



# Central Coast Chapter CRFG

August 2022 Newsletter

by Dara Manker

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## Next CRFG Meeting

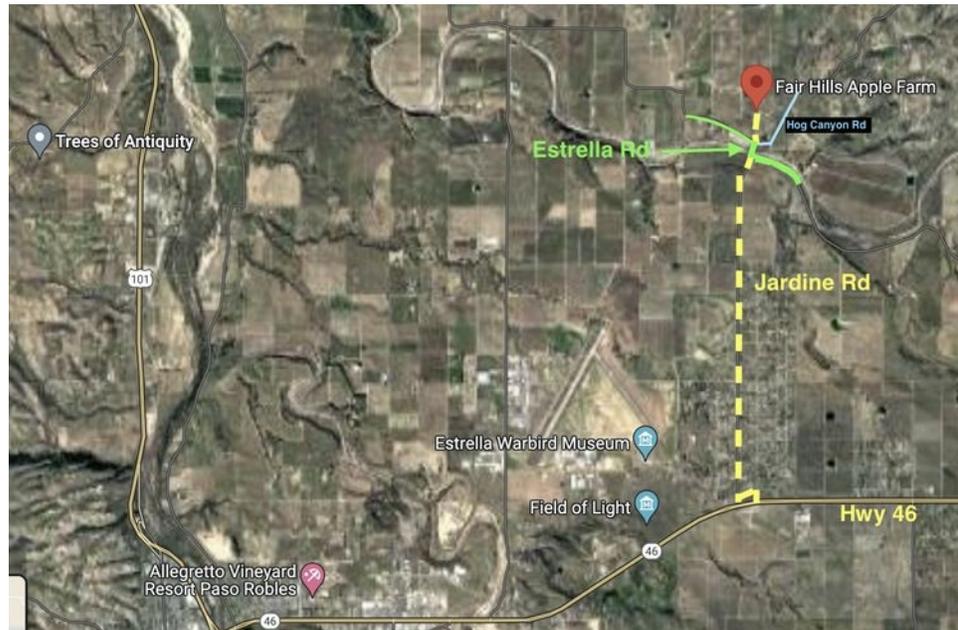
**When:** September 10th, 2022

**Time:** Socializing and Refreshments: 12:30 pm  
Meeting: 1-3 pm  
(Tour starts at 2 pm)

**Where:** Fair Hills Farms <https://fairhillsapplefarm.com>  
[6780 Estrella Road, Paso Robles](#)

## Directions:

1. Turn north off of Hwy 46 onto Jardin Rd.
2. Jardin Rd. becomes Estrella Rd.



3. At the intersection of Estrella and Hog Canyon roads, turn onto the dirt driveway (see green arrow in picture).
4. Continue up the hill to the gate. There is a lot of parking.



**Bring:** Your own chair; refreshments to share if you would like.  
Fair Hills Farms will provide apple juice tasting and fruit samples.

## **About Fair Hills Farms**

Russel Steingold Owner

Alex Martinez 805-610-9021

Alex Martinez and Amulfo, Orchard Managers

From Fair Hills Farms:

Russel Steingold is a native of South Africa. He is a fashion executive and co-founder of Fabletics.

Russel is also a licensed pilot and, during a flight to Paso Robles from L.A. in 2020, fell in love with the area and decided to buy the orchard and build a home here. Before moving here, he didn't know anything about farming.

He is a huge believer in organic farming and so we are transitioning back to organic because of him. We also started making juice to reduce waste because as he will often tell you, his biggest pet peeve is waste. Coming from a business background, he is always full of new ideas and is very driven!

Fair Hills Farm is located at the three-way intersection of Hog Canyon, Estrella, and Jardine Roads. The Estrella River basin offers a unique climate with hot sunny days and cool nights that are perfect for growing apples, stone fruit, and grapes. The first apple orchard was planted in May, 1992.

Fair Hills Farms is committed to being the preferred supplier of sustainably grown produce. Fair Hills has followed sustainable growing practices for the past 15 + years. We continue to follow sustainable growing practices and bring the freshest and healthiest fruit to our long time loyal customers. Fair Hills has over 19 apple varieties, 30 peach and nectarines, and numerous plums, pluots, apricots, cherries and pears.

