

# The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter  
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## 2006 – The Year of the Healthful Grape

### Vitacea

*Vitis vinifera L ssp. silvestris*

### Growing Your Own Wine Grapes on the Central Coast



You've seen that article with Dick Pottratz in the newspaper, read about his award winning wine made from grapes grown in his own little plot, and have decided that if he can do it, so can you! (That's Dick on the left, pruning fruit trees at our January meeting.) You have a patch of rocky soil that slopes uphill from your patio that you've never been able to do anything with, so you make a run to the local nursery, pick up 30 bare roots of Chardonnay grapes (on sale!) and head home to rev up the rototiller. Several days of backbreaking work (and trips to the chiropractor) later, you have your vineyard planted. You are very proud of your accomplishment. Sitting on your patio and looking over your new vineyard you envision mature, healthy vines,

loaded with clusters of light green grapes. You see yourself sharing **your** award winning wine at some future CRFG meeting! You are applauding yourself on the great decision to plant a home vineyard!

Fast forward four years. Despite your best efforts of weeding, watering, fertilizing, and pruning, half your vines are dead and the other half look as if they intend to be. What the gophers didn't gnaw, the mildew molded. In spite of that, your vines had actually managed to produce some clusters this year, but now the vines are completely void of any grapes. What has happened to the grapes that were there yesterday? In anticipation of your first "pressing", you just bought a nice big plastic vat and recruited four teenage boys who wear size 11-13 shoes (and who assure you that they don't have athlete's foot) for trampling duty. Now you discover that your "crop" has vanished. This is truly a disaster! You should have listened to your neighbor when he said if you want to make some wine, do what he does—go to Manteca and buy the juice you want at the winery and make a nice barrelful of wine.

Well, your neighbor is right. His way is easier (and cheaper!) if the end goal is simply to make wine. But, Dick Pottratz did it from scratch, and so can you! The climate here is perfect for growing most

types of wine grapes, especially Syrah, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Zinfandel. So, if a person likes white wine, Chardonnay wasn't a bad choice. (It is only a bad choice if you want to grow vines for commercial wine production. It has been over planted!) Even the location—a rather rocky hillside—wasn't awful. Using the rototiller wasn't wrong. Buying bare root plants from the local nursery was okay. What did you do wrong that Dick does right?

After talking to Dick about his vineyard of 20 Syrah vines, I guess I'd have to say—nothing! In spite of winning silver and bronze medals for his wines in 2005, he insists he isn't an expert in growing grapes. He has had more than his share of growing disasters!

"Grapes grow well in poor soil", says Dick. "They don't need a lot of water or fertilizer. But in this climate, what they do need is to be sprayed for mildew." This was a lesson Dick learned the hard way. During the growing season, Dick sprays his vines about three times a month with wettable sulfur. He has them trained on regular steel staked wires and he uses a quadrilateral spur pruning method. His best year, those 20 vines produced 400 pounds of grapes, with every 15 pounds supplying about one gallon of juice to be turned to wine. When he thought he didn't need to spray with sulfur, he ended up with only 60 pounds of grapes! Battling gophers and ground squirrels is a never-ending chore. Use whatever method works best for you in maintaining plants in the rest of your yard, but don't imagine they are just going to "go away." And why did your grapes disappear?

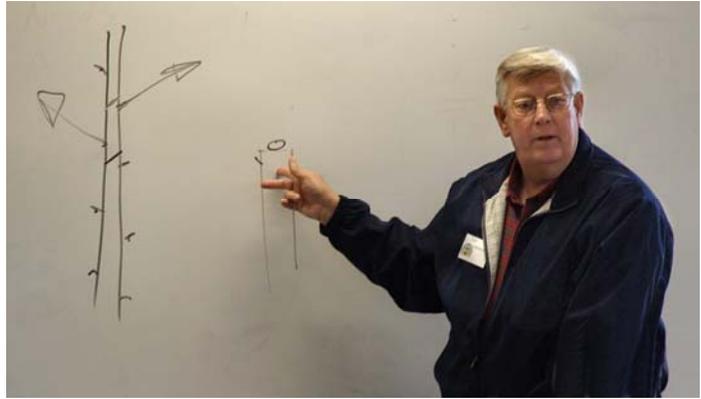
"Birds," says Dick, "managed to get into my vines and eat most of the crop, even though I had them netted. I've figured out what I did wrong, but it's too late this year." Birds fly in and decimate ripened grapes in hours. They can find holes and spaces in netting to get into the center where they can eat, but often, they can't get out and end up dying there, bellies full of your grapes! It is unlikely you will ever manage to get a decent crop unless you net your vines.

