

# The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter  
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## 2007 – The Year of the Mango

### Mangifera indica

### Anacardiaceae



Several tropical fruit websites maintain that more mangoes than apples are eaten worldwide! That may certainly be true when one considers the population numbers in areas where mangoes grow best. Also, if one is to believe these websites, mangoes are one of the easiest tropical fruits to grow because of their adaptability to many different climates (as long as they are warm!) and growing conditions.

A member of the sumac family, (yes, the very same one as poison oak and ivy!) this Indian and Southeast Asian native is prized for its “delicious, fleshy fruit.” Botanically, it is a drupe with an outer leathery skin (exocarp), a fleshy mesocarp and a hard, stony endocarp (pit) surrounding the large seed. Mango endocarps often wash ashore on tropical beaches, probably thrown overboard from ships and boats at sea, or perhaps having traveled many hundreds of miles. In any case, the mango has spread far from its original homeland.

Because it is a member of the sumac family, its outer skin can cause a rash on a person’s mouth if it is bitten into instead of peeled. The skin is inedible, so there is no need to take a chance to see whether or not **you** are one of the unfortunate people who might have an allergic reaction. Just peel it! (There is some evidence that native born Hawaiians and Asians may be less susceptible to poison oak because of early exposure to mangoes.)

Most people (myself and Dick Pottratz **not** included) enjoy the flavor of a perfectly ripe mango, likening it in taste to a blend of ripe peaches, apricots, and pineapples. Mangoes are quite readily available commercially with the season beginning with Haitian fruits arriving as early as January, followed by Mexican fruits in February-March. However, those-in-the-know, say these earliest fruits should be avoided as they are the strain **Oro**, and they are stringy and bitter. Once the Mexican **Haden** variety starts arriving in April, the eating is good up through September or October when the Coachella Valley fruit kicks in. Brazilian mangoes

begin arriving about October, and are quite flavorful, although a bit pricey. Fruit usually arrives in a nearly ready to eat condition, but if the mango is still very firm when you buy it, let it ripen at room temperature until it gives a bit to the touch.

As a rule of thumb, mangoes like warmth, dryness, and freedom from frost. This makes them trees that are less-than-likely to be successfully grown in California north of Santa Barbara County. In tropical habitats, they have five to six growth flushes a year each of them adding a foot or more to the height of the tree. Under optimal conditions trees can grow to 60-65 feet tall and be very long-lived. There are some trees known to be over 300 years old and still fruiting!

Frost and moist air are the mango tree's worst enemies. Prolonged temperatures of 50° F will retard growth and flowering, 40° F, even for a short period, will kill flowers and small fruit, and 30° F will kill small trees and seriously injure mature trees. Mangoes love summer heat, but hate summer fog, which leads to anthracnose and poor fruit set.



However, despite the odds, there will be those of you in San Luis Obispo County who will (or do)

want to grow a mango tree. After all, you are a “rare” fruit grower, right? So, here are some tips that may help you become a successful mango grower on the Central Coast:

**Location:** Choose a spot in full sun as close to a south facing wall as possible. Pavement nearby is good, as this helps to retain heat.

**Soil:** Must be well drained and deep—clay and heavy soil will kill the tree. A pH between 5.5 and 7.5 is preferred.

**Water:** Begin to irrigate about April and continue to do so until rains in the fall or early winter are adequate to keep soil moist.

**Fertilization:** Use an organic nitrogen fertilizer on a regular basis. Chelated micronutrients, especially iron, are also good, but do not fertilize after mid-summer.

**Frost Protection:** Provide overhead frost protection for at least the first two years! Once the tree is four to five feet tall, it may be more difficult to do, but is worth the effort if you plan on

ever having any fruit on your tree! An overhead lath shelter that can be covered with a tarp and have a warming light placed beneath it is also a viable way to protect your young tree.

## December Meeting



Jingle bells, something smells...good! At least that is what our merry band of fruit loving elves thought when they attended the annual December meeting and potluck at the PG&E Community Center. Many of our members, in the spirit of the season, wore red clothing items—as you can see in the photo above taken by Paul Moyer.



Chapter co-chair, Bob Tulloch, managed to recycle his bright green “Year of the Grape” shirt by adding red suspenders and a Santa Hat. He was dressed just right to learn how to create fresh arrangements for his holiday table (along with co-chair, Art DeKleine) in a demonstration by Ms. Christine Lancaster, Floriculture teacher at Paso Robles High School. She

managed to show her “less than adept” students how even they could design a wreath they would be proud to display. Thank you, Christine, for your patience and enthusiasm!