Fair Hills Farms are at both local Farmers Markets here in San Luis Obispo and as far as Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles counties. They have a fruit stand on the property that includes sampling and apple juice tasting.

## Items of Interest

### From Robert Scott:

There is an interesting article about a pioneer CRFger who past away this year. Leo Manual lived down in San Diego, and his fruit notes from 2007 can be found by following this link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sgqkARzK35VUB-XITsELiYAV\\_WalCav3/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sgqkARzK35VUB-XITsELiYAV_WalCav3/view?usp=sharing)

### From Larry Hollis

A few years ago some young folks asked me to give them a spontaneous grafting lesson, and one of them videoed it. I recently found the video on YouTube after someone said they saw it. I send it to you in case it might work as filler on the CC YouTube site, though it probably would be improved with editing.

<https://youtu.be/Pfuanut2Bvg>

[Editor's note: Tom will add this to the Chapter's YouTube channel. Check out the channel that Tom created for us:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChRkqkelrmBKYXPXOON7nLg>]

### From Karen Kolba

Not sure if you want to publish this, but since our members are lovers of all parts of nature, may be worth passing on. They are recommending that we stop feeding birds, dry up the bird baths, etc for their own good.

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/News/avian-influenza-virus-detected-in-wild-birds-in-california>

## Recent Meeting Notes

### OUR AUGUST MEETING – BARBECUE AT TUCKER SCHMIDT’S HOME

Report by Linda Robertson, Chapter secretary

Our August meeting, on Saturday, August 13, was what I think was our chapter’s first-ever barbecue. Tucker Schmidt volunteered to host it at his home in Nipomo and to cook meat on his amazing grill setup. The chapter paid for tri-tip and chicken, and members brought plants to exchange and dishes to share, including baked beans, salads, brownies, and a chocolate cake made by Tucker’s mother for our event.



*Linda Robertson  
Secretary*

The weather was cooperative, another sunny day on the Central Coast, and after a report by Seth summarizing how the chapter reorganization is going, we settled down to eat delicious food and then explore Tucker’s orchard. The chapter met at his place a few years ago, when he was just starting to plant trees, and it was fun to walk around now and see how everything has grown, from apples and stone fruit to citrus. Everyone had a fine time; it may be worth considering making a summer barbecue or picnic an annual event.



**Central Coast Chapter Booth at the 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Harvest Festival  
Old Town Arroyo Grande  
Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Marv Daniels has handled our participation in this event for many years and is stepping down. Fortunately, at a recent Board meeting, Tucker volunteered to manage our participation this year.

We will have a table at the event on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, from 8am to 4pm. We'll be selling plants, educating the public about fruiting plants, holding grafting demonstrations, and signing up new members.



**Let Tucker know if you'd like to volunteer for a shift at the CRFG Central Coast Chapter booth, and/or if you have plants to donate for sale.**

A portion of the sales money will go toward scholarships for Cal Poly Fruit Science students.

## Get Your CRFG Central Coast Survey In And Qualify For A Prize Drawing!

Sharon Lovelady has put together a survey that Dick has emailed it to all CRFG Central Coast Chapter members. Check your email!

Sharon writes:

Although COVID shut down some of our monthly meetings, we are still moving forward and planning future meetings within the new COVID restrictions, whatever they may be at the moment. This slower COVID time is perfect for future planning and we're all interested in where you want your local CRFG chapter to go, what and where you're gardening, and what your volunteer interests are.



To that end, we're asking all members to read, fill out and return the survey so that we may plan 2023 meetings with your interests in mind Thanking you in advance and looking forward to your attendance at future meetings.

Your Board members are asking for your input moving forward with our C.C. Chapter activities and planning. We hope you can take time to complete and return the survey to us. For all of you that return the survey we will have prize drawings at our December 10, 2022, holiday party. If you would like to be eligible for the raffle for completing the survey, please fill out the form at the end of the survey.

