

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter
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2009 The Year of the Olive

July Meeting & BBQ

Lupine Meadow Farm, the home of David and Joan Maislen, was the site of our July Meeting and BBQ. It was our first ever potluck barbecue and was a huge success, with over 100 people attending. The weather was perfect. The chicken and tri-tip prepared by Larry Hollis and his wonderful volunteer crew was delicious. The program presented by David was interesting and chock full of information helpful to all rare fruit growers. The plant raffle was not only of financial benefit to our chapter, everyone who won a plant got something special.



The meeting was opened by our co-chair, Patti Schober. She presented CRFG hats with their names embroidered on them to our hosts, Dave and Joan Maislen. Business, such as where to get plants brought in from other areas inspected, was discussed. Several people gave reports on the success (or not!) of the avocado trees they'd grafted at the May meeting. (There is a separate article in another part of this issue for more detail on this!) Joe Sabol gave an orchard report, reminding people that there are still items needing

attention there, such as the sprinklers, and asking those who go to taste fruit to remember to make a brief report on it on the forms provided there.

David Maislen then took over and gave us an interesting and detailed talk on how the five barren acres he and Joan bought some years ago has evolved into the property which has been certified as a sanctuary by the National Wildlife Federation. He discussed how, by making it attractive to birds such as owls and Western Bluebirds, he has valuable



allies in his fight against gophers and harmful insects, such as grasshoppers.

A major portion of David's discussion centered around his beekeeping business—something he has been doing since 1996. He made clear the importance of bees to all of us by reminding us that bees—through pollination—are responsible for about a third of the food we eat. We'd need bees even if we didn't gain a benefit from the by-product of that pollination work--honey! (I was amazed to learn that it takes 3,000,000 flower visits to create just one pound of honey! No wonder those little guys have to be busy!)



We then headed out to Dave's orchard and garden to learn more about bees with an up-close and personal encounter with the hives and more about another of David's passions—the black box gopher trap!

All the exercise made us hungry—but our hard-working BBQ team was ready for the onslaught with succulent chicken and tri-tip. Our own members weren't slouches in the food department, either! If anyone went away hungry that day, it was their own fault!

A streamlined process used by Owen Baynham and his team for picking the winning tickets in the plant raffle made it easier for everyone involved and resulted in many happy winners! (Jack Swords alone had donated 80 one-gallon containers with rare fruiting plants, and along with other plant donations, most of the 200 raffle tickets Choung sold were winners!)

But what was the best part of the day? I think it was the opportunity for members to learn more about one another, maybe even something unexpected! (For an example of what I mean, see the "Pineapple Memories" story featured later in this issue.) All-in-all, I just don't think meetings get much better than this one was! Thanks to **all** of you who worked so hard to make it happen!



The BBQ Team!



Choung gets Jim's last dollar!

Everyone looks happy! Art Henzgen is happiest of all because his rooster crowed and reminded him it was time to eat!



The 2009 Festival of Fruit



people were missing from the picture.)

This year the Festival of Fruit was hosted by the Redwood Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers in Santa Rosa, CA. According to Joe Sabol, "We all had a great time, learned a lot, heard some fantastic speakers, took a lot of educational tours, ate some delicious fruit, and enjoyed the warm hospitality of a bunch of fine folk!!!" Details of the gathering will be found in the next issue of the *Fruit Gardener*. The photo on the left shows members of the "Central Coast Delegation" taken before they went to dinner. (According to Joe, three

Pineapple Memories

You've heard of a Memory Album, but have you ever heard of a Memory Pineapple? I sure hadn't, but this "rare fruit" was brought to my attention by Jane Roach as a result of a conversation she had at the July BBQ meeting. She saw an unusual looking prickly plant among those ready for the raffle. When she wondered aloud what it was, Carol Scott, who was standing nearby, answered that it was a pineapple plant. (It had been donated by Pet Daniels). Then Carol told Jane about her pineapple plant.

