Central Coast Chapter CRFG

September 2022 Newsletter

by Jenny Weaver & Tom Sheldon
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Next CRFG Meeting

Where: North County Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden at Centennial Park, 600 Nickerson Drive across from Red Cloud Rd, Paso Robles (see map, next page)

When: October 8, 2022, 12:30-3:00pm

Schedule:

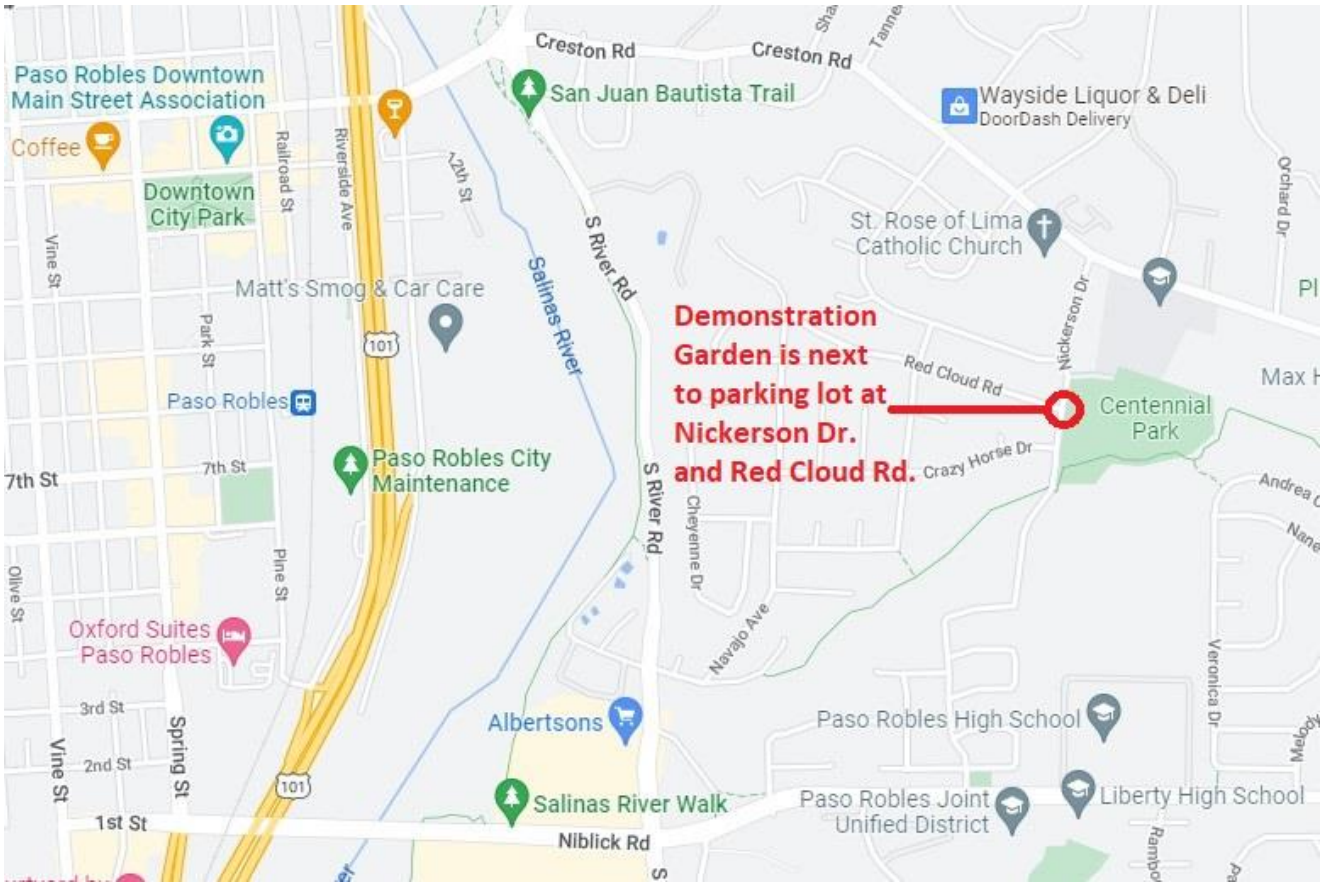
12:30 – 1:30 for set up, refreshments and socializing.
REFRESHMENTS: Bring something for yourself or to share. Please bring your own water, preferably in your own container. Meet in the Pergola area where there are picnic tables and benches.

We have invited the Cal Poly Ag Student CRFG Scholarship recipients for a Meet & Greet.