Please return your completed survey before December 1, 2022. We will have paper copies at our next four meetings. You can mail it to Sharon Lovelady PO Box 3704, Paso Robles CA 93447. You can return it via email to [smlovelady2011@gmail.com](mailto:smlovelady2011@gmail.com).

Questions? Please call Sharon Lovelady for more information: 805-610-2900.

## New CRFG Central Coast Chapter Logo! Merchandise Coming Soon!



At a recent board meeting, Gabrielle volunteered to look into ordering merchandise for the Chapter. She asked a friend who is a graphic artist to design a custom logo for our Chapter that incorporates the logo of the State CRFG. Her friend came up with five designs. Gabrielle says she showed the logos to many people at this meeting, and the winner by far is the one shown here.

Gabrielle will be ordering men's t-shirts (with and without pockets), women's t-shirts, hats, and visors. Gabrielle will start by ordering a few different types of items to see how well they sell. If it works out well, she will branch out into other items which may include sweatshirts, socks, and aprons.





Tucker and his brother Kord at the BBQ











## Orchard or Jungle? Touring Jack Swords' Incredible Property

### by Tom Sheldon

*The following story is taken from a recorded interview with Jack Swords on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Both Jenny and I visited Jack and I recorded our tour of his property. A video will be available as soon as I get some free time.*

#### Part 1

Most CRFG members know Jack Swords and have even toured his property. For those who don't know, Jack is the "godfather" of our local group. He helped form the original Central Coast chapter of the CRFG back in the 70s with his wife Mary Kay, along with Art Henzgen and his wife Doris. Long-time member Gabrielle Robbins also became involved in the group back in those early days, shortly after they started meeting at the Mid-State Bank building in Nipomo. In Part 1, Jenny and I take a tour of the property with Jack. In Part 2, we talk about the CRFG group and its early beginnings.



*Jack Swords in his orchard, er...jungle*

We arrived at Jack's on a relatively warm day, appropriate for visiting what some might consider a tropical garden. Jack led us back to a shady spot and mentioned that it was 82 degrees. But the orchard was comfortable because it was shady nearly everywhere. The trees form a high canopy above us. There is a diversity of trees and exotic plants that have been growing for almost 47 years. A tour can certainly give hope to any grower just starting out, especially if you are on 300 feet of sand dune as is Jack's property. Jack says "We've been here since 1975, and so time has been to my advantage. If I put in 100 items, I have 20 left. I can't take a lot of credit other than we have been here for a long time. And that is why you see these large trunks."



Jack's orchard has been highlighted in a number of local newspaper articles over the years, including an article in the July 21, 1982 edition of the old Five Cities Times Press Recorder, the July 17, 1986 edition of the Santa Maria Times, and April 16, 1987 article in the Telegram Tribune. The Five Cities article has a photo that shows what the orchard looked like with just 12-years of growth (see photo). There is plenty of open sky compared to the high canopy you see today.

*Jack Swords in 1982  
(photo by Jerry Bunin)*



*Jack Swords' jungle, circa 1982 (note plenty of open space and sun still available)*



*Jack on one of the many paths through his jungle.*

I'm not sure whether to call Jack's property an orchard or a jungle. It certainly has lots of fruit, but it also has a lot of exotic plants. Jack has a passion for ferns and proteas, so the property is more of an "international jungle" than just an orchard. There are even plants considered weeds by some, such as the Palo de Arco. Jack picked it up in Baja California because he loves its beautiful flowers.



### *Flowers of the Palo de Arco*

Jack says the property is 1 ½ acres, but you can't tell. You can't see the fences or the neighbors. You can't see far at all because there are mature trees as well as new plantings everywhere. There are no rows and apparently, there is no landscape design. Things are planted where there is an opening to the sun or space that was made available by an experiment gone bad. Some of the newer plantings are in the old horse corral, now gone.

Above in the canopy, the bees are buzzing and the birds are looking for food. *Yellow Hooded Orioles* have taken to drinking the nectar from a tall *monkey's hand tree*, a tree that was sacred to the Aztec Indians. The flowers of the Monkey Hand tree are deep red, almost crimson. We spot one and Jack pulls down a branch for a closer look. It has a set of inner petals that look like a hand with pollen on the back of the fingers. Jack obtained the seeds from the former Quail Botanical Gardens (now San Diego Botanical Gardens) down in Encinitas many years ago.



