

Southwest Florida Tropical Fruit News

covering Naples and Bonita Springs, Florida

November 2008

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Club news

COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS COUNCIL

www.collierfruit.org

The next meeting is Monday, November 17th. This month's speaker is David and Jenny Burd, owners of Friendly Burds, a tropical fruit tree maintenance business. They'll be speaking about the basics of tropical fruit tree maintenance.

The club meets the third Monday of the month, beginning at 7:00pm for socializing; 7:30pm for the program at the Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway (corner of Sunshine Blvd.), Naples.

Tasting table. Janet Puig is overseeing the tasting table. Please wash and cut up fruit before you bring it to make the whole process easier. It'd also help if you bring a sign identifying the fruit.

Membership & change of address. Yearly membership is \$25; renewals before February 1, \$15. Send checks and change of address information to Mary Fehr, c/o CFGC, 137 Debron Dr., Naples FL 34112.

Miracle fruit project. To avoid spoilage, freeze berries in a ziplock bag, 12 to a bag. When you bring berries to the club meeting, add ice and salt to preserve the berries. For more information, contact John Puig at 601-2919 or capjohn@naplesbiofuel.com.

BONITA SPRINGS FRUIT CLUB

The next meeting is Tuesday, November 11th. The speaker is Chris Rollins, manager of the Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead. He'll be delivering part 2 of his talk on tropical vegetables we can grow in Southwest Florida.

Meetings are the second Tuesday of the month, beginning at 7:30pm at the First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs (from Old 41, turn east on Crockett and left on Shriver).

Bi-monthly workshop. The workshop meets November 25th at 7:00pm at the church. **NOTE:** The board of directors will meet at 6:00pm prior to the workshop.

Membership. Yearly membership is \$15. Send checks to Tom Betts, 25071 Pennyroyal Lane, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Upcoming dates. November 8, Fall tree sale; December 1 field trip to Excalibur Nursery.

Fruit Calendar

November 11. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club meeting. 7:30pm. First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 851-4448.

November 17. Collier Fruit Growers' Council meeting. 7pm. Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples. 530-2383.

November 24. Native Plant Society meeting. 6:30pm. Naples Botanical Garden, 4820 Bayshore Dr., Naples. Use Thomasson entrance. 239-643-7275.

November 25. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club workshop. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, Bonita Springs. 851-4448.

December 1. Field Trip to Excalibur Nursery, Lake Worth. Also visiting Sundy House, Del Ray Beach. \$20. Depart 8am from Sunshine Ace Plaza, Bonita Beach Rd. Returning around 6pm. 851-4448.

December 9-11. Agricultural Conference, ECHO. 17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers 239-543-3246, www.echonet.org.

Collier Fruit Growers Council

The Collier Fruit Growers Council is an active non-profit organization dedicated to introducing, propagating and distributing the many rare tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world, as well as offering education in these areas and encouragement to extend their cultivation. CFGC functions without regard to race, color or national origin.

Field trip December 1

This is one trip you cannot miss: **Excalibur Nursery** in Lake Worth. Excalibur and owner Richard Wilson are world famous for offering an amazing assortment of fruit trees. A partial list can be seen at

www.excaliburfruittrees.com.

For those who want to purchase trees, there will be lots of room under the bus.

The bus will leave Sunshine Plaza (on Bonita Beach Road—just East of Route 41) promptly at 8am and return about 6pm. People are asked to pack their own lunch; the club will supply drinks. Excalibur has invited us to use their picnic area at the nursery.

A second stop will be Sundy House, a beautiful hotel and tropical landscape designed by Richard Wilson in Delray Beach. See page 3 for more information.

The price is \$20 per person—paid in advance. Checks are to be made out to BSTFC and turned in or mailed to either Tom Betts, Linda Coyner, or Madeline Bohannon.

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November in SW Florida

General notes:

Club elections are coming up shortly. If you enjoy the clubs, why not take an active role? Both clubs have worn out their officers and need more members to step forward.

My thanks go to Steve Brady for opening up his yard for a tour. He had quite a turnout, which included a class from FGCU. And his durian ice cream was fabulous.

I know there's no shortage of enthusiasm for fruit trees among the local clubs. Many of us, however, puzzle over how to take care of what we've got, which is why I've asked David and Jenny Burd to talk about fruit tree maintenance at the November Collier meeting.