1:30-3:00 Meeting and Presentations: Master Gardeners Demonstration
The Master Gardeners will be doing presentations and giving us information about their demonstration garden.

The Master Gardeners provided this description:

"The new Centennial Park Demonstration Garden (CPDG) is a 3500sf garden located in Paso Robles' Centennial Park, a vibrant, busy and beautiful center for community recreation. Since February 2022 when the SLO County Master Gardeners took on the responsibility for the under-tended and overgrown garden, we have removed junk, cleared weeds, cut failed trees, installed a new irrigation system, laid out plots and installed border stone. Come and see the garden ready for the next steps in its renovation and learn about the shared goals we have set with the City of Paso Robles for this soon-to-be pretty and productive plot of land".



Directions to Centennial Park Demonstration Garden

Announcements

From the Editor (Jenny):

I learned about the Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers (HTFG) group from Bob Holzinger, a CRFG member we met through Zoom when Tom interviewed him about some CRFG "old timers" HTFG are having their annual conference this fall! Since there was no CRFG Festival of Fruit, maybe you'd like to attend this one!

32nd Annual Hawaii Tropical Fruit Growers Conference

Agenda Propagation! Send in the Clones
Time Nov 04, 2022 3:00 PM – Nov 06, 12:00 PM HST
Location Royal Kona Resort, 75-5852 Aliʻi Dr, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740, USA

For more information, recipes and much more, here is their website:

https://www.htfg.org

From the Video guy (Tom):

I have finally posted some new videos on our local chapter's YouTube channel. Here's a link to the channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHrKqkelrmBKYXPXO0N7nLg

Here's a video of the September 2022 meeting:

https://youtu.be/7_8CFTGjIzU

You'll also find a video tour of Jack Swords' jungle orchard. Be sure to check it out, especially if you want to see what your own garden could look like in 45 years. Jack also provides a few tips for fruit growers.

https://youtu.be/kD6eTycJPZc

Larry Hollis impromptu grafting demo: https://youtu.be/1Np9DM4Pr5A

September 10th Meeting Notes and Presentation

Report by Linda Richardson, chapter Secretary

Our meeting this month was held at Fair Hills apple farm outside Paso Robles. The meeting took place as the heat wave was breaking, and the weather was warm, but breezy and pleasant in the shade of the outdoor work shed where we gathered.

September meeting video highlights: https://youtu.be/7_8CFTGjIzU

At the business portion of the meeting, Nell announced that this year twelve students will receive scholarships from our chapter, totaling $15,000: seven will get $1,500 each, and five will get $900. We're giving a larger total amount this year because we went three years without giving scholarships at all because of the COVID pandemic. Professor Garner was instrumental in getting applications and vetting the students. (*Editor's note: read more about it in Nell Wade's letter*)

We'll be continuing the scholarship program, and we need to do more fundraising in the future to support it. Seth said that all the money we bring in from dues and plant sales go to the scholarship fund.

The chapter is looking for volunteers and plant donations for the Arroyo Grande harvest festival on September 24. Contact Tucker Schmidt to volunteer or donate. Plants need to be dropped off the day before; you can leave them with Tucker or with Seth.

Sharon Lovelady reminded everyone that we need as many responses as possible to the survey. You can fill out the form on Survey Monkey or contact Sharon, and she will e-mail you one.

First time and longtime members gather for the August meeting at Fair Hills Farms.

Socializing in the shade

On the left, Larry Hollis shows some grafting techniques. On the right, the Williams family, newcomers from Paso Robles. Our youngest fruit lovers!

Fair Hill Farms Presentation by Alex Martinez

Alex Martinez, the manager of the Fair Hill Farms orchard, gave a talk about the farm. He and his father have been managing it for 20 years. The farm grows 15-20 varieties of apples on 40 acres, as well as some stone fruit. The apples they grow include Pink Lady, Gala, McIntosh, Braeburn, Russet, Pippin, Cameo, and many others. They sell apples at Farmers' Markets up and down the coast. From the seconds they make apple juice which they sell at Farmers' Markets and grocery stores, including Whole Foods. The orchard was sold two years ago to a new owner, who is in the process of taking it organic and plans to emphasize making juice and other products, such as dried apples.

Amulfo & Alex. Father & Son

To irrigate, they have found that sprinklers work better than drip to grow large apples. They fertilize with 4-4-2 organic fertilizer, and every other year, they apply gypsum to the orchard. Pruning is done in January when the trees are dormant, and they do some thinning later in the year to promote good fruit color. For codling moth, they use DiPel (an approved Organic pesticide containing *Bacillus thuringensis*) spray and pheromone confusion loops. Deer are an issue in the orchard; the former owner used to allow them to roam because he hunted them. Gophers seem to be pretty well controlled by the resident cats.

