



The Fruit Leaf



April
2010

<http://www.crfg.org>

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Next Meeting

April 10, 2010

Emma Prusch Park
Social and set-up 12:30
Meeting 1pm to 4pm

Three Speakers in April!

If you've ever wanted to build your own tree, here's your chance to learn how to do it, at the annual green scionwood exchange and April CRFG meeting. This month, CRFG is lucky to be hosting three citrus experts at Prusch Park, starting at 1:00 in the afternoon on April 10th.

Fixing what goes wrong

If you've ever had a citrus or avocado tree that didn't do well, it might not have been your fault. You might have just picked the wrong variety for your conditions. Master gardener Nancy Garrison will talk about which citrus varieties are best for Bay Area microclimates.

And if you need to know what's eating your orange tree, Aaron Dillon of Four Winds Nursery might be able to help. He'll give a talk about a myriad of citrus diseases and healthy cultivation practices.

Build it yourself

But perhaps the most interesting facet of the meeting is the green scionwood exchange, where you can find rare varieties of oranges, lemons, avocados, guavas, sapotes, loquats, passion fruit, cherimoyas, Surinam cherries and a host of other evergreen fruit trees.

Then you can watch Dan Wiley, a CRFG member who lives in the South County and has had a lot of personal experience with citrus grafting, show you how to put your scions together using his grafting techniques.

Lindcove Fun and Takeaways: Why BO is Better than TB

by Victoria Tran Sood

It was time to play and time to learn on the sunny, cool Saturday morning of January 16, 2010. I, along with ten other members of the Santa Clara Chapter, joined 35-40 other CRFG fellows and fruit enthusiasts at the University of California Lindcove Research and Extension Center in Exeter, California to taste and pick our favorite citrus for two hours.

The rules were simple: 1) use only hands to remove fruits from trees—no cutting devices such as knives or scissors of any kind; 2) get out when time is up.

We met at the prep talk room at 10 am. While waiting for the talk to begin, Sini Falkowski, a walking encyclopedia on fruits, explained the myth and facts about **the effects that pummelos and grapefruits can have on certain cholesterol medications**. (Some people who have combined certain statins with these fruits or their juices have had severe side effects, including kidney failure.) See the following URLs for more information:

* http://chemgroups.ucdavis.edu/~shaw/CHE_150_2008/DHC-Website/Bergamottin_MurphyJ.pdf

* <http://cholesterol.about.com/od/statindrugs/a/grapefruitstat.htmwww>

* <http://drugs.emedtv.com/simvastatin/simvastatin-and-grapefruit.html>

The prep talk was succinct. At the end of the talk we were given a map that would lead us to each of the 180 varieties, and were immediately led to the demonstration block.

I was fortunate to join up with Dan Willey, who let me shadow him. Dan and I then met up with Nancy Garrison, another walking encyclopedia on fruits. Nancy moved swiftly through the varieties and Dan and I could not keep up, so we were on our own.

Dan glanced at the map and within few seconds he found our bearings, and strategized a route to his targeted varieties. Here's what we found:

* We started with the kumquats: The **W. Murcot** mandarin, **Indio mandarinquat**, **Nordman seedless kumquat**, and **Nagami**. **Nagami** was too sour for my liking. The others were okay—nothing spectacular—but I picked some anyway.

* Dan reminisced about the sweet lemon juice in India that had no added sweetener; the sweetness came from the lemon. To quench Dan's curiosity about **sweet lemons**, we tasted the **Millsweet lemon** and **Mary Ellen sweet lime**. Both fruits were bland and had little flavor. We thought the fruits might be better for juicing, so we picked a few.

* Some of the mandarins were delicious but nothing to write home about. The **Satsuma mandarins—China S series** (S-1, etc.), **Miho Wase Satsuma**, **Xie Shan Satsuma**—lacked flavor and sweetness. The **SRA 92 Clementine** also had room for improvement. Dan said the **Pixie** at Riverside tasted better.

* The **Gold Nugget**, **Honey Mandarin**, and **Nuts Clementine** were tasty but not exciting. If I had to choose a favorite, the prize would go to Gold Nugget.

