



The Fruit Leaf

Santa Clara Valley Chapter



July/August
2005

California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc.

Notes from Corrie



Saeko hard at work

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Firstly, I want to thank Bob Allen for processing our newsletter for a long time. At times he had editorial help from Todd Kennedy, thanks Todd. Both these two fruit growers felt that they needed a break and as luck would have it Sue Conde was ready to offer help to continue this task. This issue is the first by Sue. It is wonderful and we applaud Sue.

We are fortunate that Bill Grimes the President of CRFG, Inc., will join us for the August 6th meeting. We will ask Bill to give us a summary of the status and health of CRFG, Inc., and to discuss the upcoming FESTIVAL OF FRUIT in Santa Cruz.

A big issue at the next meeting will be FESTIVAL OF FRUIT, which will be held in Santa Cruz in September. A lot of relevant information has been sent to all members plus the latest *Fruit Gardener* has information and application forms. Please sign up for this event; it is such a wonderful opportunity for us, not to be missed,

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2005 Festival of Fruit

2005 FESTIVAL OF FRUIT - summary
Tuesday September 6th-Saturday September 10th, 2005

REGISTRATION: Registration forms will appear simultaneously on the websites (www.nafex.org & www.crfg.org) and in the *Fruit Gardener* around July 1st. See instructions on the registration form for mailing and payment. However, the form does not mention PayPal but this option is available for on-line payment. Forms can be sent to Bill Grimes at 66 Farragut Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94112. Also, the forms Registration packets may be picked up early at the following locations:

- **Monday** - Idell Weydemeyer's in El Sobrante (1.5 miles from the Pinole Motel 6), just off Highway 80, on the way to the Tuesday Wolfskill tour. Pick up packets from 2:30-5:00 p.m. or call 510-223-6291 if you are traveling through earlier.
- **Wednesday am & pm**-Prusch Park, at the car pool site at 8:00-9:00 am and 4:30-6:30 at the picnic.
- **Wednesday pm**-UC Santa Cruz Conference center (8:00-9:30 pm). Signs will be posted for the location.
- **Thursday pm**-UC Santa Cruz Conference center (7:00-9:00 pm).

Pistachio, Pistachio, Where Art Thou? *By Marc Schuyler*



Photo by D. Kerbow
<http://www.ars-grin.gov/ars/PacWest/Davis/pistacia.html>

Prompted by inability to find pistachio trees at local nurseries, one of our members contacted several commercial sources for pistachio trees, and here's what we learned.

There is very strong demand in new plantings, a trend that has now been around for several years with no apparent end in sight. The pistachio industry is quite small (only 3 major nurseries) and less than 100,000 acres planted. With limited deliveries of water to irrigation districts, many California growers are shifting to permanent crops, i.e., from cotton, tomatoes, and melons, to tree crops, as these require less water. This is one of many factors driving the pistachio tree demand at this time; the bottom line is that trees are, and will continue to be, hard to find at both retail and commercial nurseries.

Advance orders for trees can be placed for delivery in late winter - 2007 for trees at about \$17 per tree (\$20-25 with shipping included). Most nurseries are in the southern central valley, in or near Kern County, and trees that are shipped are bare root and have fairly short viability outside of the ground (rooted trees tend to have a greater success rate and for this reason, pickup is probably better for the trees than shipment). To order trees, a 25% deposit and 10 trees is the smallest minimum order we could find.

We plan on continuing to keep an eye out for local retail source of pistachio trees, and will report that to the membership if and when we find it – if you find such a source, or if you think you might want to participate in a group order, please reply to marc_schuyler@yahoo.com so that he can get size up interest in a possible group order.

Notes from Corrie, *cont. from page 1*

since it is so close by. We have invited a few leading organizers of the Conference to attend our meeting to also speak to us.

This FESTIVAL is being arranged with our Chapters participation; we therefore, have to participate in the work at the Conference as volunteers. Information about the tasks for which help is required was sent to you. Please look at it and let Sarah know where you would like to help. We will of course also talk about this at our August meeting.

