The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter
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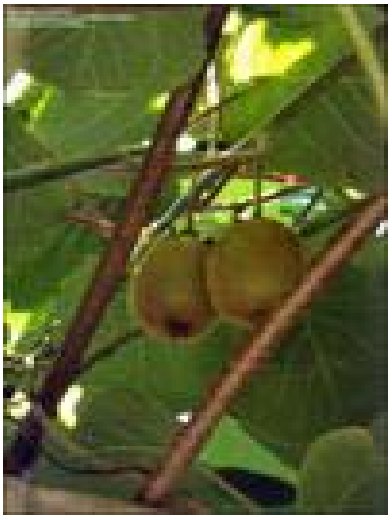
2004--The Year of the Berry

Kiwifruit

Actinidia deliciosa

Believe it or not—there is a berry that can be eaten green—the Kiwifruit! Also known as the Chinese gooseberry, the fuzzy, egg-shaped fruit has a sweet/tart taste between a strawberry and a gooseberry (some even say it has pineapple overtones). While not all kiwifruit is green inside (it can be yellow, light brown, or off- white) the needs of the non-hardy kiwifruit of any color are pretty much the same.



Native to the Yangtze River valley of northern China and the Zhejiang Province on the coast of eastern China, the first Chinese gooseberry plants were brought from China to the United States about 1904. New Zealand plant propagators, using seeds carried from China by missionaries in 1906 had begun a development of Chinese gooseberries as a commercial crop about 1940 and by 1960, over 900 acres were planted. Lagging behind, U.S. agricultural propagation of the fruit began in 1935, but it wasn't until 1960 that Carl Heinke became the first commercial grower of California kiwifruit when he planted nine vines next to this grape vines in Paradise. George Tanimoto of Gridley, California became the first kiwifruit grower of significance when he harvested 1200 pounds of the fuzzy brown berries in 1970!

New Zealand growers of the Chinese gooseberry wanted to export their crop to the United States, but realized they were up against the American cold war mentality. So they deleted the reference to what was then a feared country, China, and began to call it by the name of their national bird, the Kiwi. In 1974 it was officially renamed kiwifruit.

The plants need a long growing season (at least 240 frost-free days) with no late winter or early autumn freezes. When dormant, an established plant can withstand temperatures to about 10° F. However they must acclimate to cold slowly and any sudden plunge in temperature may cause trunk splitting and subsequent damage to the vine. Late winter freezing temperatures will kill any exposed buds. In California the kiwifruit is an appropriate crop wherever citrus fruits, peaches and almonds are successful. All cultivars need a certain

period of winter chilling. For our area, cultivars such as Elmwood, Dexter, Abbott, or Vincent are suitable. In very mild winter areas the vines may retain their leaves and fail to flower the following season. Kiwi vines can also be successfully grown in large containers.

Kiwifruit will tolerate part shade but prefer a sunny location where they can ramble across a trellising system. The vines should be protected from strong winds. Kiwifruit prefer somewhat acid (pH 5 - 6.5), well-drained soils that are rich in organic matter. The leaves may show nitrogen deficiency if the soil is too basic and they do not tolerate salty soils. At least one male plant (which doesn't produce fruit) is needed for pollination of every five or so female plants.

The plants need large volumes of water during the entire growing season but must also have well-drained soil. **Watering regularly in the heat of the summer is a must**. Never allow a plant to undergo drought stress. At least one male plant (which doesn't produce fruit) is needed for pollination of every five or so female plants.

Although relatively pest free, the kiwifruit has one attribute that can be a problem. The trunks have a catnip-like aroma which cats love to rub against! When plants are small, cats can rub off any new shoots which emerge in the spring. Garden snails can also devastate younger plantings.

Kiwifruit is great to eat right from its skin—just cut in half and scoop out the luscious filling with a spoon. It has more vitamin C than an orange, has high fiber, no cholesterol, trace elements not found in other fruits, and only 100 calories per fruit.

Kiwifruit Muffins

1 cup milk	2 cups flour
1 egg	2 cups flour
1/4 cup oil	1/3 cup sugar
3 teaspoons baking powder	3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon	2/3 cup pared and chopped kiwifruit

Beat together milk, egg and oil. Combine remaining ingredients except kiwifruit; stir in milk mixture until flour is moistened. Divide half of batter into 12 greased muffin cups; spoon kiwifruit over batter. Top with remaining batter. Bake at 400 degrees about 20 minutes or until golden brown. Serve hot.