### *Flower of the Monkey Hand Tree*

There's also food for the butterflies. Jack has milkweed scattered around the yard, some in cages to keep the chickens from eating it. When the Monarch caterpillars eat a milkweed plant down to nothing, he moves them to another plant. He has a tropical milkweed plant but points out that they are not recommended because parasites can over-winter on them. Jack cuts his back during the winter.

Jenny and I are secretly looking for food too. Jenny spots a cherimoya on the ground. It's one of her favorite fruits and she won't be able to get it out of her mind. Later, she'll ask Jack if he is "willing to part with it." Not only does she get the fallen cherimoya, but also an armful and a hatful of other freshly picked fruit to take home.

Jack is generous with his fruit. He is not growing for commercial sales. He is more interested in the challenge of growing things that are more common to places like Mexico, Costa Rica, and

Australia. When he is successful at growing a “rare” specimen, he shares cuttings so others can grow them as well. That reflects the spirit of the CRFG. That spirit has always been about experimenting and sharing the results, and also taking care of your friends in the group. CRFG members have spent entire days helping other members prune their orchard, then relaxing under the trees to enjoy snacks and conversation, and of course, some of the fruits from the trees. Jack recalls that long-time CRFG mover-and-shaker Joe Sabol once said “a number of people in our group don’t have room to raise these fruits but our meetings are a social occasion for them.”

Jack says a big part of the CRFG group is its willingness to share. It started out sharing things like seeds and scions and the resulting fruit. He says “I get on the tropical fruit forum where we share seeds and plants and some people want to pay for it. I say no, I don’t want money for it. First of all, it would take the enjoyment from me. What would I charge? What about the people who have been so generous over the last 45 years that have shared with me. How do I pay them? This was all done out of sheer kindness and generosity. For the most part, things are just freely given and we are all benefiting from that.”



*A small experimental mango grove*

As we walk further into the jungle, we pass near a small grove of mangos. Jack says “These are mangos, and they are all different kinds. This is an attempt to grow mangos, just to say I did it. I can’t say I have ever grown a mango. The problem with mangos is if they get cool, they will flower, and if you cut off the flowers, they’ll grow more. Our cool nights make it difficult to grow mangos here, but someday I may find a variety that will grow here.” I asked Jack about this in a follow-up question. He says the reason for cutting the flowers is to keep the plant from expending energy on flowers and fruit so it will grow larger. But his mangos keep flowering, so he keeps experimenting. One technique is to let a few fruit form and remove them when they are bean size, but he’s still experimenting with that.

Jack’s dog Xochi is barking and wants to get out from behind its fence to greet us, or at least sniff

us. Xochi is named after one of Jack's favorite exchange students from Mexico. There are other creatures here. Creatures of the night. They too look for food. Possums, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, ...and rats. The rats like the macadamia nuts that are everywhere on the property. It's a problem, so Jack traps them. He never uses poison.

Jack points up at one of the rat traps, which is mounted on the top of a movable pole. A wire cage surrounds the trap to keep birds out. "Sometimes, rats will eat the avocados, sometimes, they will eat citrus, but for the most part, they are after the macadamias. This time of year, when the macadamias are soft, you see the chew marks. That is what alerts me to set the traps. Once the macadamia shells get hard, the rats have a harder time chewing through them."

Other critters are tolerated. He even puts trays of water out for them. Jack says "I used to haul raccoons out to the country, but I don't bother anymore. If I took one away, that just opened a niche for another one."

I'm admiring all the growth and so I have to ask the inevitable question: "Are you on a well?"

Jack says they are on city water. He says he has a device on his water meter that alerts him of excess water usage. It was developed by Cal Poly students. When you live on a sand dune, you don't always notice water leaks because the water goes straight down, so you watch your water meter. He says the device "detects when water is running excessively and transmits to a device in the house. I know when water is supposed to be running, and if I see it running at the wrong time, I fix it right away."