The meeting will include a potluck lunch; see the notes inside by Saeko who is organizing it. Our program will be by Nancy Garrison who will moderate a round table discussion in which members will share, briefly, interesting experiences growing fruit, which ought to be very educational and interesting for all of us.

Bring with you things like tools and plants or other horticulture related stuff that you no longer need but may still be useful by others to be sold at the white elephant sale, which we will hold that day. You may donate all or at least 10%, or may be 100% of the proceeds to CRFG. It would be nice to have a few dollars with you so as not to miss out on any bargains. We may also have interesting plants for sale by Katie and Steve.

Business wise we will arrange for a nominating committee to nominate the Board Members for the next two years starting January 2006. Consider this topic and be ready to volunteer for the job or to nominate someone else, but be sure to get the someone else's agreement before nominating.

Looking forward to seeing you all, in particular new members who never attended before. Doors open at noon to start talking, bragging and trading. The potluck will start at 1:00 PM, Saturday, August 6.

Feel free to bring along guests who are fruit enthusiasts.

2005 Festival of Fruit

(MANY) Volunteers needed for 2005 Festival of Fruit September 6th-10th.

UC Conference Center in Santa Cruz 1 (866) 827-2466 (\$99 rooms for CRFG & NAFEX)
(See www.crfg.org and www.nafex.org for details soon.)

Schedule

Tours: Tuesday 6th - Wolfskill; Wednesday 7th - seven in the Santa Clara area & two in Santa Cruz; Thursday 8th -eleven near Watsonville; Friday 9th - four tours in the Santa Cruz area.

Speakers: Three on Friday (start 1:00 pm); 22 on Saturday five concurrently at each time slot (start 9:00 am)

VOLUNTEERS

PRE-CONFERENCE REGISTRATION: Bill Grimes receives/records registration. I. Weydemeyer assigns tours, sends confirmations with tour tickets. Help needed with confirmation mailings.

ON-SITE REGISTRATION: Sarah Sherfy, Chair. Help needed: Hand out reg envelopes Fri & Sat (for approximately 3-5 hours daily, some during speaker time); Hand out at hotel Thurs evening; Stuff name tags and meal tickets in registration envelopes (mostly done at least two weeks before conference).

TREASURER: Jeffrey Wong, Chair

WEBSITE SET UP: Gail Morrison chair for CRFG. Katherine Pyle & Bill Grimes assisting. Dave Ulmer chair for NAFEX.

HARD COPY MATERIALS: Katherine Pyle & Gail Morrison design tickets and program. Need volunteers to print these, take to Registration Chair and Conference site.

VENDORS: K. Pyle contacts vendors, assigns spaces, and answer questions. Need on-site person Friday & Saturday to help the vendors find spaces.

TROPHY COMPETITION: Need a chair and committee to select winners. Competition theme focuses on the quality of CRFG chapter activity in the community.

TOURS: I. Weydemeyer chair, local coordinators-- Ray Sheehy-Woodside, Nancy Garrison-Santa Clara area, Chuck Rust-Watsonville & Santa Cruz. Need a volunteer on site at every tour to take tickets/ensure guest enter and leave at right time. Most sites have two tours. (About 40 volunteers needed.) Need someone to write directions for some tours.

HOSPITALITY: Chair & committee needed to staff a hospitality room at the hotel on Thursday evening.

FRUIT SHOOT: Someone to hang winning photos.

LOGISTICS: Direct people to parking areas.

FOOD TICKETS. Collect tickets for Fri & Sat box lunches, Friday dinner and two fruit tastings.

SPEAKERS: For each speaker (approximately 26), one volunteer to give introduction and one to monitor time/find help if equipment breaks down (can be the same person).

COORDINATORS ("trouble shooters"): On Fri and Sat, assist with projector set up; Sit at lobby table (one person for each speaker time period) to handle issues (broken projector, people speaking loudly in hall, etc) or send for Bill or Idell .

TASTING: Chairperson and volunteers needed. Buy fruit or find donations; cut and hand out fruit.

SIGNS: Produce & place signs for parking lots, vendor areas, lists of speakers on doors, etc.

Perks: There may be garden & orchard tours prior to the conference arranged specifically for people who volunteers for any task.