August Meeting

The weather couldn't have been nicer for our August meeting held at Hearst Castle in San Simeon. We assembled (more or less) by the flagpole at the Visitor Center, before moving to another area where our co-chair, Roger Eberhardt, welcomed us and introduced special

guests. He briefly talked about our next gatherings (Fruit Tasting on September 4 and our regular monthly meeting to be on September 11 at Bob and Janet Tullock's in Paso Robles). He introduced Bob Gordon, president of the State Garden Clubs of California, who was instrumental in coordinating our tour of the Hearst Castle gardens.

Roger introduced Kim, our Hearst Castle liaison, and gave her a CRFG hat. Then came the exciting part—at least from our point of view—when Roger and Dick Pottratz, our treasurer, presented Kim with a facsimile check for $1750 to go toward the restoration of the Hearst Castle gardens. The amount will be matched by the State Garden Clubs of California!



After hearing a bit about Hearst Castle and its gardens from Kim, we got our free movie tickets for a post-tour movie at the Visitor's Center from Joe Sabol, and headed for the buses!

Once up the hill, our Tour 1 Guide, John Fixler, gave us a brief talk about the gardens and the needed restoration. The citrus orchard near the "house" was planted in 1941, but the war years were hard on the citrus trees and they all died out. It wasn't until last year (2003) that money was made available to replant the trees around the Castle. Hearst originally had planted 14 varieties of citrus trees, but five of those are no longer available! The new trees are doing quite well.

William Randolph Hearst, the original builder of Hearst Castle, didn't even begin his massive development of the land until 1919 at the age of 56! His parents hadn't wanted to give him the property, which they had owned since mid-1800, because they were afraid he'd spend too much money there! They certainly knew their son!

While the house itself is a work of art, the attention Hearst gave to the garden is what I find truly amazing. He even planned what annuals were to be planted in the flower beds! The grounds, covering about 30 acres, were at the top of a rocky ridge and Hearst had topsoil hauled in to cover it to a depth of five feet! None of the native oaks were destroyed in the building process, either. All fertilizer used both then and now is 100 per cent organic.

One special part of our tour, which the "general public" does not see, was walking down the hill to look at the beginning of the restoration of the green houses. Originally, there were about five Lord and Burnham Greenhouses imported from England. One of them was dedicated to orchids, another to growing seedlings for the flower gardens. By the time the State of California was given the estate (the house and 127 acres) in 1958, the green houses were in complete disrepair. One of the green houses is nearing completion of its restoration at the astronomical cost of **One Million Dollars**! According to National Park Service guidelines, nothing in an historical monument can be restored unless it is with the same type of material as used in the original. Need I say more?

We ended our tour at the beautiful indoor swimming pool where no one liked to swim, but where everyone liked to “meet.”

CRFG/Cal Poly Orchard Update

Go and eat! Please be sure to make comments on the date of your visit, the type of fruit you tried, and your opinion of it! There is a sheet just for that information on the kiosk inside the fence. Don’t forget to check if the Richard Shimamoto Memorial Japanese maple tree needs water! It is located beneath the big sycamore tree near the entrance to the orchard. If you see something that needs doing, be a good member and pitch right in to do the job—especially the job of tossing fallen fruit over the fence for the wildlife!

Pet and Marv Daniels have organized many Saturday/Sunday morning work parties. This orchard belongs to all of us—don’t let them be the only ones doing the maintenance chores! Parking is free at Cal Poly on Saturday and Sunday—no permit needed!

Planting a Memorial Tree for Gerda Martinez

CRFG Member, Norm Beard, of Santa Barbara, donated a beautiful Jujube tree to plant in the Community Orchard. It is a 6-foot tall tree, in a 5-gallon container, and it has fruit on it! Gerda Martinez, a long-time and dedicated CRFG member who has passed on to that great orchard in the sky, especially enjoyed growing the Jujube and it seemed only fitting that this tree be planted in her honor. Joe Sabol has been in touch with Angela Martinez, Gerda’s daughter, and the weekend of October 16-17 has been tentatively scheduled as the date for this memorial planting. The date is especially propitious as Gerda’s birthday was October 18! More information on this special event will follow.

