



# RFCI

April 2023

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 Unity North Tampa Church,  
19520 Holly Lane, Lutz, FL 33558

## ∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

**There will be no regular meeting in April. See you at the Plant Sale.**

**April 14<sup>th</sup> (for set up) and April 15 and 16 for the USF Spring Plant Sale** – one of the Club's biggest events of the year!



**Volunteers are needed** to help with setting up the Club's sales booth on Friday at 1PM, and also from 9am-3pm on both Saturday and Sunday for the big sales event. Wear your Club t-shirt. The Club will provide drinks and snacks.

See more detail about the Plant Sale on page 7.

## ∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Trish Lawton    Odessa

Paulette Balfour    Tampa

Jeff Kocher    Odessa

President: Hillary Cosenza; Vice President: Dylan Chadwell; Secretary: Jager Mitchell;  
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

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## Tomatoes in Florida

### With Dr. Gary Vallad



The March meeting featured Dr. Gary Vallad, Professor of Plant Pathology with the Gulf Coast Research Center of the University of Florida's Plant Pathology Department.

Dr. Vallad provided a very well detailed presentation on how the home gardener can enjoy growing tomatoes, with lots of great techniques for dealing with diseases when growing tomatoes.

Slides discussing the various diseases were presented, with plenty of pictures. Tomatoes are one of the most popular vegetables - (really, it is a fruit) to grow.

Here are some important take-away tips for your best growing!

Florida's wet, humid climate makes perfect conditions for a myriad of viruses, bacterial infections, blights, rots, wilts, fungi, and insects to challenge any grower of tomatoes.

There are many ways to reduce these problems, although they can never be eliminated. Once in the ground, the pathogens shall remain.

Pathogens can start with seed. Choose seed from reputable sources to reduce chances of bringing something bad into your garden. The seed companies do check all batches of seed, but of course, they cannot check every single seed. A hot water bath at 85 degrees will kill surface pathogens, but this can be tricky as different varieties of tomatoes are sensitive to different temperatures. The seed must be planted immediately after a heat treatment.



Select varieties of seeds and plants that have resistance to certain diseases. This information is provided on the seed label or catalog description. Heirlooms have not developed resistance to many of the pathogens in the environment, and may develop problems more readily in our climate.

Plant seeds and plants at the right time of year. Timing is everything! Start in September for a fall crop, or Jan/Feb for a spring crop. Don't try to grow in the wetness of summer.

Grow your plants from seed whenever possible.

When choosing tomato plants at the store, carefully examine them for any signs of disease. Bringing home plants with pathogens is one of the biggest sources of problems for the home gardener. It takes 7-10 days from infection to visible symptoms.

Keep plants (above ground parts – leaves, fruits, stems) as dry as possible to avoid splashing of water on leaves. Use drip irrigation, hand watering directly to the soil, even cover plants under a tunnel to keep the plant dry from rain.

Clean up tomato leaf litter. Do not compost it.

Do not touch plants when wet! That will increase spreading of disease. Water is what is needed for pathogens to spread. Even dew and fog create the environment needed for pathogen growth!

Remove and dispose in a sealed trash bag any leaves or plant material that appears diseased.

Use large planting tubs or buckets rather than planting in the ground.

For larger crops, a minimum of a 7-year crop rotation helps when planting in the ground.

Neem is excellent for powdery mildew, a pathogen that bucks the trend and prefers to thrive in dry weather.

Eggshells around your plants will provide the extra calcium needed to reduce blossom end rot.

There are a number of safe, organic pesticides to help reduce the vector insects that bring problems with them, such as aphids, white fly, and thrips. Keep ahead of the bugs!

Increase spacing of plants.

These pathogens will not affect you; the fruit can still be consumed safely. Just trim away affected sections, or peel unsightly areas.

**Dr. Gary Vallad - Gulf Coast Research Center**  
**813-419-6670**  
**gvallad@ufl.edu**



## ☞ What's Happening ☜

by Paul Zmoda

The threat of frost is over for another year and things are really happening here. Loquats have made some nice crops. The jaboticaba gave us about three or four pounds of those tasty, attractive fruit. They ripen quickly and don't keep well unless you freeze them.

As the weather got warmer, I made lots of air-layers using several methods. Pomegranate, olives, starfruit, and longans are some I started. I also went crazy grafting. I did field and bench grafts of persimmons, free grafts of grapes to be rooted as the next step, and some genetically different grumichama scions were added to my large tree which never sets fruit, despite being very healthy, profusely flowering and attracting plenty of bees. I believe it is not self-fertile, so by adding the different budwood, I hope cross pollination occurs later on.