Jane emailed to tell me the story because she thought it was so "sweet"—and also because she was surprised to learn about a "romantic" side to pragmatic Robert! I visited Carol and Robert in their home a few days later and saw the pineapple plant for myself and asked Carol if I could use the story in the newsletter. She agreed and she also promised to take a photo and send it along. Here is what Carol said in the note that was attached to the picture she sent. "I took a picture of our pineapple. We brought a pineapple back from an anniversary trip to Hawaii 21 years ago and planted the top. It grew and developed a pineapple. Now, every year we harvest a pineapple and cut off the top and replant it. It grows in our greenhouse in a pot."



How Sweet It Is!

Or should that be, how sweet **is** it? Using a refractometer to test the sweetness (i.e. ripeness) of home grown fruit was a recent topic of discussion among some of our members. Dick Pottratz, our chapter treasurer and a home wine-maker wrote a very nice explanation of the "gadget" and its potential use.

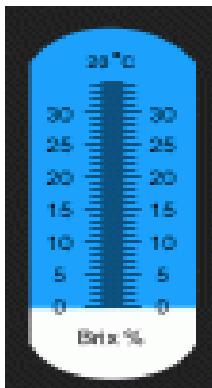


"I plunked down \$100 (plus tax) for my refractometer from the now defunct Cuesta Equipment on Broad Street. I use it to measure the sugar content of grape juice that I occasionally am successful in turning into wine. The refractometer works on the principle that light travels slower in sugar water than it does in distilled water and is calibrated to indicate the percentage of sugar in the grape juice. (In winemaker's lingo this percentage of sugar is called 'Brix' – more precisely, Brix is the specific gravity of the solution.) When the Brix is known the winemaker can easily determine the potential alcohol in the finished wine by using a Brix to

alcohol conversion scale. (The refractometer could be made to directly read the potential alcohol but as far as I know that hasn't been done.) Hydrometers can also be used to

determine specific gravity/Brix; however refractometers have a couple advantages. The first advantage is ease of use. The second is that they only use a couple of drops to get a reading while hydrometers require about a half cup of fluid.

The first thing you want to do is to calibrate your refractometer. This can be done by using distilled water. Lift the cover at the end of the refractometer and place a couple of drops on the blue colored prism and wait a few seconds for the water to equal the temperature of the prism. Close the cover and look through the refractometer. You might have to twist the eye piece to focus the image. You should see what looks like a blue ruler. Turn the adjustment screw until the white section stops and blue begins at the 0 level.



It should look like this when you have it calibrated.

Now you are ready to take a reading. Put a couple of drops of any fruit juice on the prism and close the top. If the juice is a different temperature than the prism, wait for it to approximately equal the temperature of the prism. This will ensure an accurate reading. Where the blue meets the white is your %Brix. (Multiply this number by 4 and you've got your specific gravity.) For winemaking, a grape juice with a Brix of 22 has the potential of making wine with 12% alcohol, wines with less than 10-11% alcohol don't keep well and wines with more than 15% alcohol are a bit too 'hot' for my taste.

Refractometers can be used to measure the sugar content of any fruit. In general, the higher the Brix the better the fruit, as we all seem to like things sweet. I've experimented with plum, apricot and loquat fruit wines and all these fruits have insufficient sugar to attain the minimum alcohol content so sugar needs to be added to supplement."

So, now you know! Thanks for taking the time to explain it to us, Dick!

The Grafts That Won't Die!

At our May meeting, guest grafted, Craig Righetti, apparently dismayed by the small avocado seedlings that were being grafted to warned that most of the grafts probably wouldn't "take" and that even the rootstock might not survive. He apparently didn't reckon with the fact that we are "rare" fruit growers and determined to boldly grow trees where no other trees have grown before (or something like that!) Even before the July meeting, people sent "progress reports" to Joe Sabol, proving Craig's predictions wrong! The photo on the right came from Mary and Pete Giambalvo along with the



comment, "Attached is a photo of our avocado plants (that are gonna die!), taken on July 8th. Post mortem will follow when the need arises."