So, get back down to the nursery and get a few more plants to fill in where the others are completely gone. As bad as the ones still there look, they will be fine after they've lost those ugly mildewed leaves and sprouted lovely new ones. Just remember to spray them next year! Prune them right. Unless your soil is very poor, grapes don't require much fertilization. Apply no more than 1/4 pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer in a circle up to 4 feet away from each vine. In following years when the vines are established, apply about a pound up to 8 feet away from the base if growth was slow or foliage color poor the previous season. Do this only when the buds start to swell in the spring. Aphids and mites are common garden insects that you may find on your plants. Treat them the way you do in the rest of your garden. Don't get rid of the vat or break-off your friendship with those big-footed teenagers. Next year you just may give Dick Pottratz a real run for his money!

## January Meeting

Art DeKleine opened the first meeting of 2006 in a room crowded with over 100 members and guests waiting in anticipation to hear Cal Poly professor, Dan Lassanske, bestow on them the secret to the perfectly pruned tree. Art got the business out of the way first, namely clearing the way for the slate of officers to be voted on. (That was quickly taken care of. See the election results at the end of this article.) Joe Sabol made a great case for why more of us attending our local chapter meetings should be members of the parent organization for the small annual fee of \$30. (Six new members joined the parent organization and six more renewed.) There were a few updates on the progress being made for the Festival of Fruit being hosted by our chapter in September. Sandra Pirghaibi, our meticulous historian, gave a brief talk on the yearbooks she has been putting together (with assistance by Marie Moyer) and presented another completed one to the chapter. The meeting was then turned over to Dan Lassanske.

“Trees have feelings,” said Dan. “Don’t prune them with dull shears. Don’t go out in the orchard and take your frustrations out on them after a bad day. Take a clue from Joe Sabol. Smile at your trees. Hug them! They’ll respond in kind!” Then he proceeded to show us exactly how to cut and shape a tree into a nice “roundy, moundy” form. According to him, you should use well-sharpened by-pass type hand pruners or loppers and make your cut at an angle close to an out facing bud. “Stumps don’t grow,” Dan said several times. Flat-topped cuts allow water to sit on top and become the perfect breeding ground for disease, as well as creating a magnifying glass effect for the sun, causing sunburn. (Great photo demonstrating correct cutting technique was taken by Paul Moyer, as was the one below in the orchard.)



The rain held off just long enough for Dan to teach the indoor portion of his grafting course. As he finished his lecture with the statement that “class will resume in the orchard”, the sky opened up and it began to pour! We thought 2006 would be a repeat of 2005, but by the time we’d gathered our belongings and chatted a bit, the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun, the sun came out, and we were able get into the orchard with no further problems. (The orchard is not muddy, thanks to the wonderful layer of mulch!)

Once in the orchard, Dan continued his excellent pruning class, reminding us again that our goal is to have “a nice looking tree that bears fruit.” Most of us attending his demonstration were not trying to grow fruit commercially, which Dan admits requires a different pruning concept entirely. Dan gave us some practical demonstrations and then turned us loose on the orchard. By the end of the afternoon, almost the entire orchard had been pruned and we all felt confident that we could go home and give our own trees the proper shaping. It was a win/win situation for all attendees!