- * The **Reinking pummelo** had thick, rough looking skin, conical shape, and was juicy and sweet but nothing spectacular. The **Cocktail pummelo hybrid** had a subtle flavor and was slightly sweet.
- * The **Oroblanco** grapefruit tasted like a pummelo, had a blooming flower fragrance, rich flavor, tender texture, and was juicy, subtly sweet, seedless. The seeds were so small that they did not interfere with easy eating.
- * The **Chandler pummelos** had a pinkish color with large seeds. In the field, Chandler pummelo was more flavorful than the Oroblanco. When I tasted them at home, the Oroblanco was superior in taste and texture. Maybe the Chandler I tasted at home was not ready.
- * The **Cara Cara** navel oranges looked beautiful and tasted decent but was not sweet. A more knowledgeable fruit enthusiast named Dick told us the Cara Cara was not ready.
- * The **Tarocco Blood** (TB) oranges juicy and had tender texture with subtle sweetness; it would be great for juicing.
- * The **Moro blood orange** had a beautiful color, nice texture and subtle sweetness.
- * The **Boukhobza orange** (BO) looked like blood orange and was very sweet with slight tartness. I would rather have BO over TB any day. (Sorry for the fruit pun.)

About fifteen minutes after noon, we received a car horn signal that we needed to get out of the demonstration block and head back to the prep talk room. My prize after two hours in the demonstration block was two full trash bags of 24 varieties of citrus.

We regrouped at the prep room for a light lunch. Afterwards, around 10 people went to the post party at Martin and Eva Bergheuis' home. Martin went out of his way to show us the citrus varieties not available in the demonstration block at Lindcove.

- * At Martin's garden I found my favorite kumquat, **Fukushu**; the peel was thick and sweet (yes, sweet with no bitter taste) and had perfume fragrance that does not overwhelm your senses, but the juice sac (I learned this scientific term from the Internet) was too sour for eating as a snack.
- * **Shamouti** orange was a treat, juicy and sweet.
- * Most impressive to me was the **Yuzu** orange, whose fragrance refreshed and rejuvenated your senses.
- * Martin also showed us his exotic fruit trees: **hog plum**, **Monstera deliciosa** (I could not appreciate this fruit), **Gotu Kola**, **jujube**, and **guava**. I had to drive back to the Bay Area, so I bid farewell before the tour ended.
- * Martin's **Cocktail grapefruit** looked different from the one at Lindcove. Martin's Cocktail resembled a large orange, while the one at Lindcove resembled a pummelo.
- * The **Thong Dee pummelo** at Martin's farm was delicious, sweet and dripping juicy. When I tasted the Thong Dee at Martin's garden, I was convinced that Thong Dee was the best pummelo I had tasted so far. But when I tasted the Thong Dee and **Oroblanco** at home, Oroblanco outperformed the Thong Dee. Perhaps the Thong Dee I tasted at home was not ready. For now, the Oroblanco is my favorite pummelo.



The Banana Report—From Fremont and San Jose

By Lisa Stapleton

Last winter, I wrote about new advances in growing bananas in cold climates. also promised updates “later.” Well, it’s now later, the winter is over, and it’s time to assess which bananas made it through the winter with the least damage. I’d planted as many of the most cold-hardy bananas I could find, from Joe Real’s cold-hardy list, available on the cold-hardy forum at bananas.org. Joe had observed which of his 85 different varieties of bananas made it through the winter outside, in Davis, Calif., and ranked them from most cold hardy to least, based on damage sustained, as follows:

- California Gold (most cold hardy)
- Thousand Fingers
- Monkey Fingers
- Orinoco
- Brazilian
- Golden Rhinohorn
- Dwarf Orinoco
- Dwarf Brazilian
- Misi Luki
- Mysore
- Namwah
- Rajah Puri (best tasting but often “chokes”)
- Manzano
- Ice Cream
- Gold Finger
- Dwarf Namwah
- Sweetheart (FHIA 3, best tasting cavendish, cold hadiest among the cavendish types)
- Namwah Pearl
- Praying Hands
- Saba
- Cardaba
- Williams
- Belle
- *Valery

During the worst freeze, in December, I pulled a few of the plants inside, but they were otherwise left in 24-inch pots on our upstairs balcony, which is about 175 square feet, located over our insulated garage.