Not smooth & shiny but crunchy & delicious!

Alex had an interesting observation about his experience with bird netting. He said they tried using it on their stone fruit and cherry trees, but the birds were able to get in and out anyway. In fact, he said, they found the birds ate more of the fruit when the trees were netted than when they weren't. Now they use silvery mylar strips, which seem to control the birds reasonably well.

After the talk we were able to walk around on our own and see the orchard, and the farm generously put out several big boxes of apples and one box each of white peaches and Pluerry* for us to sample and take home. Many thanks to the events committee for arranging this interesting and informative visit.

*Editor's note: Pluerry™ is described by Raintree Nursery:

"The Pluerry™, a dark red fruit with yellow flesh, is a complex interspecific hybrid, predominantly of plum and cherry with a hint of peach and apricot thrown in for good measure. It looks a lot like a small round plum but the taste is like a tasty plum infused with cherry flavor. It's new and unique and will be very popular. It blooms with late mid season Asian plums and needs a pollinizer. Flavor King Pluot, Burgundy and Santa Rosa plums have proven good pollinizers and gardeners will need to experiment to find the best pollinizers in their region. Needs 450 chill hours."

On left, fireblight (cut out and remove from orchard). On right, poles from earlier idea to make a tunnel of apples for ease of picking

Twelve Scholarship$ Awarded to Cal Poly Student$!!!

Nell Wade

Greetings fellow fruit lovers and growers.

After taking a two-year absence from meeting due to the COVID pandemic, the Scholarship Committee met last month to discuss the twelve applicants Dr. Garner presented to us for scholarship funds. The reason for the high number was directly because of our two-year absence. As a result, Dr. Garner picked students that might've received scholarships during 2020 and 2021 in addition to this year's students. We requested and received from the board $15,000 to distribute. We distributed $1,500 to 7 students and $900 to 5 students, ensuring that all of Dr. Garner's applicants received some of the funding.

We've also asked the board for additional items that will be discussed and voted on at a future meeting. Part of that proposal is that our chapter goes back to our community participation of the past and actively make fund raising an integral part of that. It will be done in two ways; increase edible plant material to sell and add donation containers specifically earmarked for scholarships to all our events at our membership area. That's why I'm writing to you today. We need you – to grow and care for plants for the chapter's fundraising goals.

The plant raffle held at our December meeting is the largest fundraiser within the chapter we have to date. That's because we always have a few members willing to donate large amounts of plants at a moment's notice. What we need in the future is a concerted effort to gather as many plants as we can and turn them into scholarship dollars for future recipients.

To that end, I'm asking you today to think about what you can donate to the December meeting in the way of edible plants that others would enjoy growing and harvesting. On December 1st, please check these plants for insects, damage, etc. and then label and water them well. We have always taken ornamental plants in the past, but they are strictly put in the 'free' pile and not been included in the raffle plants.

Come the Springtime, we'll also be asking you to participate in a grafting workshop where we'll graft left over rootstock into fruit trees and then farm them out for care until scheduled community events occur, where we will be selling them to the general public.

All of these efforts will accumulate into additional funds for our scholarships program while also hopefully, adding new members that want further care

instructions for their trees - as well as more plants for your gardens. Remember raffle tickets are still only $1 each, or 6 for $5 – it's an excellent way to fill that bare spot in your yard – and help educate more people about the fun of growing fruit. And if you absolutely cannot find another place for a new plant, you can always donate directly via the donation jars.

We're looking forward to getting back to being active members in the chapter, and within the community, and welcome your participation. Going forward, please don't hesitate to contact us with other ideas and suggestions.

Thanks!

The Scholarship Committee:

Marv Daniels, Les Ferreira, Karen Kolba, Tucker Schmidt and Nell Wade, chair

THE BLACK FIG FLY – NOT YOUR BFF

Linda Robertson, our chapter Secretary, attended a presentation in August by the Master Gardeners about the Black Fig Fly. Researchers from UC Riverside gave the talk.