Art DeKleine also gave a great PowerPoint presentation of **ALL** of the photos taken at our chapter events this past year—including the Festival of Fruit we hosted at Cal Poly! Well, maybe it wasn’t **ALL** the photos, but it was **MANY** of them! (But, seriously, Art, thank you so much for putting that show together! If someone didn’t see their face somewhere there, it was because they didn’t attend any event!)

And, last, but not least, thanks to Marv Daniels for arranging for the great site where the potluck was held and to all of you who participated by bringing food and plants for the plant

raffle and exchange. If you missed out this year, make plans NOW to attend in December of 2007. It will be fun!

## Peace on Earth—Goodwill to All!

The story of the year began with a seemingly simple request by e-mail back in October to California Rare Fruit Grower President, Bill Grimes. It stated:

*My name is Master Sergeant Patricia Marsano and I am an Army Reserve soldier currently mobilized at Camp Anaconda, Iraq. One of our goals, as a unit while here in Iraq, is to leave our location looking better than when arrived. Part of our plan to do that includes planting trees in various locations around Camp Anaconda. My team and I have researched various tree specimens and have concluded that the Olive Tree would be a great variety to plant. The weather in Iraq is great for the Olive Tree and growing conditions we feel would be more than sufficient to have a healthy tree. In addition, the Olive Tree is a symbol of Peace which is the message we want to leave the citizen of Iraq.*

*While doing a search on Olive Trees I came across your association, the California Rare Fruit Growers. Since our unit, the 164th Corps Support Group (CSG) has its higher headquarters, the 63rd Regional Readiness Command (RRC), located in California it was only natural for us to approach a local organization to see if they would be interested in helping us accomplish one of our goals in support of the Global War on Terrorism by donating Olive Trees. We would like to plant 164 trees as a symbol of the 164th CSG. To do this we will have to rely strictly on donations as we have no funding to buy these trees. I have checked with our local terrain management and they are in full support of having Olive Trees planted as our symbol of Peace. I have checked with the local customs agents and they said there would be no problem on getting them into Iraq.*

*Would your organization be able to help us with this project? We are hoping to get our project completed before December. Our local Public Affairs Office (PAO) is interested in doing a story on this project if we can get the donation of Olive Trees. If you have any questions about our goals or would like to talk further about this request, please contact me at my email address: ... I will be more than happy to answer whatever questions you may have.*

*Thank you for taking the time to consider this request. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Very respectfully,*

*MSG Patricia Marsano*

Bill thought it was an excellent idea, so he forwarded the email to CRFG board members which included our local chapter member, Joe Sabol. At first, Joe “wasn’t in a rush” to help. After all, he’d barely had a month to recover as co-chair of the Festival of Fruit and he, along with his wife, Jill, were looking for a place to move—preferably in the Montana outback! But with typical Joe-like exuberance, he saw this request as a new challenge. Joe contacted Tom Burchell of Burchell Nursery in Oakdale, California and after some negotiation Tom agreed to sell 200 rooted olive trees for the project at \$2.50 per tree—half of normal retail price.

Joe let everyone know of the generous offer and many CRFG members were willing to donate to the cause, but one anonymous donor paid for the entire cost of the trees. The next hurdle was how to get the trees to Baladad, Iraq in a timely manner. With shipping cost estimates in the \$2000 range, Joe was stymied. He didn’t want to collect that kind of money to get the trees to their destination. After several false starts, FedEx agreed to ship the trees to Baladad for the unbelievably low price of—FREE!



To make a long story short, with plans A-G (or more) scrapped, Burchell Nursery workers packed the 1-pound containers with their trees into protective sleeves, packed those into boxes, and took the trees to FedEx. The trees left Ontario, California on Friday, December 15 and arrived in Baladad on Monday, December 18 (Iraq time). Those little trees on their peace mission had gone to Memphis, TN, Paris, France, Dubai, and finally to their destination-- LSA Anaconda.

On Saturday, December 23 (Iraq), a ceremony was held in Baladad with several Americans and Iraqis planting several trees on Camp Anaconda’s main road, Pennsylvania Avenue. Captain Ochonma, a Californian serving in Iraq stated at the conclusion of the ceremony, “There is no better gift to express our wishes for peace and friendship. These olive trees are a gift from the people of America to the people of Iraq.”