### Chapter Officers 2006

Co-Chairs: Art DeKleine, Bob Tullock; Program Chair: Joe Sabol; Program Assistant: Carol Scott; Secretary: Rhonda Underwood; Treasurer: Dick Pottratz; Web Master: John and Choung Crowe; Web Assistants: Pet and Marvin Daniels, Art DeKleine; Raffle Directors: Marvin Daniels, Larry Hollis; Historian/Archivist: Sandra Pirghaibi, Marie Moyer; Photographer: Paul Moyer; Assistant Photographer: Ronald Blakey; Refreshments: **Open\***; Friendship Chair: **Open\***; Newsletter Editor: Lennette Horton; Newsletter Mailing: Art and Doris Henzgen, Linda Hauss; Community Orchard Coordinators: Joe Sabol, Pet and Marvin Daniels; Apple Grafting Coordinators: Joe Sabol, Marvin

Daniels, Patti Schober. Festival Steering Committee Co-Chairs: Joe Sabol, Pet Daniels. \*Volunteers are needed for these positions!

## Orchard Work Day



There were 12 trees that were left unpruned after the pruning class. Pet and Marv Daniels quickly organized a workday for January 28. Those that turned out to assist (Pet, Marv, Sandy, Paulski, Larry, Roberta, Jaleah, Art, Evelyn, Joe, Steve, John and Choung) managed to get those trees pruned, as well as cleaning up most of the trimmings that had been left. Then, still eager for more, they went to the Cal Poly vineyard and collected grape cuttings for Bob Tullock and his crew, who will have them available at the Festival of Fruit. There is always something to do in the orchard. If you have a spare moment, your help would be much appreciated. There are no parking fees on campus on the weekend. For more

information contact: Marv Daniels [marvnpet@aol.com](mailto:marvnpet@aol.com) or Pet Daniels [petmarv@aol.com](mailto:petmarv@aol.com)

## Ask an Expert

Aura Carmi, a CRFG member who lives near Camarillo in Ventura County has a very old and unusual apricot growing in her yard. She has been told that the best way to propagate it is to graft it onto other rootstock, but she isn't sure what kind of rootstock is best, where to get rootstock, or even how to graft. Her questions reached Joe Sabol who gave her some great advice—advice that might help any of us having the need of saving an old tree from extinction. Following is most of Joe's answer to her.

“Dear Aura,

Glad you are trying to save a very special unusual apricot! Grafting is the best way to save the genetics in that very special apricot!!! Grafting is not all that hard to do.

Here is some advice for you:

1. Graft it to any apricot tree you can find--a neighbor's tree or a fellow CRFG member's tree--keep it alive first! Keep those genetics alive somewhere, anywhere! You can then go back to that tree and take scion wood (and fruit) because your original tree is now very much alive down the street or across town. Do this regardless of your success finding rootstock this year!
2. Citation and Marianna should be OK for your rootstock. They are not easy to find at your local nursery. Wholesale nurseries such as Dave Wilson, Burchell, and Orange County Nursery might be a good source but they are reluctant to sell and ship one or two rootstock. All three of these nurseries sell over a million rootstocks each year so you need to know someone to get them to take the time and effort to ship one root to you. Talk to Norm Beard, he may help to get a few Citation roots? Shucks, he can find anything!
3. Now for good news: Any seedling apricot would be fine! Check with your local CRFG Chapter and see if anyone has an apricot seed growing in their compost pile, go get it, dig it up, pot it, the graft your cot to the seedling. Put the word out that you want any seedling apricot that has a diameter of

about 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch at the 6 to 10 inch mark on the seedling. Go dig it up in January, pot it and then....graft it in late February after you do number 5 or six or seven below.

4. More good news: Go buy a bare root apricot tree in January, any variety. Buy it at Home Depot for \$13, cheap. Plant it. Then, graft it over to your unusual apricot in February and you are in great shape. This may be a much better idea than trying to buy one rootstock from a very busy wholesale nursery! Leave the two apricot varieties on the tree for a while; they may help to pollinate each other if they bloom the same time! Keep reading.