Sometimes it seems we deal with a never-ending parade of pests attacking our trees and trying to keep us from eating the fruit we spend so much time and trouble growing. The latest entry in the rogue's gallery of insects invading our area of the state is the black fig fly (*Silba adipata*.) Originally from the Mediterranean area, the fig fly has spread to the middle east, Mexico, and in the past couple of years, California. So far, it hasn't been found in the commercial fig growing regions of the Central Valley, but it has been making its way through southern California and the Central Coast. It has now been reported in several places in San Luis Obispo County. In spite of its initials, the black fig fly is anything but your BFF.

The black fig fly is a shiny black fly, about a quarter of an inch long, with large red eyes. Its one good quality is that it infests only figs.

The female BFF does its damage by depositing its eggs in immature figs, through the ostiole (the little pimple at the end of the fruit opposite the stem). The larvae grow inside the fig, making tunnels through it. At that stage, they are invisible from the outside of the fruit. The infestation causes the fig to fall from the tree without ripening; and the larvae tunnel out and form pupae, which live in the earth around the tree until they hatch into the next generation of flies. Depending on how warm the climate it, fig flies can produce 4 to 6 generations in one growing season.

The fig fly's life cycle makes it difficult to control. Insecticides don't reach the larvae because they're sheltered inside the figs, and there aren't any soil drenches that have been found to kill the pupae. Baits for adults are still being

tested. Because they're such a recent pest here, researchers are in the early stages of looking for effective controls. Traps can be made to monitor for the presence of the flies. Some information about trapping them can be found in an informational flyer from UC Riverside; there's a link to it in the references at the end.

Right now, the best way to protect against the BFF seems to be careful sanitation. Pick up all fallen figs as soon as possible and destroy them. (Don't put them in your green can.) Jenny Weaver from our chapter has tried putting small net bags around young figs as a barrier against the female fly (see Editor's notes for how that's going). For small trees it may be feasible to wrap the whole tree in insect netting, but it needs to be fairly tight around the base of the tree because the flies hatch in the ground. Some growers are also trying laying landscape cloth around the bases of trees, to stop the larvae from getting into the soil. The effectiveness of these techniques hasn't yet been proven.

If you find infested fruit or suspect that BFF may be attacking fruits in your orchard or yard, contact your local UCCE Farm Advisor and County Agricultural Commissioner.

You can also report the pest to CDFA's Pest Hotline: 1-800-491-1899.

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/reportapest/

Because it's so new here in California, the story of the black fig fly is still developing. Researchers from UC Riverside and elsewhere are studying it and experimenting with methods of controlling it; in a year or two we'll probably know more about what works.

References:

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/countyag/postings/files/Wilson_et_al_-_P.pdf

https://entomology.ucr.edu/news/2022/05/19/black-fig-fly

https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=50933

Editor's note: I have had limited success with the organza jewelry bags. For every 3 ripe edible figs, about 13 damaged figs fall off! The figs either never developed, had several larvae and pupae in the bag, or most recently got moldy. After the rain last week, the figs did not dry out and became moldy. And of course, there are the nightly visitors, Mr. & Mrs. Raccoon, who climb the tree, knock off the fruit and rip the bags open to eat the ripe fruit!

Also, the San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture has recently found Black Fig Fly in Creston. According to Edwin Moscoso, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner in September "...it is probably spread all over the county. So far, we have found it in Creston, Cayucos, Los Osos, Pismo Beach and San Luis Obispo. We have not been looking for it anymore since we assume that the whole county is infested."

If you are lucky to have some ripe figs, here are some recipes for figs and other tropical fruit: https://www.htfg.org/publications

Passionate about Passion Fruit Vines

By Jenny Weaver with help from Jack Swords, Robert Scott, Dara Manker & Evelyn Ruehr

Passion flowers are some of the most beautiful flowers on earth. They open up fully and show all their glory. There are around 400 species of *Passiflora*. I learned a lot while researching *Passiflora* species. They are used for food, medicine and in cosmetics! I have had bedtime teas with *Passiflora* but didn't like them because I felt very groggy in the morning. It did too good a job of making me sleepy! Did you know they are technically a berry?! I didn't.

Passiflora species are native to the Americas and considered tropical and subtropical. But there are a few hardy species. One hardy passion flower, *P. vitifolia* offers brilliant scarlet flowers with yellow filaments and edible fruit. This variety is hardy to 28° Fahrenheit (-2 C.). Passiflora grow as far north as the Bay area in California.