To volunteer, please contact the chairpersons below as well as your chapter chair.

Bill Grimes (co-chair) wagrimes@sonic.net 415-469-0966

Idell Weydemeyer (co-chair) iwgarden@sbcglobal.net 510-223-6291

Sarah Sherfy (registration) sherfy@us.ibm.com 408-846-5373

Katherine Pyle (Hard copies, vendors) kpyle@sonic.net 510-843-1657

Mushroom Compost, by David Sarasua



One of the joys of living in the bay area is that this is one of the largest mushroom growing regions in the United States. Now you ask why is this a joy? If you live next to a mushroom farm, they produce a smell that can only be described as very unpleasant. Well, I love to garden and happen to have clay soil. Actually, I should say, that I had clay soil. I now garden in pure mushroom compost.

I am fickle when it comes to gardening. What I plant somewhere today; I usually will dig up and plant somewhere else in the future. I am not sure why I do this, but I do. I think I get a pleasure in dealing with the soil. Anyway, when I first bought the house, I thought if I would turn the soil and add a bit of gypsum, my soil would be nice and fluffy. I'm not sure where I heard this, but it was advice that I heard time and time again.

I borrowed a rototiller and wanted to turn 12 inches of soil. Well even the rototiller that I borrowed, a real beast, could only go down six inches. So I rototilled six inches and used a shovel to till the other six inches by hand. I did not know how much gypsum to add so I added about 100 bags to my back yard. It was not real expensive and I really wanted my soil to be fluffy. Boy, was I wrong. One good rain and the material would revert back to its same hard character.

A friend of mine was having his house torn down. He asked me if I wanted some of the plants, as they were all going to be replaced. My neighbor and I went over in my pickup truck and we proceeded to dig out these plants. This soil was the same clay that I had at one time. We broke two indestructible shovels from Home Depot. These were the fiberglass shovels that have a limited lifetime guarantee...limited to what you use them for and how you use them. When I bought the house, I had to dig a hole to mount a mailbox. It took about four hours to dig that hole. I finally borrowed an electric jackhammer. Gardening in clay is not a pleasure.

Driving around the neighborhood, I noticed these ugly raised beds in the parking strips. Why would anyone do such an ugly thing? Answer: the clay soil was so hard that it was easier to bring in six inches of soil than to deal with the material.

Well, getting back to mushroom compost. Clay weighs about 2,000 lbs. per cubic yard and it has a high cohesion level...it binds with itself. A friend of mine who operates a backhoe states that clay is considered bedrock for grading. I think having a house built on a clay foundation is great, but as a foundation for gardening, I was not pleased. Mushroom compost weighs 500 lbs. per cubic yard and has a much lower cohesion level.

There is a simple pie pan test where you take the material in your garden and mix it with any amendment to determine how much of that amendment you should add. Take ten pie pans and mix your soil with an increasing 10% amendment mixture (the first one is 10%, the second is 20% and so on). Take this mixture and mix with water and let it dry. When you get a mixture that makes you happy, then you know how much to add to your garden. Now when I did this, it was not until I got to 50% before I was satisfied. Adding 50% of some amendment to my garden was not going to be an easy task. Think about this. I remember reading somewhere that the roots of most plants reside in the first twenty-four inches of your soil.

What I wanted to do was to completely remove the first twelve inches of soil and then mix the second twelve inches with some type of amendment. Economically this is difficult. I found it was cheaper to just remove all twenty-four inches and put in a potting mix. Since potting mixes range from about \$20 to \$40 a cubic yard, this was not a cheap solution. I needed a more affordable solution.

I read all I could find on soil and was amazed at the science. Did you know that loam is a combination of sand, silt and clay? In all my research on soil, I found that a number of potting mixes contained material called mushroom compost. Why were they using this product and why was it relatively inexpensive when compared to other mixes? The reason is that it is a waste product of the mushroom farms in our area. Mushrooms, actually mycelium, need organic material to colonize and produce mushrooms. After the mycelium breaks down organic material and reproduces the material is spent as far as the mushroom farm is concerned. However, this is the stage where the plant material loves the waste product. This happens in nature all the time. Fungus breaks down organic material and the plants use the material to grow.