Then, Jeanne Blackwell wrote: "O.K. Joe, remember the little avocado cutting you were carrying around in your pocket? Remember how you said get a cutting and graft it right now because it is going to die? Well, I took that little cutting you were carrying around (for over an hour) not exactly immediately and I think it was Dave that did a graft on it--just magic. Well, I am here to say you can tell your friend that said IT IS GOING TO DIE that he was wrong. It LIVES. I have little shoots popping out of the nodes. It is outside in the shade in a plastic bag. After I had it in intensive care for about a month without any signs of improvement I gave it one last chance. I said, "I am putting you outside. This is do or die." Well, I checked it after about a week and there it was a little shoot pushing itself out of the nodes on the grafted part. I know you wanted to prove your friend wrong and so you shall. When it is big enough to see I will send you a picture as proof. It lives. It lives. I am so pleased. It was really a great graft--tongue and groove? Thanks, Joe. This was fun."

At the July meeting, while several people gave reports of their avocado grafts (**none** of them telling of dead grafts) one of those stories especially stuck in my mind. Louise (sorry, I didn't get her last name) said hers was doing great and that she attributed it to the fact that she would spit into the bag and say, "You will not die!" Well, I guess her plant enjoyed the humidity, if nothing else. And I'm sure no one will be happier than his "dire warnings" didn't come true than Craig!

Community Outreach

We've had a busy summer, even without an August meeting locally! Our chapter donated 10 grafted apple trees in 5-gallon containers to the San Luis Botanical Garden Plant Family Camp that was held the week of August 10-14.

At another community fundraiser, an apple tree in a basket that we donated through Marv Daniels raised \$125 for that non-profit event! (Marv wondered if something from another well-known Daniels might have been added to the basket to "sweeten" the deal!)



On August 29, several of our members went to the Botanical Garden Tomato Extravaganza. It was a **hot** day but our stalwart crews hung in there! Larry Hollis gave a 20-minute talk and grafting demonstration. All grafted trees were sold and Jim Ritterbush took home non-grafted rootstock to care for—AGAIN. People loved the grafting demos, the trees, and our wonderful volunteers! Thanks so much to Larry, Pet, Marv, Jack, Jim, Dave, Carmela, Mark, Marlene, and Joe! You went above and beyond the call of duty! (Photo is of the first shift crew.)

Feijoa Grafting Report

In our previous newsletter, there was mention of a special team of grafters that went to John Swift's and spent the morning grafting Feijoas. Here is Joe Sabol's report on the success of that venture:

1. Robert Scott was the best grafted in our group by a MILE!!! He is good!! (This statement is proven by the photo on the right!)
2. Full wrap with Buddy tape resulted in the best success with 12 successful grafts!!
3. Whip and Tongue method gave best success!!! No question!!
4. Grafting Feijoas is much harder than grafting apples! Of the 50 seedlings we grafted only a total of 16 grew!!! Of these, 12 were fully wrapped with Buddy tape. Whip and tongue was the best, only two cleft grafts worked. Four grafts grew that were NOT wrapped with Buddy-tape. Not one machine (tool) graft worked. Zip. (The machine tool is a hand held "press" that punches out a graft on the rootstock and on the scion wood so they match perfectly. Nice tool. I have one, never use it. A knife works better if you only have a few to do. If you had 100 to do the tool is good.) Only four grafts that were fully wrapped did not grow.
5. The grafts that did not grow had dry/dead scion wood today so our prediction is that no further success will be coming.
6. We trimmed the growth below the successful grafts but did not remove it all. These leaves are going to help the graft heal (nurse limbs). We moved the tips of all the shoots below the graft so that the tallest terminal buds are now the scion wood.



In Memoriam--Betty Middlecamp



Betty Middlecamp, a long-time member of our local CRFG Chapter and a delightful living "history book" for all questions about Cal Poly and local agriculture, passed away on July 10, 2009 at the age of 95. Betty was interested in the life around her right to the end. Her grandson, David, recalled, "When we talked to her last week she was still curious and excited about the olive grafting that my sister and father were working on. She looked forward to every CRFG get-together."