Jack Swords is also very knowledgeable about passion fruit & flower vines. He says

> *"We have a variety of Passifloras and many attract different butterflies. Best is P. incarnata, also P. suberosa, and P. caerulea. Mainly the Gulf Fritillary prevails around the vines. Need lots of vines as these caterpillars are prolific."*
>
> *"Several of other Passifliora I have grown have not been targeted by any kind of butterfly. But, P. incarnata, P. caerulea, and P. suberosa are hit pretty hard. Then, later in the year, little pupae are found hanging down from branches and fence wires. These are nice to put into a container for kids to see the end result of metamorphosis, then release the butterfly."*

As a child in Santa Barbara, my mother and I would collect large bags of ugly, shriveled purple fruit from enormous walls of vines. As a child it was hard to imagine there would be anything worth eating inside the leathery wrinkled hide! Besides good for throwing at my brother, they were delicious!! My family and friends slice the top off and scoop out the pulp for immediate enjoyment, put on yogurt or ice cream or make homemade passionfruit jam and ice cream.

Purple fruit are P. edulis 'Fredricks'. Orange fruit are P. cearulea

I have 2 different species of vines that do well in Pismo Beach. On one side of my house, I have the Fredericks variety of *Passiflora edulis*. They are the purple leathery type about the size of a goose egg. The fruit can be eaten when the skin turns purple and is smooth or when it is wrinkled. The seeds are crunchy. You can either chew them up, swallow them whole or strain them out. These passion fruits often drop when they are ready or maybe the possums are picking them!

I have never seen Gulf Fritillary larvae on my Fredrick's vine. If I did catch some munching, I would relocate them to my other Passiflora species.

P. cearulea, Blue Crown Passionflower and 2 larvae of Gulf Fritillary Butterfly

Jack has the same experience at his place: "I used to grow several kinds of Passiflora, but I can't recall any larvae on P. edulis. I have not had any Passiflora stripped of leaves as the adult butterfly seems to be prudent in egg laying. I really enjoying seeing them flying around."

On the other side of my house I have a different variety that I started from seed from soft, orange, ovoid fruit that Marv and Pet brought to our booth at a Harvest Festival many years ago. The seeds sprouted quickly but the vine did not produce for many years even though it always had lovely flowers that the bees and I enjoyed. I kept it because it is the ONLY host to the Gulf Fritillary butterfly.

Finally, this year it started fruiting. Sometimes it takes patience with plants. These fruits are an "emergency orange" color and very soft and squishy. The fruit has a delicate, mild sweetness and has bright red seeds that are not too crunchy. Some people describe the fruit as bland, insipid or having an undesirable flavor. You won't know until you try it! You might like it.

It is the blue passion flower or bluecrown or common passion flower*, Passiflora caerulea* which is widely cultivated as a wall-climber or as groundcover. Though hardy down to −10 °C (14 °F), it requires a sheltered position facing south or west (in the Northern Hemisphere). It can become invasive, the twining shoots constantly appearing unless eradicated. The new stems are easily pulled out or dug up to be shared with others. It has gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit so it can't be that bad!

If you don't have any passion fruit vines yet, you can always buy some fruit at Farmers' Markets and some specialty stores. Good Land Organics, in Goleta, owned by one of our previous co-chairs, Jay Ruskey sells a 5 pound box for $22.50. I think local grower Swift also grows passion fruits and there must be other growers and sellers locally.

Here's what Robert Scott, my Garden Guru, in Nipomo says about the Passaflora spp he & Carol grow:

> "Here is my list. So many Passiflora I almost shocked myself!
>
> ***Edible types:*** *P. edulis-'Fredrick', P. edulis 'Nancy Garrison', P. edulis 'Tango', P. edulis 'Black Knight', P. edulis 'Red Rover', P. edulis 'Black Magic' from friend in San Jose. Sweetish P. edulis I've ever tasted!) P. edulis 'Golden Giant', P. edulis flavicarpa (yellow or golden), P. edulis 'Possum Purple', P. edulis 'Red Rover', P. arida pentaschista, P. ciliate, P. incarnata, P. tripartita -Banana Passion fruit, P. ligularis, P. tacsonia E.S.B. hybrid sweet fruit, P. malformis, P. laurifolia (seed from Gabrielle Robbins), P. laurifolia (with triangular fruit from Island. of Guadeloupe /ˌgwɑːdəˈluːp/ It is an archipelago and overseas department and region of France in the Caribbean.), P. decaisneana= P. alata X quadrangularis and P. manicata!*
>
> ***Flower only type:*** *P. 'Etna' (Passion Flower. Deep, intensely purple flowers. Vigorous, tolerant vine. It will produce tasty edible fruit if pollinated by another passion vine.) , P.'anastasia', P. serrulata, P. pinnatistipula, P. capsularis 'Vanilla Creme', P. cearulea can have fruit too, P. cearulea 'Constance Eliotte'."*
>
> *"That's it until I germinate some more species"!*
>
> *"Carol and I mostly use passion fruit in smoothies but sometimes when we have a bounty, we freeze the pulp in ice cube form for later in year. Some such as P. arida are small and I just suck out the juice and seeds when I see a ripe one!"*