I ask about water allocation and Jack says they don't have an allocation. He mentioned that the community service district installed a pipeline from the Santa Maria river and is committed to buying a certain amount of water whether it is used or not. The cost is shared by all the homes being built in the area, so its reasonable, and besides, Jack says he doesn't mind paying the bill because it allows him to do something he really enjoys (pointing to the orchard). He mentions that "everything is on drip and timers and monitored by the computer. If something breaks, I get an alert. The governor said we need to cut back and I'm willing to do that. We'll just modify our irrigation system and hopefully keep things alive."

We stop at a cluster of large trees that shade a table and some chairs where we will eventually sit to discuss the local CRFG chapter's history. Jack says "this macadamia tree is 45 years old. It came from a guy down in Vista who had an orchard and was propagating them. All of these macadamia and the white sapote are 45 years old." Jack points to the white sapote (see photo). "What's neat about this tree is the graft I put on it nearly 45 years ago. This is the scion wood (pointing to very large branch), and this is the basic tree (pointing to one branch of the trunk). There are a couple other scions stuck on it. This tree has a frost burn on it from back in the day when we used to get down to 20 degree. Not any more" (see picture ).



Jack points to the location of a graft on a white sapote tree done nearly 45-years ago.



Frost burn on white sapote tree

To say that Jack is an expert at grafting is an understatement. He's been doing it successfully for 45 years. He gave us a quick lesson. If you want to graft macadamia trees, you have to girdle the scion wood two or three months before cutting them off the source tree. This helps store up starches in the scion and gives them a better chance to take once they are grafted. Jack says in his experience, non-girdled macadamia grafts have a zero percent take, whereas girdled scion wood has a 100% take. His technique for girdling macadamia scions is to strip about  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch band of bark off the bottom of the scion, down to the cambium. He grasps the branch with a pair of pliers and then rotates the pliers about 90-degrees to scrape off the bark. This is done very lightly to avoid damaging the cambium under the bark. This girdling keeps the starches from going down into the rest of the tree, but with the cambium intact, the scion still gets water.

Jack mentioned that he put in hundreds of trees over the years, so I ask him what plants didn't work. He laughs and says "I put in a whole lot of things. I lost a lot of macadamia and mangos of course. I can't recall all my failures. I try not to remember them."

We pass a group of lucuma trees, which have been getting a lot of attention from the Central Coast CRFG chapter recently. Sharon Lovelady, one of our committee members, is especially familiar with the fruit. Her father, Alfredo Cheri (pronounced "Keeri") brought the lucuma here probably 30 years ago. He had been on a visit home to his native Peru and brought some lucuma seeds back with him in his pocket. Alfredo eventually became the manager of the arboretum at Cal State Fullerton. He was friends with Edgar Valdivia, who is well-known in state CRFG circles, and the two of them helped to spread the lucuma in California. I can't help but think this lucuma is from Alfredo's original trees.

*[Editor's note: See the story about lucumas in the January 2022 newsletter via this link: <https://www.crfg-central.org/newsletters>]*

We're still trying to make it to the table for a discussion, but there are too many distractions! Jenny notices a mulberry. Jack says it is a Persian Mulberry and the best mulberry fruit there is. "It is very very sweet. They don't get as large as some of the others do, but these have a really good flavor. This is the Kaester, which was introduced by Nelson Westree down in Los Angeles. I got a piece of scion wood from Nelson and I bought a fruitless mulberry at the nursery, and I stubbed it off and I grafted that scion, and this is what happened—on a fruitless mulberry. When I was teaching biology, we had silkworms, and this provided food for the silkworms. It reminds me of Nelson Westree, who also provided a lot of different macadamias to me, Surinam cherries, and so on. A lot of these plants remind me of people that are gone now, so they live on in this orchard."