5. Really good news: Attend our Scion Exchange and rootstock sale here in San Luis Obispo on February 18 at 1:30 p.m. at Cal Poly. We sell rootstock for \$2 each--cheap. We will have Nemaguard Roots for sale at \$2 each. They will be an OK rootstock for your apricot. We would love to see you here at our meeting. Keep reading number 6.

6. Now for the fantastic news: Attend our Scion Exchange and Grafting Party here in San Luis Obispo on Feb. 18 at 1:30 p.m., same as number 5 above and learn to graft! We will have 4 or 5 demonstrations going all afternoon, with expert grafters demonstrating how to graft your apricot. Bring some of your apricot scion wood to the meeting, buy a root or two, and I will help you graft it to your \$2 rootstock that same afternoon! I will also ask you for 6 inches of the scion wood to put on my apricot tree!

7. More great news for you: Attend the CRFG Meeting in Santa Barbara on Feb. 25. I will be there too; teaching the SB/Ventura CRFG Chapter how to cleft graft an apple tree. The same process will work for your apricot. You need to learn to graft so you can keep the special apricot tree alive for the generations to come!

8. Practice your skills. Connect up with Bob Vieth and go grafting at the local high schools right near you!!! Bob is teaching apple grafting at Camarillo, Carpinteria, and Ventura High Schools in February and early March. He would love to have you join him. You need not be an expert to go with him. He needs help counting grafting knives at the end of each class! He is getting a cc of this note.

9. Connect up with Jim Bathgate. He is a CRFG Member way down south near San Diego and LOVES apricots, especially ones that might be low chill and super delicious! He may have 9 other suggestions for you. He is the pro. I am one of his students. Jim is getting a cc of this note.

I hope this helps you and you can select and "do" a few of the activities above and keep that special apricot tree alive and perhaps share it with others in CRFG!"

### Dormant Pruning and Saving Scion Wood

Many of us are pruning our deciduous fruit trees right now. 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 put 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 17, 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 17, label them, and place them in a poly bag with a wet paper towel--but no need to put all these in a refrigerator!!! Joe Sabol, (805) 544-1056

## Festival of Fruit 2006

The exciting event known as the “Festival of Fruit” will be held September 5 through 9, 2006, right here on the Central Coast. We are expecting a turnout of at least 400 people from some of the other 22 CRFG chapters in the state, as well as at least 150 people from our own chapter. It is a memorable and fun event and one all of you will want to be a part of. We need “many hands” to make it successful. If you can help, call Pet Daniels at 773-9311 and cheerfully volunteer your services!

The next meeting of the Festival Steering Committee will be at 6 p.m., Tuesday, February 17, 2006 at the Pismo Outlet Center Community Room.

### Local Rare Fruit of the Month—February—Sapote

By Pet Daniels

Ah Yes! Sue Belle is my favorite girl! She is sweet, delicate, productive, and controllable to 7 or 8 foot tall with watchful pruning of the top branches and the fruit is ripening in a constant stream! It's called double cropping, but actually we have fruit all year!



Harvest is one at a time with the color being the factor in picking the light colored, almost yellow, fruit and allowing it to ripen at room temperature similar to an avocado. Once in a while a fruit will soften on the tree and when that is picked it is marvelous! They do drop when soft so I am attentive to the fruit and check it often for the ripeness. If I were to select only one tree for my garden here in Pismo Beach, I would select the Sue Belle White Sapote. I feel it is superior to the Vernon variety as Sue is sweeter, and has a more tender skin. She is not a good selection for a commercial grower for the reason that a tougher skin is better for shipping.

What's the flavor of Sue Belle Sapote? She is delicate and sweet, but not sickly sweet! The texture is creamy and smooth, juicy tender flesh! It can be eaten before it gets soft and is sweet and crunchy! Unlike a ripe avocado, Sue Belle Sapote is not rubbery. I think the closest in texture is a creamy ripe pear. In flavor I don't think it compares with any other fruit--just my opinion as I have eaten Sapote since I was very small. Sue Belle is a queen!