November notes: We have another summer under our belts and the weeds to show for it. In some cases they're bigger than my fruit trees. Thank goodness there was no hurricane.

The taste of cold weather in late October wasn't just to remind you of Halloween, which it did nicely. It was a wake-up call for what's to come. Keep

Officers

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your frost cloth handy.

It's not too late to apply the last round of fertilizer for the year. Water first, then apply fertilizer at the drip line, then water again.

If you have questions about tropical fruits, email the newsletter (fruitnflowers@gmail.com). You can check with members at our monthly meetings or contact the University of Florida's Collier Extension at 353-2872 or Lee Extension at 461-7504 —*Linda Coyner, horticulturist & freelance writer*

Sundy House

Sundy House is our second stop on the December 1 field trip to Excalibur Nursery in Lake Worth. Here's some background on Sundy House and what you have to look forward to:

Sundy House is located in the heart of historic downtown Delray Beach. It's an inn and restaurant set in a restored Victorian mansion once owned by Delray Beach's first mayor and his large family.

The inn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The house is nestled within an acre of tropical gardens designed by Richard Wilson, owner of Excalibur Nursery. The garden has bubbling waterfalls, charming cul-de-sacs, bridges, gazebos and lovely brick garden paths.

Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club

The purpose is to introduce and distribute the many rare and tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world; to inform, educate and advise members and the public in the selection of these valuable tree crops, so as to encourage their cultivation. Where possible, the organization will produce a basis for researching producing new cultivars and hybrids.

Back to the pomegranate by Regina Schrambling

LA Times, September 19, 2007

EVEN in a world where food trends cycle in and out faster than art-house films at a multiplex, the career trajectory of the pomegranate has been dazzling.

Only three years ago it was a relatively esoteric fruit in this country. Then it became the juice equivalent of oat bran, then the flavor du jour of the beverage case. And now it is being made into a liqueur – Pom to Poma in less time than it takes to age a decent white wine.

What got lost in all of this forced trendiness was the original, relatively esoteric fruit, which really is one of the glories of late summer and early fall. Juice has made it more accessible, but the crimson seeds of the fresh fruit have a crystalline beauty and singular crunch well worth exploring. You don't have to drop \$5 for an over-designed pint bottle at the supermarket.

Admittedly, pomegranates are intimidating. They are the crabs of the produce aisle, wondrous to eat but a messy hassle to break down to extract that wondrousness. Since they have such a short season, though, the pleasure outweighs the pain. They never get to be a routine.

And the rewards are endless. Pomegranates are tart and crisp, which is the least you expect in fall fruit. But they are also dramatic in a way no apple or pear could ever hope to be. A handful of seeds tossed into a mesclun salad with blue cheese can elevate the whole eating experience, with color, texture, flavor and drama.

The seeds can also make a statement in soups. They're the ultimate seasonal garnish.

The trick is just to flick every seed out without catching any of the exceptionally bitter yellow pith around it. Luckily, the seeds are contained in fairly fat compartments inside each pomegranate and you just have to open the whole thing and prize them out. If you do that over a

bowful of water, the good stuff sinks and the bitter bits float, making it easier to separate the two.

Making juice from fresh pomegranates is also easier than it looks. "Chez Panisse Fruit" by Alice Waters and her team suggests a simple technique: Break open the pomegranate (with a knife if you must) and carefully separate the seeds. Using either an immersion or regular blender, liquefy the seeds and strain the juice through a sieve. "Viola!" as they say on the blogs. Two to three heavy pomegranates should yield a cup of juice.

This is a very different product from what you can buy bottled. It's thinner and naturally tarter. But even the Pom juice will work in most recipes. Most other brands seem to be the pomegranate cousin of cranberry juice cocktail, more grape juice and high-fructose corn syrup than the fruit on the label.

The juice and seeds are also very different from what Southern Californians can expect from pomegranates growing in the backyard. Most of those bushes are ornamental, and although they do yield gorgeous flowers and fruit, the latter are usually waxy rather than succulent. *[I've read that pomegranates grow well in Florida but don't fruit well. Editor]*

Pomegranates sold in stores are generally California-grown, with different varieties available from September through December.

What are widely available now are Granadas, which have light-red skins and are not supersweet; in a few weeks the seductively named Wonderfuls will arrive, the familiar large, deep-red fruit that grow progressively sweeter as the cold sets in later in fall.

You can also sometimes find boxes of pomegranate seeds at Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, but those we tasted weren't as fresh and flavor-