How Chemicals Saved the Grapes

As if two centuries of political upheaval wasn’t enough of a burden on French farmers, in the middle of the 18th century, the vineyards of France suffered the devastation of an imported aphid, phylloxera (*Daktulosphaira vitifoliae*) and downy mildew (*Plasmopara viticola*) which had come into the country from the U.S. Between them, the insect and the fungus wiped out millions of acres of grapevines. Then the Franco-Prussian War hit in 1870.

The few vineyards not destroyed by insects or fungus endured pillaging by those people left hungry and homeless because of the war. Losses of even a fraction of his crop could determine whether a grower and his family would join the ranks of the disenfranchised. Then one day, someone discovered that copper sulfate, hydrated lime, and water sprayed on grape vines would deter theft. Handling the freshly-treated grapes caused skin itching and, if not washed off, led to chemical burns. A thief who ate treated grapes suffered from gastritis, diarrhea, bloody stools, and anemia. It irritated the lining of the mouth and discolored the tongue and gums. The discoloration was a tip-off to the police that they were looking at a grape thief.

In 1876, Pierre Marie Alexis Millardet became Professor of Botany at the University of Bordeaux. Millardet discovered that root stock from America was resistant to phylloxera, but

the American vines did not produce grapes acceptable for the fine wines of France. He grafted French vines onto American root stock and brought the insect plague under control, but the fungus was still rampant.

Turning to the downy mildew problem in October of 1882, Millardet noticed that growers who treated vines with a copper sulfate and lime mix to deter theft had fewer problems with the fungus. Millardet spent the next three years experimenting with the mixture and testing it on vines. He published his findings in the Journal d'Agriculture Pratique. Millardet's Bordeaux mixture became the first widely used fungicide, but more importantly, he launched the idea that **chemicals** could help solve agricultural problems.

Announcements

Welcome New Members in August: None?

Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting Event at Cal Poly: The Dave Wilson Fruit Tree Nursery will be conducting a free fruit tasting party on Saturday, September 4 from 1 to 5 PM and everyone is invited (you don't need to be a CRFG member). We will taste 30-40 different fruits including peaches, nectarines, plums, Pluots, Asian Pears, and apples. Some of the fruit is so new it hasn't been named yet! The tasting will be held at the Cal Poly Crops Unit building on the corner of Highland and Mt. Bishop. No parking permit is needed. The Cal Poly Crops Club and the Horticulture and Crop Science Department are co-sponsoring this event with us. No fruit or fruit trees will be for sale by the Dave Wilson Nursery, although there will be trees for sale by the Cal Poly students. This is a FREE, FUN, and DELICIOUS time to savor the best of summer!

To get to the Crops Unit, take Highway 101 to Santa Rosa/Highway One and go north toward Morro Bay. At the Highland Avenue entrance to Cal Poly (signal light on Highway One) turn right. Follow Highland to the first stop sign and turn left. Immediately after turning, park your truck, car or bike and look for the new classroom/lab. It is back about 50 yards from the stop sign on Highland.

Organic Chicken Manure: David Maislen is in the process of ordering some Perfect Blend organic chicken manure. It's registered in the state of Washington as 100% organic and it's a 4-4-4 blend. It comes in 50 pound bags and will cost $12.85 a bag, which includes freight and there is no tax. He must order at least 40 bags to get the price. He has 20 bags spoken for and needs to find others who could share in purchasing at least 20 more bags to get this fabulous deal. If you are interested, contact David at **474-4010**. (David says this manure is sold in 20-pound bags at Lowe's for $7.99 a bag plus tax!)

Trees Needed: The "Friends of Hearst Castle" are seeking donations of citrus trees in large containers. Needed are: 5 – 15 gallon Tangerine "Dancy" or Satsumi; 1 – 24" box Kumquat; 1 – 15 gallon Calamondin; 3 – 15 gallon Orange Valencia or Washington. If you have access to trees like this, please contact Michael Rader, Executive Director of Friends of Hearst Castle.