The Sapote is not going to fruit from a seed in my estimation. I have had no luck that way, but grafted, it can be a Sue Belle and a very healthy plant. I have no problems with disease or insects on my tree! If you have a seedling and would like some grafting wood please contact me.

(According to Joe Sabol, Pet is absolutely right. A Sapote seedling will not produce fruit, as attested to by Joe's beautiful but not fruitful ten-year-old tree pictured on the left. **He** finally got some grafting wood from a Sue Belle in January, so he hopes to have a crop in the near future. Pictured above is the one-year-old bark grafted tree at the home of Barbara and Lloyd Matthews. It already has blossoms! )



## Announcements

**Welcome to Our Chapter:** Mark Skinner, Ron and Liz Helgerson, Bill Casella, Skip Dyke, Joe & Carol Lorenzini, Kristyn Kellogg, Thorv & Mary Lou Hessellund, Sanford White, and Bob Asbell.

**SARC Sponsored “RESTORATION AND SELF-CARE 101” Workshop:** Nutritionist and chef Craig Lane will hold a workshop to cover practical instruction/tips for vibrant health including delicious and therapeutic cooking skills, activation and restoration of sublime body systems (drawing from Western, Oriental and Ayurvedic modalities), stretching and movement, and work with sound and dialogue. Expert instruction combined with outdoor activities, participant interaction and fabulous meals promise to make this a weekend to remember. The workshop will be held in San Luis Obispo on **Saturday, Feb 4th from 1-6pm and Sunday, Feb 5th from 10-5pm** (dinners to follow are optional). Sliding scale tuition: \$80 - \$150 (scholarships are available based on need). Contact Hunter Francis at 756-5086 for more information.

**Reminder from Marv Daniels:** We use the PG&E Community Center for our annual December meeting and potluck. PG&E has always been happy to let us use the facility, but this year, we didn't do a good clean-up job. *“Just to let you know that we had a complaint that there was quite a mess left from the plants when your group was here December 10. Our janitor had to perform extra work to clean up after your group. We look forward to the Rare Fruit Growers coming back; however every group does have to clean up after themselves. Thanks, PG&E Rep.*

**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. (With Joe's encouragement, **SIX** new members signed up for the national organization and **SIX** people renewed at the January meeting!)

**Return of the Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting Event:** Mark your calendars now for **Saturday, August 12, 2006** when Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting will return to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. This has been a **wildly** popular event that we weren't able to host this year. (Yes, I **do** mean “wildly”. Have you ever seen fruit enthusiasts high on fructose?) Note that this is less than one month before we host the Festival of Fruit. **Your** assistance is not only requested, it is **NEEDED!**

## Calendar of Meetings – 2006

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!

**February 18—Annual Scion Exchange—Cal Poly Crops Unit:** **(Note that this is the third Saturday of the month!)** This is another very popular meeting, and one you won't want to miss! There will be grafting demonstrations, a scion exchange, rootstock for sale, and grafting knives, Buddy Tape, and bird netting for sale, too. The Cal Poly students have some great plants for sale, too! Come with your U-Haul! **Refreshments group S-Z please—we have many visitors at this meeting, so please provide accordingly!**

**Directions to the 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.

**March 11—The Sustainable Agriculture Farm at Cal Poly:** Join us on a visit to this unique instructional unit, learn all about the CSA, and meet some Cal Poly students. This location is a secret and fun to try to find! Hint: Look behind the Dairy Unit! (If you come to the February meeting, you'll even get a map to guide you to the location.) Dr. John Phillips will host us. **Refreshments group A through G, please.**

**April 8—Green Acres Lavender Farm in Atascadero:** Janice Silva and Bob Bostwick will host our meeting and share their fascinating lavender with us. Thanks to Roger Eberhardt for helping to line up this adventure. Check them out at: [www.greenacreslavenderfarm.com](http://www.greenacreslavenderfarm.com) **Refreshments group H through R, please.**

**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.