Here's what Dara says about the passion fruit vines at our CRFG Demonstration Orchard at Cal Poly:

> *"The large one from the Nextdoor app has one fruit. I took this picture exactly a month ago and it is easily twice as big now.*

There are 3 more smaller ones given to us by Dixon Smith. One had a flower for the first time this year! The deer are not eating them. Phew!"

Passion fruit vines on the left and right of the pitaya

Check out the Passiflora Society International (PSI) website and Facebook page. http://www.passiflorasociety.org/

Their Facebook page recently said this:

> *"The latest issue of our journal Passiflora is going to press shortly. At 54 pages, it is one of our biggest yet and is packed with interesting and helpful articles – reportage, original research, how-to guides – it's all there!"*

Just in case you have the travel bug!! The Passiflora Society International is having its annual conference October 21-23 2022 in Hyeres, Cote d'Azur, France.

Many of you know Bob Holzinger, a long time CRFG Inc. member in southern California. He maintains the American seed bank for *Passiflora* seeds. Seeds are sold to members of PSI.

You can read more about passion vines and passion fruit on these sites:

https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/passion-fruit/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passiflora_edulis

https://farmhomestead.com/herbs/passion-flower/

Gardening Know How: Passion Flower Types: What Are Some Common Passion Flower Varieties: https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/vines/passion-flower/passion-flower-varieties.htm

Evelyn's Passion Fruit Jelly

Evelyn, who grows passion fruit in Los Osos, contributed a Passion fruit Jelly recipe.

The entire recipe is on the next page so you can print it whole.

Pomonas Universal Pectin version of Passion Fruit Jelly

I purchase Pomonas online and like it because I can use less sugar
-Evelyn

Ingredients

- 4 cups passion fruit juice
- 4 teaspoons prepared calcium water (from Pomona)
- 1 1/2 cups cane or beet sugar
- 4 teaspoons Pomona's pectin (measured from the large packet)

Instructions

1. Prepare fruit. Scoop fruit and seeds from shells. I gently warm mixture and then run thru my Foley Food Mill – a chinois will work as well. Warming helps break down the pulp. Others run pulp and seeds in blender or food processor just enough to separate pulp/seeds, but not break up all seeds. Then run thru a food mill/strainer.

2. Prepare calcium water. Put 1/2 teaspoon calcium powder (from the small packet) and 1/2 cup water in a small jar with a lid. Shake well before using.

3. Fill your water bath canner to a level that will cover your jars. Bring to a boil. Proceed with next steps while the water is heating.

4. Wash and rinse jars. Bring lids and rings to a low simmer; turn off heat and let stand in hot water.

5. Measure passion fruit juice (could be half juice and half pulp with seeds) and prepared calcium water into a large stock pot. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently.

6. Meanwhile, combine sugar and pectin in a bowl. Stir very thoroughly to prevent clumping.

7. When juice boils, add sugar mixture and stir vigorously to dissolve the pectin. Return to a boil (about 5 minutes) and then turn off heat.

8. Skim off the foam for nicer appearance. It's totally edible so save for personal use.

9. Fill half-pint jars to within 1/4" of top. Wipe rims clean with a damp cloth. Screw on 2-piece lids/rings, finger tight.

10. Use a jar lifter to place jars in boiling water bath. Bring water back to a boil (it doesn't need to be a hard boil) and set the timer for 10 minutes.

11. Remove jars to a towel-covered countertop to cool.

12. Check seals. Lids should be solid and pulled down tight. (if they flex and pop, the jar didn't seal; put unsealed jars in the refrigerator and use those first).

Jack Swords Interview, Local Chapter History

By Tom Sheldon

On June 28th, 2022, Jack Swords gave me and my wife Jenny Weaver a tour of his fantastic property and sat down with us to talk about the history of the local CRFG chapter. In Part 1 of this article, I described the tour. It appeared in the August 2022 CRFG-CC Leaflet newsletter available here (see 2022/Aug): https://www.crfg-central.org/newsletters

Watch the video tour of Jack's Jungle: https://youtu.be/kD6eTycJPZc

Jack Swords is no stranger to long-time members of the local CRFG. He literally started the group back in the 1970s. At that time, Jack was collecting rare fruits on a property in Orcutt, but when it turned into a passion, he moved to a larger property in Nipomo where he eventually planted an entire jungle. I'm guessing his interest may have started in the 7th grade when he took up beekeeping. An article in the July 1986 Santa Maria Times quoted Jack saying, "The main reason I became interested in rare fruits is because someone said they couldn't be raised here." Jack has proved over and over that they will grow and flourish here-- except for those dang mangos.