We will plant a tree in Betty's memory at our Community Orchard early next year.

Announcements

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Teri Monell, Eva Zayha, Rudy Lucero, Ed Van Fleet, Will Davis, Missy Reitner-Cameron, Mehe Samano, Michael & Allison Man, Larry & Susan Fishman, Else B. Drengler, John Swift, Marlene Barkley, Mark & Andre Dennis, and Michael J. Russ.

JOIN CRFG: If you **haven't** joined the national organization of the **California Rare Fruit Growers**, why not? With your membership you receive a wonderful color magazine, ***The Fruit Gardener***, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, many chapter activities and contacts. You can also vote on important membership issues and even elect the governing board. Where else can you get so much for a mere \$3.00 a month? That's less than one trip to that specialty coffee place! Dues are **\$36 annually or 3 years for \$100**. Membership applications are available from **Joe Sabol**. Call him at **544-1056** if you can't find him at a meeting or sign-up online at www.crfg.org. (If you prefer, you can save more by subscribing to the magazine by e-mail only which is just **\$25** per year!)

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER FEES: Please be sure your chapter newsletter fees are current and save our treasurer, Dick Pottratz, lots of work and begging. Newsletter fees are due January 1 of each year. Looking to save some money? Then pay the five-year rate of \$25 and you will save \$5 (since the **annual fee is \$6**)!

SARC Sustainability Fair: Thursday, October 15 in the PAC Plaza. The Sustainable Ag Resource Consortium at Cal Poly will be hosting this fair from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. There will be great speakers and lots of free information available.

Central Coast African Violet Club: Saturday, September 12 beginning at 10:00 AM at the North County Christian Fellowship on 9th and Vine in Paso Robles. The group will be dedicated to the care and propagation of registered African Violets. This is the first meeting and they will address basic violet care, Oyama self watering pots and the organization of the club. RSVP your intent to participate to Mary Thompson at 459-6070 or email her at znaillady1@aol.com. Attend and become a charter member!

Calendar of Meetings – 2009

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. **No pets** at any meeting, please! Pet Daniels suggests we **bring our own bottled water** to drink, too. What fun it is to be a member of **CRFG**!

September 12—Mike Cirone's Orchard—See Canyon: Mike is a commercial fruit grower and sells fruit at Farmer's Markets from SLO to Santa Monica. We have had the pleasure of meeting with Mike many years ago at his Morro Bay Orchard. Mike will take us on a tour of the commercial orchard that will include apples and stone fruit. The amazing feature will be the production of quality fruit without irrigation!! That is correct. He is DRY FARMING fruit in

See Canyon!!! Mike is an amazing grower with a wealth of knowledge about all aspects of fruit production and marketing directly to the consumer. Wear a hat, sunscreen and walking shoes. We will take a walk through the orchard. Please bring folding chairs. And, as always, **please leave your pets at home.** Refreshments by the **H-R team**, please!

Directions: Take the 101 to Avila Beach Road Exit. From the corner of Avila Beach Road and See Canyon, go up See Canyon **4.5 miles.** (This is way past Gopher Glen Apple Ranch.) Turn right when you come to the big windmill. Follow the signs and park.

October 10: To Be Announced. Refreshments by the **S-Z team**, please!

November 14: Special Youth Meeting. You won't want to miss this! Refreshments by the **A-G team**, please!

December 12: Annual Christmas Potluck and Plant Raffle. This meeting begins at **12 Noon** and the location is to be announced.

Central Coast Chapter CRFG Contact Information: **Larry Hollis**, co-chair, l_hollis@hotmail.com or **704-1513**; **Patti Schober**, co-chair, pwolfy@tcsn.net or **467-5097**; **Art DeKleine**, program chair, adeklein@calpoly.edu or **543-9455**; **Joe Sabol**, publicity, jsabol@calpoly.edu or **544-1056**; **Dick Pottratz**, treasurer, pottratz@sbcglobal.net; and **Lennette Horton**, newsletter editor, handynana@gmail.com or **474-6501**.