Most interesting of all is grafting some Italian medlar scions onto an old loquat tree. I had already proved this possible twenty years ago, but now my goal is to eventually make new medlar trees with fresh scions grafted onto new loquat seedling rootstocks.



Jaboticabas – photo Paul Zmoda

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## Special thanks for Citrus Trees

At the March meeting, there was a special separate raffle for a very nice selection of citrus trees. These trees were provided to the Club for the Fair and then to raffle off to lucky members.



The 3 nurseries providing “Citrus Sleeves” for the Citrus Celebration at the Florida State Fair for 2023, and for our Club were:

1. Southern Nurseries in Dundee, FL
2. Citrific Nursery in Lake Wales, FL
3. Blue Heron Nursery in Winter Garden, FL

The above nurseries sell plants wholesale by the thousands to citrus growers throughout Florida. The rootstocks are grown specifically for the growers according to their particular soil types. The scions (variety or top part) are grown with input from the growers and what they believe will be a beneficial product for them. Plant labels provide this information. These plants are not typically available to the public, but are graciously donated to Tampa RFCI for our organization’s use at the Citrus Celebration and for our members. We sincerely thank them for sharing their plants with us!

The “Tree Defender” demonstration materials that are used in “CUPS” (Citrus Under Protective Screens) programs were provided by Southern Nurseries. They are available direct to the consumer.

Contact: <https://thetreedefender.com/contact/> .

Website: <https://southerncitrusnurseries.com/> .



These materials are recommended for use to keep Asian Citrus Psyllids from infecting our trees with the bacteria causing HLB (Citrus Greening Disease). We may be able to obtain some used materials at a later date and discount price. We will explain in a later article how to set up the cover on your young plants. Don’t forget, we can grow citrus with the greening disease within and still get quality fruit!

We also want to sincerely thank the University of Florida Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) in Lake Alfred, Florida for their continued yearly support in providing educational materials for our use at the Florida State Fair and for our club members. Several of our members participate in many events with CREC in Lake Alfred throughout each year, learning from professors, speakers, and “citrus tastings” at meetings. Most of our citrus displays are provided by the citrus arboretum in Lake Alfred which was decimated years ago, but now recovering well. They have a large greenhouse system developed for the CUPS program. We also attend Agricultural events throughout the year in different areas of the state. If you would like more information about attending these events, please contact George Campani or Tom Schaefer.

Special thanks also to all our volunteers who helped with the “Tampa RFCI Citrus Celebration” at the 2023 Florida State Fair! Without you, we cannot celebrate and share our knowledge of citrus to the public!

Tom Schaefer

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## More information on the plant sale:

### Volunteers are needed!!

**Friday April 14<sup>th</sup>** - Please arrive 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 April 15<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday April 16<sup>th</sup>, during the sale hours**, help is needed to assist in sales, answering questions, manning the new membership table, manning the display, and just chatting with customers.

**Sunday April 16<sup>th</sup>**, after the sale, help is needed to dismantle the set-up, load the trailer, inventory remaining plants, and clean up the area.

Please contact **call/email George at 813-743-6549** if you can help out in any way, and let him know what days and times you are available. After the sale, all remaining plants will be available to members who helped at the sale at a discounted price.

**Note:** Members are encouraged to bring fruiting plants that they have raised to the plant sale if they wish. If you are selling plants, you must plan on remaining at the sale 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. These must be plants that you grew on your own (**no citrus**).

All plants must be healthy, no disease or insects, properly identified and labeled. Cultural information is very helpful to buyers. You may bring your plants Friday afternoon, or before the 9am opening time on Sat/Sun. **Please use the plant manifest on page 7.**



**Note: Due to new regulations, there will be no juice sales this year.**

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## ∞ Club Notes ∞



It's time for elections!!!! Be at the May meeting to throw your hat in the ring to express your interest in running for available board positions. Normally elections are held in March, but with the urgency of needing to find a new meeting location, this process was put aside until the next meeting of the general membership, which is in May.

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](mailto:bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com)  
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **April 22nd**.

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### Important - Change in meeting location!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Please read!

Continuing with the May meeting, and for the foreseeable future, Club meetings will be at the following location.

Unity North Tampa Church  
19520 Holly Lane  
Lutz, FL 33558

Unity North Tampa Church is right off North Dale Mabry Highway, just north of Tampa, and easily reachable from all major highways such as I75, 275, Route 41, or 589.

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## ∞ 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

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***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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Tampa Bay RFCI  
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