Not knowing about this material, I decided to learn more. There was a lot of information on mushroom compost. A lot of it wrong. Just like the advice I got on adding gypsum to the garden.

Some people stated that the material was salty and hot. Now salty or hot was not the same when you talked to different people. I thought salty meant table salt and hot meant heat. When you asked people to explain what they meant by salty or hot a lot could not explain. It was something they heard but did not understand.

All fertilizers are salts. Salts are a type of chemical bonding that are unique. They are a weak bond and come apart when in solution form. For example, if you take water, specifically deionized water and test for electrical conductivity, you will find that water is not a very good conductor. We all know that water conducts electricity. Salt dissolved in water does conduct electricity.

Plants need fertilizers but are limited in how much they can deal with at any one point in time. When you first see a soil analysis, you wonder what are all these new terms such as pH, EC and CEC. The first time I saw this, I thought you had to be a scientist to read this stuff but it really is not difficult to understand. EC stands for Electric Conductivity. This is how they determine how much salt is in the material. Most plants can only tolerate an EC under 4. I was surprised to find that the EC was about 14 for most soil amendments.

Let's talk about pH for a minute. Most plants can not take up nutrients unless the pH is between 6.5 and 7.5. If the pH gets outside this range, the plant cannot absorb the nutrients. CEC stands for cation exchange capacity. Soil is negatively charged. What holds the nutrient is this charge. Most nutrients are positively charged. Some have more voltage than others and the higher the voltage the stronger they can hold on to the soil particle. Nitrogen is a very weak charge and is easily displaced by other nutrients. This is the reason that most soils are deficient in nitrogen.

All soils are not equal. Some soils have a higher negative charge than other soils therefore they can hold onto more nutrients. One of the reasons that organic material is a blessing to gardeners is that organic material has a stronger negative charge.

This is an article on mushroom compost so let's get back to it. I went down to a rockery and purchased some material and really enjoyed running my hands through it. I smelled it and it had an earthy smell. Well it turns out that there is a life form called Actinomyces. It is suppose to be part bacteria and part fungus...the scientific community in classifying fungus and bacteria did not know where this life form belongs. This life form excretes a smell that is very earthy.

After much research on mushroom compost and soil, it turns out that given certain parameters, a soil scientist can tell you if a plant will do well in a particular material, but you need to actually try the material to determine if it really can do what they say. So I planted in varying mixes of mushroom compost. Mushroom compost is sort of like wine, in that wine is a living breathing medium. I found that when I took a fresh batch of material to the soil lab, it had an EC of 14. A year later, the same material would have an EC of 6. What happened? One of the nitrogen sources that this mushroom farm would use was DPW, Dried Poultry Waste, a very nice term for chicken waste. In that particular waste was Potassium Chloride. Potassium Chloride has a low charge and is extremely water-soluble. One good rain and the medium from the stand point of EC, was very well close to what plants can tolerate.

Anyway, I tried growing in varying mixes of mushroom compost. The plants that I tried were agapanthus, vinca, onions, roses and geraniums. They all did rather well.

I was talking to a backhoe operator who gave me some prices to do some mixing. It was cheaper to dig out and replace the soil than it was to mix. So I crossed my fingers and had a part of my parking strip dug out and replaced with mushroom compost. We dug three feet down and backfilled with pure mushroom compost. After a year, I found this part of the garden was the best to garden in. the soil was a pleasure to work with.

My wife thinks this is the man's approach to gardening as she stated that she would have constantly amended the soil. The problem with this as with the computer that I use...she has her own computer but insists on using mine...is that she likes to garden in the spot that is pure mushroom compost.

My last thought on this is that mushroom compost is not the same material everywhere. Also, mushroom compost has very little to do with mushrooms except that it is the medium that is used to grow mushrooms. In understanding what a fungus is, it is a life form that decomposes organic material. After the fungus does what it needs to do, the plants just love the material. The term mushroom compost that we are discussing is called by many names. The farms called it their spent material.

