all remaining plants will be available to members who helped at the sale at a discounted price. Those who volunteer both days get a free shirt!

Note: If you are selling plants, remember – no citrus – they must be plants that you grew on your own. All plants must be correctly identified and labeled including price. Cultural information is very helpful to buyers.

If you sell, you must plan on staying at the sale for the entire two days to answer questions about your plants.

Remember to please price your plants accordingly, as 10% of the sale price goes to the Club, and 20% to USF.

If you arrive at the Plant Sale for volunteering, and need verification to gain entry at the gate, please call Paul Branesky at his cell phone, 727-515-6073. Please make sure you have this number with you.



Experiences and Experiments with Fruit



Steve Curcura

At the March meeting, Steve Curcura of Fruitscapes Nursery in Bokeelia, Florida spoke about his favorite fruits, many worldly searches for new varieties, and the trials and tribulations of trying new plants in the Bokeelia climate.

Steve has been fascinated with all things fruit since he was very young, and this interest has taken him to many exciting places, to experience a wide variety of cultures, and learn about the history of fruits, and how breeding and selection has resulted in many of our favorite fruits today.

Much of what we enjoy today when we bite into that large juicy piece of fruit is the result of much selection, hybridizing, and crossing to bring out the most desirable characteristics. Humans have been engaged in this process for over 10,000 years. There is evidence of specialized breeding of figs that goes back 11,000 years, apples – 10,000 years, and mangoes for 5,000 years.

The complex process to develop fruit with desirable characteristics is a very long process, waiting many years for fruit from trees grown from seed, often 8-10 years. There are good and bad results.

Some plants, such as mangoes have the capability to create a new variety with each and every seed. The resulting plant from any given mango seed will be uniquely genetically different, so the fruit resulting can be a surprise.

Other fruits, such as lychee are very difficult to hybridize from seed. Grafting is the best option to preserve a tree with desirable characteristics.

One experiment Steve did with lychees went horribly wrong. After waiting an excruciating 8 years for fruit, the resulting fruit were terribly sour. The entire 80 tree experiment was a failure.

Cacao has proven to be an interesting and successful experiment for Steve. His trees are now producing a rainbow of colored fruits in the tropical weather of Pine Island.

But, some fruits do not like Pine Island weather, such as the Pawpaw. This incredible delicious native member of the Annona family must have some cool hours to produce fruit, and just are not happy that far south in Florida.

Steve is sure to continue trekking through jungles, experiencing cultural uses of fruits, and bringing home new ideas to experiment with here in Florida.

If you would like to visit Fruitscapes, stop by and say hello to Steve, and his partner Jesse Avalos, and of course get some fresh fruit or trees, here is the website: <https://fruitscapesllc.com/>



Contact information:

Fruitscapesmcc@gmail.com

12870 Stringfellow Road, Bokeelia,
Florida 33922

(239) 218-2848

Tom Shaefer (L), speaker Steve Curcura, and Paul Branesky (R)
making sure all the equipment is ready for the meeting.
Photo: George Campani

☞ What's Happening ☜

by Paul Zmoda

That's right!!! Thirty years of monthly newsletter articles without missing a deadline. I hope my readers have stayed informed and entertained.

The January freeze was pretty bad here – lots of damage still being assessed. Our grafted Black Sapote gave us its only fruit and it was quite tasty, not quite chocolate, but a pleasant facsimile of raw brownie dough.



A wagon full of freshly grafted persimmons.
Photo Paul Zmoda

I finally got around to starting a batch of white wine from the grapes harvested in July and stored in a freezer. Two gallons are perking away under air locks.

Our poor soursop tree was finally returned to the outdoors after spending the winter inside our laundry room. It suffered from infestations of mealy bugs, spider mites and scale insects, but was still able to deliver a nice, two pound fruit that was turned into delicious ice cream by Luisa.

My persimmon rootstock began to push new growth, so I got to grafting with all the budwood I had saved from our trees while pruning.

Photos at the meeting by George Campani



Plenty of plants for the raffle



Plenty of seeds for members

Thank you to Michelle and Madison James who rescued hundreds of cuttings from John Starnes roses before the burned home was razed. They took cuttings and dipped them in rooting hormone and then planted them in a mixture of compost with perlite. Then they watered them well and often. Once they took off, they got planted up into one gallon pots and after that they started to fertilize them with an organic 5-6-6. John Starnes favorite was Mills Magic for roses. The roses were brought to the March meeting and shared with members. For more information on John Starnes, recall the December 2020 newsletter.



Plenty of food at the buffet table

☞ Club Notes ☞

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: **April 22nd**.

Member looking for Krachai/Chinese finger root (*Boesenbergia rotunda*) If you have some extra to share, please contact Eric - Email: eric.young13@ncf.edu



Member seeking Babaco Papaya, also known as Mountain Papaya, Champagne Fruit. This hardy papaya relative with a unique, football size, effervescent fruit (hence the champagne name), must be obtained from cuttings. If you have one or two to sell, please bring in to the May meeting. Thank you.

☞ 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

Local Event



Saturday, April 16th, 9:00am to 11:00am - Third Insight Design and Nursery presents **Southern Sweet Sugar** – a workshop on *Saccharum officinarum* processing, cultivation and uses. Press and taste fresh sugarcane juice, learn how to peel it, plant the canes, extract and preserve the sugar, learn history and other uses of sugar cane. \$5 per adult. Apollo Beach Community Forest Garden, 664 Gulf and Sea Blvd., Apollo Beach



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
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Dade City, FL 33525