Jack Swords

One reason for visiting Jack was to hear about the history of the early CRFG. We also toured his property and spent quite a bit of time wandering the many paths before we finally managed to sit down and talk. Jack led us to a table and chairs under a large cherimoya tree. He was prepared for us with a selection of fruit on the table to taste, including Surinam cherries (Westree 369, a variety developed by Nelson Westree) and jaboticaba, a fruit that grows right on the bark of its tree trunk. We also got some allspice leaves to smell and chew, and Jenny got an allspice plant to take home.

Jack Swords in 1987 from Telegram/Tribune article.
Photo by Mark Buchman

Jack showed us three different newspaper clippings from the 1980s that highlighted the progress of his work and his adventures at gathering seeds in places like Mexico, Costa Rica, Hawaii, and Belize. He mentions that they have been on the current property since 1975. He was teaching 6th grade at the time

when he met John Moore, who had an acre in Orcutt where he was planting fruit trees. Jack says he would go out there and browse his property and think "I want to grow some of this."

John Moore was the one who got Jack involved with the California Rare Fruit Growers. He says "We would take trips down to San Diego because that was the only place in California where some of these rare fruits were growing. We would drive down and camp or stay in a hotel and then visit all these people involved with rare fruits."

The California Group

Two of the people who started the main California Rare Fruit Growers' group were John Riley up in Santa Clara and Paul Thomson down in Bonsall CA. Jack says "I never met John Riley, but I met Paul Thompson many many times. I got advice and plants from Paul. Interesting person. Ex-marine. At that time, Paul would prepare a newsletter using a mimeograph! He sent that newsletter out to all the California members, which was probably only 20 to 30 people. And so, I would get this newsletter and once a year we would get a year-book chock full of information."

Riley and Thompson first started talking about forming a group way back in 1966, and by 1968 they had formed an official group. By 1971, membership had grown to 379 members and by 1975 to 595 members. Today, there are over 3000 registered members in California and beyond, as well as many other unofficial members.

More information about the state group can be found at https://crfg.org/home/history/

The Local Group

Jack began to get involved with more people on the Central Coast who were involved in growing fruit. One character was Art Henzgen. Jack says "Art would sell a variety of plants such as coffee in a paper cup full of soil at the Farmers' Market. Each cup had a stick to identify the plant." Art would eventually become the co-organizer and co-chair of the newly formed Central Coast chapter of the CRFG.

Jack says about that time the local Five Cities newspaper would call him every day to get the weather in Nipomo since Jack had an extensive set of temperature gauges on his property. "I would give them the minimum and maximum temperatures at around 5 or 6 AM. Jerry Bunin was my contact at the newspaper, and he wrote an article about my work that appeared in the paper. There was little knowledge of our group until these articles (Bunin's article and two others) were written in the local newspapers. They helped get the word out about our group. People who were interested in rare fruits connected with each other because of these articles.

According to Jack, about 10 people decided to organize a local chapter of the CRFG. He estimates this was in the mid-1980s. They started meeting in the community room at the Mid-State Bank in Nipomo (now the Mechanics Bank). It was a small group, but it was made up a people dedicated to raising rare plants. The organizing members were Jack and his wife Mary Kay, along with Art Henzgen and his wife Doris. Jack and Art were co-chairs, Mary Kay was treasurer, and Doris was secretary. Jack said that Gabrielle Robbins was a part of it. He said, "She's been around since the very beginning, and she is raising a lot of different stuff considering that she is in a much colder climate."

Editor's Note: You can find the memorial page for Art Henzgen on the CRFG Central Coast Web site here: https://www.crfg-central.org/in-memoriam

Joe Sabol (former chair) and Dick Pottratz (current treasurer)

Art and Doris Henzgen

Doris and Art at a CRFG meeting

One person made a connection with Cal Poly. Jack thinks it was Les Ferreira. There were a few meetings at Cal Poly and the word started getting around among like-minded people. Membership increased considerably due to the Cal Poly meetings. But the real magic for the group was Joe Sabol, a Cal Poly ag professor. Once Joe got involved, membership really exploded.