Fruit slices

Keith Barton is offering Loquat white-fleshed seedlings which need to be repotted. They are about 6-inches tall. If interested contact Keith.

Payment for trees

Some members picked up trees from Doron's house before our previous (June) meeting where they were intended for sale.

We need payment for these trees at \$10.00 per tree. Please send your checks to the treasurer, Jeffrey Wong, or have it available at the August meeting.

White Elephant Sale

You may bring to the meeting, for sale, your unwanted gardening stuff and non-gardening things that may still be interesting and useful to others.

We would like this to be a fund raising for the chapter so it would be nice if you would donate the proceeds to the Chapter. However, if you would like to keep the money, that would be OK too, but then, give the Chapter at least 10% of the money collected.

We will put a table outside for the "stuff" but keep in mind that if it does not sell you have to take it back with you or lose to city garbage collectors. Please display a tempting selling price on your items, preferably before you leave home. We will also ask Katie and Steve to bring a few interesting plants for sale to the meeting.

Andy's Orchard, August 7 (Sunday) 10:00am Harvest Walk n Tour
<http://www.andysorchard.com/>

Saeko has designed the below graphic so we may cut out and use as a badge. Just write your name nice and large with a sharpie and pin to your lapel for any CRFG event.



Next Meeting

August 6, 2005
CRFG Meeting
Prusch Park in
the Meeting hall.

1:00 pm to 4:00pm



Karl sharing knowledge

Prusch Farm Park
647 South King Road
Take the King Road
exit off of Hwy.
680 just east of
Hwy. 101

We are having a special potluck lunch at noon and a round table sharing about our rare fruit growing successes and challenges. Time permitting, after we have the roundtable sharing, we may be able to also address rare fruit growing questions from the floor.

For the potluck, please bring a dish that serves about 8 people such as a salad, appetizer, main dish, dessert and of course, any fruit you've got growing that is ripe. We'd really appreciate recipes of what you have prepared, so we can try making it ourselves and because some people have restricted diets, food allergies, or wish to avoid certain foods for a variety of reasons. Please label the fruit you bring, as to what it is, variety if known and your name and city in which you live.

For the round table discussion, which Nancy Garrison will moderate, we need to keep our sharing brief and to the point; 3 – 5 minutes each for the first go round. If time permits, we can have a second round after everyone has had an initial chance to share. What we'd like to hear about are things like ... you are growing several different varieties of a fruit and have found one to be better than the others? What is it and what makes it better ... flavor, more reliable production, more attractive plant, etc.? Or maybe you've tried something new and are excited about it or not and won't grow it again because.... How about sharing about the fruit in your yard that is the most rewarding to grow and why??? Have you planted something in a special microclimate in your yard? Have you prepared your soil in a special way? What's the rarest fruit you have and how is it doing? Are you using any innovative trellising techniques that you could share with us? Bring photos if you'd like. We will probably have you display them somewhere where they can be perused after the sharing time. Maybe stick them on a sheet labeled as to what they are and your name.

Come prepared to share anything you think might be of interest or useful to other rare fruit growers. We look forward to getting to know each other a bit more.

What to bring, what to bring.....

If your last name begins with:

A-H Please bring a main dish, e.g., casseroles, noodles or meat

I -Q Please bring a side dish or salad or vegetarian dish

R-Z Please bring a dessert

Of course if you have a specialty you want to bring that doesn't fit into these guidelines, bring it by all means. There will be a microwave, a stove, and an oven available at the meeting hall for heating food, and a big refrigerator to keep the food cool.

Membership Information Address Change Notification

Chapter membership dues of \$10 for the year 2005 are now payable. For information on chapter membership, notification of address and phone number changes, please contact:

Sarah Sherfy
9140 Paseo Tranquillo
Gilroy CA 95020
408 846-5373

Newsletter

Submit articles, pictures, cartoons by email
Sue Conde
weedeater@earthlink.net
Or snail mail:
4698 Englewood Drive
San Jose CA 95129

Santa Clara County Rare Fruit Growers

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Thank you, Mike, for
helping out at Prusch

We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.crfg.org

***CRFG-Santa Clara Valley Chapter
9140 Paseo Tranquillo
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