(The photo above shows MSG Patricia Marsano planting “her” tree. Even with her head facing her job, her happy smile is evident!) The gesture was seen around the world as it was even shown by CNN along with a live interview of MSG Marsano which aired on December 24! It took several more days to complete the plantings which were finally done on December 28 when the last of the 200 trees was placed in the ground.

Meanwhile, Joe organized a planting of 12 olive trees along Foothill Boulevard in San Luis to roughly coincide with the planting in Baladad. A strong contingent of CRFG members and friends showed up to either plant trees or assist in traffic control! KSBY News came to film the event.

While many thanks go to everyone who participated, the photos on the next page are especially meaningful. The one on the left is of Joe Sabol with local FedEx driver, Karin, who

joined in to indicate FedEx shipping involvement. The photo on the right is of several participants who planted a “military” tree. Two of the men pictured have served in Iraq and all the others are in some way closely connected to the military.



Thank you to everyone who made this such a meaningful event, both here and in Iraq. What better present could people give to other people than evidence of an outpouring of good wishes for PEACE?

### Newsletter Fees Due

If your name is listed below, it is because your annual chapter newsletter fees are **due in January**. For a mere pittance of **\$6** per year, you are kept informed of chapter activities and you receive this fabulous newsletter six times a year! (Conversely, **this will be your last newsletter** if fees aren't updated by the next publication date. Isn't that sad?) Where else can you get that kind of return for just about **1 ½ cents** per day? To make it an even better value, you could pay \$25, get the newsletter for **five** years, and not have to search for your name for a long time! So check it out! Please send your choice of payment to: **Richard Pottratz, Treasurer, 2430 Leona Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.**

***Sande Adkins; Robert L. Asbell; Richard Beltran; Paul & Becky Bestwick; Elfrieda Blond; Bernard Diggins; Chester A. Gibbs; Joe Malatesta; Liese Rego; Esther Rigoni; Charles & Dolores Roady; Eunice W. Scarbouough; Walter & Dorothy Seelos; Bob Simola; and Suedene Walker.***

### Dormant Pruning and Saving Scion Wood

Many of us are pruning our deciduous fruit trees in December, January and February. We hope you will consider saving some of your best shoots for our annual Scion Exchange in February. There are two ways to do this: First, as you prune, save those freshly cut scions! Label them, bundle them up in 10 to 12 inch lengths, pencil thick, healthy wood only, and put them in a polyethylene bag with one moist paper towel, and place them in your refrigerator. The second method is, as you prune your tree do NOT prune the best scion wood. Leave those 10 or 20 shoots on the tree until February 9, the day before our Scion Exchange! You must handle these with great care because the buds may be pushing and

more pronounced and more likely to be broken off with rough handling. If you do this pruning on the afternoon of February 9, label them, and place them in a poly bag with a wet paper towel you will not need to put all these in a refrigerator! (Remember, we can't exchange patented materials!) Joe Sabol, (805) 544-1056

## Frost Bite!

Cold is the leading killer of tropical plants. "Well, duh", you say. But have you ever considered why a plant's hardiness is calculated by the **minimum** temperature a healthy **mature** tree can take and not on how much heat it can withstand? After all, it can be stinking hot in Paso Robles (115° F or more!) and it won't kill your mango tree, but let the temperature drop to 30° F one or two nights and your unprotected tree is probably history!



Here in San Luis Obispo County and Northern Santa Barbara

County our [hardiness zone](#) has average lows in the 20-40° F range, which means that, with planning, you can grow most tropical fruits in most areas. Fortunately, when temperatures in our areas drop to freezing or below, it generally isn't for a prolonged period of time. (Pray you will never see frost like that pictured on the orange tree above!) You can protect your trees on cold nights when the temperature is expected to be in the mid 30's or lower by using any number of items found around the house. Cover them with cardboard, blankets, frost fabric or burlap. Just remember to remove these covers in the morning when it warms up as it can have an opposite effect.

Lights are a great heat source. That cold snap we had in December came at the right time for using lights to heat with! Purchase some old fashioned outdoor lights (not the little twinkling ones) and festoon your tropical trees and plants with holiday cheer **and** frost protection! And, hey, why not leave them up until Easter? No one can ever have too much frost protection and who cares if your neighbors think you've gone over the edge by drinking too much eggnog?