They don’t get as cold there as they would if they were permanently planted in the garden. Even so, I had four young Dwarf Cavendish plants, and every single one shriveled back and appears to have rotted. Other plants, such as **Super Dwarf** and **Kandarian** died back, but their roots felt firm, and they are coming back, sending out fresh green growth in early March. **Gold Finger**, **Lady Finger**, **Thousand Fingers**, **Monkey Fingers** and **Saba** got by with minimal damage, just a little leaf browning on a few leaves. But the real “stars” were **Dwarf Orinoco** and **California Gold**. They quit growing from December through February, but that’s all. They are extremely cold hardy, with California Gold perhaps staying a little bit greener and resuming growth a bit earlier than Dwarf Orinoco.

Of course, my bananas are still quite young; except for **Dwarf Orinoco**, they just survived their first winter. Dwarf Orinoco has survived two. So there was a point before they started to push again when I was feeling kind of low. You know the feeling. You’ve got a lot of young trees that have been in the dirt a year or two, and a part of you thinks that you’ll *never* see fruit from those trees.

This year, though, visiting a Fremont garden of one of our members, **Bill Merrill**, “cured” me. He had several huge stands of bananas—maybe taking up about a 200-square-foot patch—planted in the dirt in the middle of his yard. They were all **Sweetheart**, **Ice Cream**, and **Orinoco**, and while they’d had some leaf damage, they had more than a half dozen huge bunches of bananas. They also towered over the roof line. Bill says that once they got started, they had little frost damage. He says that he and his wife eat fresh bananas much of the year.

I left with a Sweetheart corm that must have weighed 40 pounds, a small Ice Cream plant in a five-gallon tub, and a renewed optimism that I’ll eventually harvest a crop half as good as Bill’s. Thanks, Bill.



Fruit-tour tip: Bring extra bags

When I was at Lindcove, my small backpack became heavy and full with fruits. This was my first fruit picking and I’d foolishly thought that a small dayhike backpack would be sufficient to carry the prize I picked. Fortunately, Dan was more experienced and had brought extra trash bags to rescue novices such as myself. Next time, I will be more prepared.

Master Gardeners Victory Garden 2.0 Event

By Lisa Stapleton

The Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County will be celebrating Victory Garden 2.0, the annual Master Gardener Spring Garden Market, on Saturday, April 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at San Jose's History Center. (Yes, it's the same day as our meeting. Maybe go early to their sale around 9:00, then scoot on over to our meeting by 1:00?)



Spurred on by the grow-local movement and the most serious recession since the Great Depression, thousands of Bay Area residents have followed Michelle Obama's lead and started growing some of their own produce.

But their best-laid plots often encounter the unexpected—varieties that don't perform well here, surprise visits from pests, and sometimes more work than anyone had counted on. That's why the Master Gardeners will also be holding workshops and mini how-to demonstrations at the upcoming event, which will feature sales of ornamental plants and herbs, as well as food-bearing plants.

Getting the most out of the sale

- * Be sure to bring something to protect your car's interior from water and dirt.

- * If you are interested in saving seed from one year to the next, ask for "open-pollinated seeds," "non-hybrids," or "seeds that breed true."

- * The Master Gardeners operate a "plant-check," similar to a coat-check, for plants that you've already purchased, so that you don't have to haul them around while doing further shopping.

- * After the show, if you need help, the Master Gardener's Web site has lots of articles, resources, videos, and even telephone and email hotlines. Check out <http://www.mastergardeners.org/scc.html>.

- * Get there early, so you can get the best plant selection. Hundreds of people attend each year, so demand is usually high. "We got there toward the end of the plant sale one year, and there wasn't a lot left," says Loren Hart, who attended a recent Master Gardener plant sale. "As one of our family members is famous for saying, 'You have to get there early to get the best stuff, before the hoarders do,'" he says.



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