Jenny sees a paint brush and a small medicine bottle in a cherimoya tree. She knows it's for hand pollination and asks Jack about his pollination methods. Jack says he collects the pollen in the afternoon and then waits until the next day to pollinate when the flowers are in their female stage. He shows a cherimoya flower that is ready to shed its pollen. He shakes it into the medicine bottle. He then finds a flower that is ready for pollination and pulls one petal off to expose a cone-shaped surface. This is where the pollen is brushed on, usually in the morning. He says you have to pollinate it thoroughly, otherwise the fruit will become misshapen. "We just don't have any native pollinizers. The bees won't pay any attention to the cherimoya flowers, so it all has to be done by hand. The commercial growers use an air gun that blows collected pollen up into the flower."



Left, cherimoya flower open and ready for pollen collection. Right, cherimoya flower cone where pollen is applied.

Jack points to one of the cherimoya trees and says it is his favorite. He got it in Costa Rica back when he went down there on a diving trip. “We drove up into the mountains and started talking to gardeners. I love talking to gardeners. They are always good people. I speak pretty good Spanish. So I found a guy growing cherimoyas and I asked him about it. He said they got ice on the ground, but that the cherimoyas were doing fine. So I brought back some seeds and that is what this tree is. It is actually a seedling with the Costa Rica variety grafted to it.”

Three bee boxes are located in a sunny spot near a shed. It's obvious two of them have hives. Jack says the third one is currently home to a spider, but says he uses it to gather swarms. He takes it to where he sees a swarm, takes the top off, and just shakes the swarm into the box. Later he transfers them to a regular hive box. “I'm dealing with the mite. There is a pesticide you can put in that will kill the mites just short of killing the bees but I can't imagine that the honey is that good for you so I don't do that. When a hive does get empty, I go in and clean it out and clean out all the debris, and then generally about this time of year, I'll hear a swarm and they come in and occupy that hive. They do it on their own. I've been doing this since I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.”

I see a tall tree with knobby spikes and ask about it. He says it's a floss silk tree. “If you were here in the fall, you would have seen big purple orchid-like flowers. I had one over by the trail. When the kids were younger, one of the kids fell against the side of that trunk, so I knocked all the spines off the trunk, but they all came back! The flowers are delightful and they get a big fruit that has seeds like a dandelion. They blow in the wind.”



The mature trunk of one of the floss silk trees on Jack's property

The back part of Jack's property slopes up. Jack says there is at least a 20 degree differential between the back and front because of the slope. In the early days, he would put thermometers all over trying to find the best place to plant. That turned out to be the middle of the lot where today the trees are much bigger than anywhere else.

We walk up to a *surinam cherry tree*. Jack says there are four different varieties. He points out number 369 from Nelson Westree and says "That gives you some idea of how many seedlings he put out to get one he liked. Nelson actually had two he liked. There were 369 and 404. His name lives on with this tree, Westree 369. They are tasty. We've dug up a lot of seedlings around here for Seth to get going (Seth lives across the road and is co-chair of Central Coast-CRFG chapter). These are all grafted varieties of surinam cherry." We also pick some fruit from a savannah cherry (*Eugenia calycina*), which is in the Cherry of the Rio Grande family. After

eating a bunch of the delicious fruit, Jack said “when you visit someone and get to eat tasty fruit, put the seeds in your pocket!”



### Savannah Cherry (*Eugenia calycina*)

We approach a bunch of Jaboticaba trees which Jack says are all different varieties. The tree is also called the “Brazilian Grape Tree.” What is striking about this plant is that its dark-colored fruit, about the size of plums, grows right on the bark.

There is a group of about five different lychees, and Jack points over to a longan, which is related to the lychee. Jenny notices a fig tree and we find out it is a seedless *jellyfig*. It’s actually called “*Steve’s Seedless Jellyfig*” after Steve Spangler down in Vista. There are feijoas from New Zealand that produce a tremendous amount of fruit. We pass more proteas, jacarandas, lucumas, and avocados. There is an avocado that has been grafted with over 25 different varieties. Jack asks if we can tell which avocado is his favorite by just looking. Jenny points to the biggest one and says “there is an old saying, the best fertilizer is the farmer’s footsteps... where he pays the most attention.”