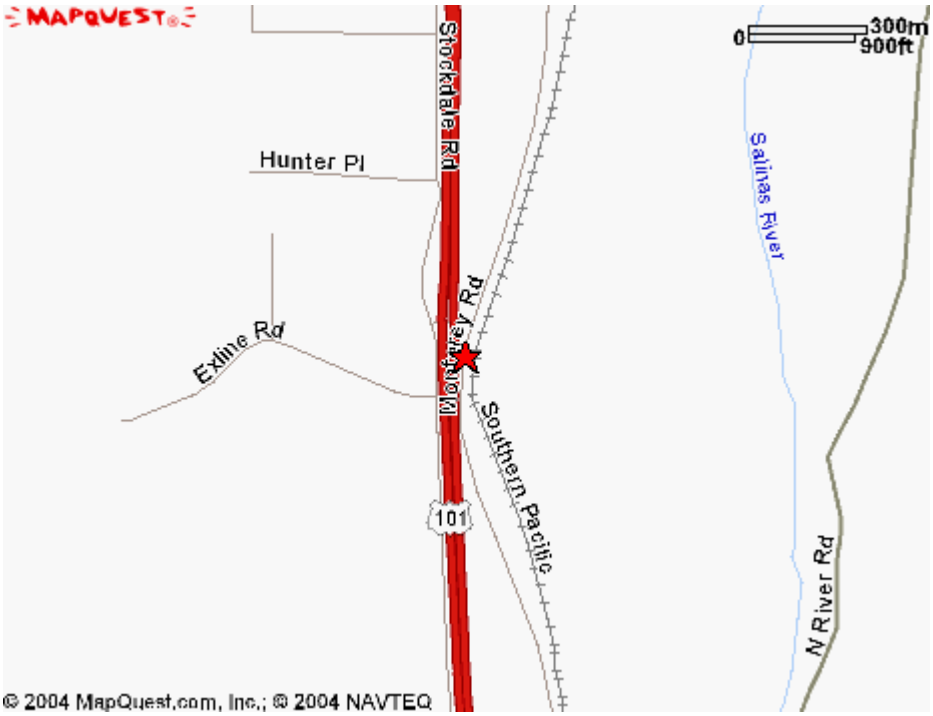
Web Site: We are still at: http://kcbx.net/~crfgslo/index.htm

Join the State Association: Many of our chapter members are also members of the State association and those who aren't should consider joining. With state membership you receive a wonderful color magazine, *The Fruit Gardener*, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, chapter activities and contacts. Yearly dues are **$30**. Applications are available from **Joe Sabol**.

Local Chapter Fees: Are your dues current? A mere pittance of **$6** will buy you all the wonderful benefits of our local **CRFG** for a year! Or, for **$25** you will get **five** years of membership and save **$5**! Where else can you have so much fun or learn so many interesting things for that price? Send your check to **CRFG Treasurer**, 2430 Leona Avenue, SLO, CA 93401.

Calendar of Meetings - 2004

September 11: J B Farms, Paso Robles: This will be our **regular** monthly meeting held at the farm of Janet and Bob Tullock in Paso Robles where the Tullocks grow a wide variety of fruit. Take the drive north on the 101 to **5335 Monterey Road in Paso Robles**.



October 23: Paul Rys' Pumpkin Patch. Paul is a champion pumpkin grower--he won the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin contest last year for "Most Beautiful." His winner weighed over 500 lbs, but it was the color, not the size that won him his prize! Big pumpkins seem to lose color, but Paul has been working on breeding the color back into the giants. Notice this meeting is in late October--not on our usual second-Saturday-of-the-month. We will need to do some heavy "publicity" on the date change, but it'll be a fun and informative time. Mark your calendars now! Call him regarding pumpkin seeds at **544-2825.**

November 13: Rim Rock Vineyard, Nipomo: This micro vineyard of syrah grapes is owned by Bernie and Lennette Horton and managed by Greg Phelan and his brother, Robert. Greg, a Cal Poly graduate with a Master's in viticulture, will present an informative talk on growing

grapes for fun and profit! (Hopefully, we'll also "taste" some of Rim Rock's 2002 vintage Syrah!) The location is at 265 Rim Rock Road in Nipomo.

December 11: Annual Potluck at the PG&E Visitor's Center

Note: If you are receiving this newsletter electronically and wish to be taken off the mailing list, please inform me at handynana@hortons.us or you may reach me by phone at **474-6501**. Lennette Horton, Newsletter Editor