What **doesn't** work for frost protection? **Smudge pots**, for one! These old standby's have been found to block 90% of the heat from the sun, but only 20% of the heat stored in the ground. **Plastic** is not a good insulator and can cause more harm than simply leaving a plant unprotected. **Mulch** doesn't make good frost protection. It blocks the heat of the sun from warming the earth during the day so there is no residual heat rising at night. (Remember, you use mulch around deciduous trees to prevent early bud breaking!) **Bonfires** don't work because the updraft pulls cold air from surrounding areas. **Chemicals** that purport they reduce the ice-nucleating bacteria on leaves have not proven reliable.

The time to plan is **before** a frost. Remember when you look up a plant's hardiness it is referring to a **mature** healthy tree. Young trees and plants will need protection at higher cold temperatures. Just as there are many micro climates throughout our area, there are micro climates right in your own yard. Try to learn the particulars of your garden as the frost warnings on the news are usually for the airport or some other reporting station. Your yard may very well be several degrees higher or lower than what is predicted.

If you are mathematically inclined and **really** want to get technical in predicting just when frost might occur in your yard, visit: <http://biomet.ucdavis.edu/frostprotection/fp002.htm> This site is maintained by the Biometeorology Program at US Davis and is really for commercial growers, but there is some advice there home gardeners might find useful.

But, what if, even with your best planning, you have gotten some frost damaged plants? What should you do? **Nothing!** At least not right away. Do not prune your frost damaged plant until **all** danger of frost is past. Frost damaged leaves and stems will continue to provide protection for the plant and you may be surprised to find that the damage wasn't as bad as you first thought. New shoots often break from branches you might think are beyond saving. Prune judiciously after frost danger is past and new growth has begun. If a grafted tree has been damaged to the bud union (original graft), get rid of it. All you will have growing is rootstock, not the desired variety. (You may also be able to graft a new variety onto the existing rootstock.)

## Announcements

**Join the Parent Organization:** Many of our chapter members are also members of the Parent association and, for those of you who aren't, perhaps you **should** consider joining. With parent organization membership you receive a wonderful color magazine, *The Fruit Gardener*, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, many chapter activities and contacts. Dues are **\$30 annually** or **3 years for \$87**. Membership applications are available from **Joe Sabol**. Call him at **544-1056** if you can't find him at a meeting.

## Calendar of Meetings – 2007

Meetings are held the **second Saturday** of the month and **begin at 1:30 PM** unless otherwise indicated. Bring a friend, car pool, and, for most meetings, **bring a chair** for all in your party. Pet Daniels suggests we bring our own bottled water to drink, too. What fun it is to be a member of CRFG!

**Directions to Cal Poly Crops Unit:** From San Luis Obispo, take HWY 101 Santa Rosa exit (Hwy 1) towards Morro Bay. Go to Highland and enter the Cal Poly campus. You will see Mt. Bishop Road to the left. Turn in immediately and park.

**January 6—Annual Business and Pruning Meeting—Cal Poly Crops Unit:** Please note that this is **not our regular** Saturday meeting schedule! This is the first Saturday of the month, but we are being flexible to accommodate the very busy schedule of expert grafter,

Mr. Tom Spellman, of Dave Wilson Nursery fruit tasting fame! This is the **perfect** meeting to bring guests to as they will get a good overview of what our chapter is all about—and take home a valuable lesson in pruning! First there will be an election for Chapter Officers, Board Members and other voluntary positions. Then we will have a short indoor lesson on pruning before we move to the CRFG Chapter Demonstration Orchard for an out door "learn by doing" session with Tom. Don't forget to bring your pruning shears, clippers, loppers, and handsaws. **Refreshments group A–G—and please remember we usually have many attendees at this meeting!**

**February 10—Annual Scion Exchange—Cal Poly Crops Unit:** This is another very popular meeting, and one you won't want to miss! We will have a scion exchange (check Joe Sabol's article on how to collect these), and grafting knives, Buddy Tape, and rootstock for sale. Cal Poly students usually have some great plants for sale, too! Come with your U-Haul! **Refreshments group H-R please—we have many attendees at this meeting, too!**

**Central Coast Chapter CRFG Contact Information:** Art DeKleine, co-chair, [adeklein@calpoly.edu](mailto:adeklein@calpoly.edu) or 543-9455; Bob Tullock, co-chair, [tullock@tcsn.net](mailto:tullock@tcsn.net) or 238-2868; Joe Sabol, program chair, [jsabol@calpoly.edu](mailto:jsabol@calpoly.edu) or 544-1056; Dick Pottratz, treasurer, [pottratz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pottratz@sbcglobal.net); or Lennette Horton, newsletter editor, [handynana@gmail.com](mailto:handynana@gmail.com) or 474-6501.