As we move to the back of the property, we come across more jaboticaba, a black sapote and a yellow sapote. Jack points to all the locations where sapotes are growing and mentions that they all came from Bob Chambers’ orchard down near San Diego. A group of CRFG members from different chapters visited Bob’s orchard shortly before he passed away and obtained cuttings from his trees. These are now growing all over the property and further cuttings have been passed on to other growers. Jack says it’s his way of preserving the varieties.

Part of the back property is a little bare compared to the rest of property. Jack points over to the neighboring eucalyptus trees and says their roots are all over his yard. He says his macadamia trees can compete with the eucalyptus for water, but not most of his other plants.

We’re now heading in the direction of the front of the property and we come across a cassia. Jack says “I put in a lot of cassias because you can. They are easy. But also, there is a yellow

butterfly called the *Giant Cloudless Sulfur*, and it was found in the LA area and it's here now. It's larvae feed on the cassia leaves and they get bright yellow. They have blue spots down the side. Certain times of the year we see these big yellow butterflies, like the cabbage butterfly, but huge."

We get to a key lime tree, and Jack pauses to tell its story. He says he has a friend who occasionally stops by for the limes, which he put in his beer. Jack says there is not much juice but they are really limey and he says laughing, they fit nicely in a Mexican beer bottle! Jenny and I get a couple to take home. Both of us will vouch for their great taste in a gin and tonic. Jack says "I had a student teacher when I taught at Arellanes School. She said, they are not a key lime. If they are a key lime, I'll make you a key lime pie. I got a key lime pie!"

Back near the middle of the property, there is a dwarfed white sapote tree. "I dwarfed this one by putting it on a yellow sapote root stock. This thing is 15-years old. It produces full-size fruit. In fact, Seth is going to try to do this, and to commercially grow white sapotes on smaller trees that people can have in their back yard." Jenny asks why the tree gets dwarfed and Jack explains that it might be some incompatibility. He actually did this twice with the same results. The white sapote grafts came from the huge tree in the middle of the property. Jack says "The sapote was one of the first trees brought in by the missionaries. If you go to some of the old missions in CA, you might be able to find a white sapote that was brought in during the mission period. There was one near the Ford dealership in Arroyo Grande and one by McClintocks in Pismo Beach that was there from when the old ranch house was still there. They are an old historical tree in California."



Dwarf white sapote grafted onto a yellow sapote.

Finally, we make it to the table under the large sapote and macadamia trees. We sit and enjoy some fruit and listen to Jack talk about the early days of the Central Coast CRFG. Part 2 of this article will cover that discussion and go into some other details.

As we're getting ready to leave, I've decided to call Jack's place a *jungle orchard*. Jack's reminiscing about the time he has spent here. "I visit these guys daily (the plants), and we walk through, the dog and I, looking for gophers. When Mary Kay and I used to go down to Mexico and live on our boat for a few months, we wouldn't get back until late spring. It would be really late when we got back, but I had to get a flashlight and look at stuff. Even though I was tired, I had to see what had happened while we were gone. It's an *illness*—a healthy illness, though. It really is. But I don't know how people are going to be able to do this with water costing so much more. More and more people are not watering lawns. Here, we may have a reliable source of water, but I worry about places like Arroyo Grande that relies on lake water."

Jack continues, "we don't know if it is going to rain reliably. I remember when the Santa Maria River was full of water, maybe 1969. It flooded everywhere. Water was flowing over highway 101 at the bridge, bank to bank, and they had to shut the highway down. Cows and trees were literally going over the highway. I had to drive through San Luis Obispo and there was high water on the streets going down to the creek. That is the last big rain I remember. We need that again. We need that saturation. I just hope it rains. We may be the last people able to do this kind of thing (pointing around to his orchard)."

By the time you read this, Jack may be backpacking in the Sierras. He and his hiking buddies were watching the snow reports and waiting for a little more melt in the high Sierras. He says the first trip they normally do is to the Kaiser Wilderness above Huntington Lake. They go about 20 miles in and spend a couple of nights. It's a test run to make sure they have packed properly and that all their gear works. It's also a good opportunity to relax near some beautiful lakes and do some fly fishing. On later hikes, they will head for some of the high passes including one above Edison Lake.