Jack said that "Joe added a lot more activities. Like the Festival of Fruit and the scion exchange and the apple grafting. There are now hundreds of members. But Joe is quite a spokesman for the group and heck of a good guy. In a nutshell, that is how it developed. We didn't have a newsletter. We pretty much wrote with quill pens."

Side note: I contacted Les Ferreira, and he said, "Dr. Bob McNeil (Fruit Science) was also very instrumental in early Chapter activities. Cal Poly had a small demonstration orchard near the railroad tracks with an extensive selection of citrus. They even grew babaco papayas on the hill by the campus radio tower. Meetings were occasionally held at the Crops Unit. The early scion exchanges were at Joe Sabol's place, but the activity became so popular that it was moved to Cal Poly."

In the early days, there were a lot of connections with the CRFG California chapter and CRFG members in other areas. The importance of this can't be overstated. Long-time CRFG members in other locations had already developed varieties that grew well in California, and they shared those with local members. The sharing continues through scion exchanges. Many of the varieties are named after some of the early members. That helps the group honor the work of the early "pioneers."

Jack said "We connected with people who I was somewhat familiar with through my earlier travels down to San Diego, which was the "Mecca" of the early CRFG. John Moore and I would travel down there, and we often went to a place called "Langdon's Lychees" which was a "nursery" owned by a member of the San Diego CRFG. I acquired several longans and lychee trees in pots from that place, and I learned how easy they are to kill. Some of them hated our water with its dissolved solids. I have since planted lychees from Florida and they seem to be doing OK now that we are getting water from Santa Maria which is connected to the State Water project."

Clytia Chambers was responsible for doing the CRFG magazine (The Fruit Gardener). She and her husband, Bob Chambers, had a 10-acre orchard of white sapotes down south. It was a huge collection. About 5 years ago a bunch of us went down there and we wandered around collecting scion wood of all the different varieties he had collected. Bob Chambers came to visit us after that, but sadly both he and his wife Clytia, have passed on. There is a white sapote growing back here with the name 'Clytia.' The scion wood that we collected from Bob's orchard is here and at Robert Scott's place and at other places. We still share that scion wood with people who want to grow the different varieties."

Side note: You can read about the Bob Chambers sapote collection in an article titled "If You Like Custard, This Fruit's for You" from October 24, 1991. It's available at this link: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-10-24-nc-100-story.html

The group also connected with Harvey Correia, who lives up in the Stockton area. Harvey had a lot of contacts. Jack said "We traveled all over Southern California with Harvey one year. He would say 'I know a guy' and then we would make arrangements to visit the guy that was raising these rare fruits. Harvey has a web site with some interesting pictures of our trip to Bob Chambers' property. You'll see the cast of characters like Robert Scott, the hard-core characters who went

down to San Diego County to take advantage of this one opportunity to get part of Bob Chambers collections."

Note: Harvey Correia's Web site is at https://whitesapote.com/

Jack also made a connection with Orton Englehart. Regarding Orton, Jack said "He invented the Rainbird sprinkler system. John Moore took me to his place. I've got a bunch of Orton Englehart's cherimoyas and some other stuff here that is correctly labeled. There is a cherimoya named Orton and another one named Englehart."

I asked Jack about the fruits they were interested in growing when the group first started. He said "They were not apples. They were cherimoyas, macadamias, white sapotes, every uncommon and difficult fruit. There were kiwis, but they have since turned into a commercial crop, so kiwis are no longer so interesting to us. In the early days, we would go down to the San Diego area and get the ones we wanted. Somebody would be growing things in a pot, and sometimes we would get scion wood. There were a lot of failures, but the main thing is that people were just interested in doing this. "

Jack says, "I brought back a lot of seeds from Mexico" and then he makes sure to point out to Jenny (a former agriculture inspector) that he cleared them through the Ag Inspection at the border. "We used to collect a lot of fruit in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Southern Baja. A lot of plants that I collected in Mexico were from people's back yards, or we had the kids in these families collect fruit. They enjoyed doing it. Subsequently, forward in time, four of those kids from two different families from Guadalajara were our exchange students in Nipomo. They went to the local schools and learned English. Now some of them are hitting 50. Well, some of the guavas here are from those little kids."

Jack continued "The number of rare fruits that we had when this chapter began has grown exponentially. I was told by nurserymen that they wouldn't grow here, but that is a challenge for me. We killed a lot; we just don't talk about it. Now you're seeing people pushing these things to grow up in more northern areas, even San Francisco."