

# CENTRAL COAST CHAPTER CRFG

Editors: Linda Robertson and Michael Kurland

## Next Meeting

**Saturday, April 11, 2026**

**Visit to Home of CRFG-Central Member Russee Parvin**

### Schedule:

*(Note: these times are approximate and may change slightly due to actual time needed.)*

**12:30-1:** Set up crew

**1:00-1:30:** Socializing and refreshments.

Bring a snack to share and your own water.

**1:30:** Chapter business meeting.

**1:45-3:00:** Presentation and tour of property. Russee Parvin, a Cal Poly graduate, was a landscape contractor for 40 years. When he retired, he went into farming and purchased his present property in 2019. He grows ornamental trees on tiers. He will speak to us about planting on tiers to maximize space for trees. He will also talk about gopher abatement, planting for bird habitat, and the relationship between trees and our feathered friends.

### Bring:

A snack to share, water bottle, and a chair. Wear clothes and shoes suitable for walking in dirt.

### Where:

1202 Twin Creek Road, San Luis Obispo.

### **Additional Info:**

The public is welcome! Please bring a friend.

Parking: There is plenty of parking on the street near Russee's house.

Restrooms: restrooms are not available – go before you go!

### **Map:**



### **No Pets**

Don't bring pets! Please review "Our Best CRFG Manners While Visiting Homes, Nurseries, Growers, etc." below. We never bring pets to meetings or tours, and we never even ask if we may!"

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## Announcements

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### Next CRFG-Central Coast Board Meeting

The next CRFG Board meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be on Zoom. Any chapter member may attend, but only officers and committee chairs can vote.

[Note: The Zoom code and password were sent to members in the members' version of this newsletter.]

### Festival of Fruit 2026: The Year of Eugenia and Her Sisters

Early registration is open for this year's Festival of Fruit, the first festival since COVID. Our hosts are the Orange County chapter. They asked us to share the following announcement, with details about registration, venue, hotel, etc.:

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The Orange County Chapter Festival of Fruit Committee is excited to announce **Festival of Fruit 2026!** Festival Day will take place on **Saturday, June 13**, with a lineup of activities and social events running from **June 9 through June 14**.

Please share this information with your members and encourage them to visit [festivaloffruit.org](https://festivaloffruit.org) to explore event details and register early. The **early bird registration rate is \$75 per person**, available until **April 19**, after which the standard rate of **\$85** will apply.

During registration, attendees can also:

- Pre-order a Saturday box lunch
- Reserve a seat for the Saturday evening dinner and guest speaker
- Purchase a Festival t-shirt featuring this year's "Fruit of the Year," *Eugenia and her Sisters*

After registering, participants will receive a form to select tours and activities scheduled before and after Festival Day.

**Festival Day (Saturday)** will be held at the Titan Student Union on the California State University, Fullerton campus. Tours, garden visits, and social activities in nearby communities are included at no additional cost; however, space is limited, so early sign-up is strongly recommended.

We have also secured a special Festival rate of **\$169 per night** for king or double rooms at the on-campus Marriott Hotel. The booking code for the special room rate will be added to the website as soon as it's received. Due to concurrent regional soccer tournaments, rooms are expected to fill quickly, so we encourage attendees to book as soon as possible.

Thank you for helping us spread the word—we look forward to seeing many of your members there!

Warmest regards,

Martha Haber

CRFG Orange County Chapter Festival of Fruit Committee



## Upcoming Plant Sales

Here are some plant sales in April that may interest chapter members.

**April 4:** Cal Poly's annual Tomato Spectacular sale, featuring over 80 varieties of tomatoes, will take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Horticultural unit near the Poly Plant Shop.

**April 11:** The Los Osos Valley Garden Club, one of the oldest garden clubs in California, is holding its annual plant sale on April 11th from 10 am until 2 pm at the Red Barn, 2180 Palisades, Avenue, Los Osos. Most of the plants for sale are tomato varieties, but there will also be ornamental plants donated by our members and the community.

**April 12:** For those nostalgic for Joe Sabol's prize-winning dahlias, the Central Coast Dahlia Society is holding its annual dahlia and mini-plant sale, featuring over 300 varieties of dahlia tubers and a presentation on how to grow dahlias. The sale will be at the United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 1515 Fredricks St. San Luis Obispo, 93405, from 1:00-4:00 p.m., or until sold out. The presentation will be at 2:00.

**April 18:** The Central Coast Greenhouse Growers Association will hold its annual open house tour from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Plants will be sold at Nipomo High School and at various nurseries on the tour route. Information and maps can be found at <https://ccgga.com/ccgga-events/open-house>

**April 22:** Our own chapter also will be having an Earth Day plant sale from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the beautiful Chapman Estate, 1243 Ocean Blvd., Shell Beach.

**April 25-26:** And last, but not least, Tiber Canyon Ranch will be holding its Tomato Fandango from 11am - 4pm on Saturday, and 11am -3pm on Sunday. 250 W. Ormonde Rd., San Luis Obispo.

## Announcement Regarding Bill Esakoff, Former Member of CRFG-Central Coast

We just learned that former CRFG-Central member passed away in October. He and his wife Anna were building a home in Colorado, where they hoped to make a permanent home near their children and grandchildren. Anna plans to stay in Colorado.

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# Reports From Our Meetings in February and March

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Our chapter was busy in February and March, with our annual scion exchange at the end of February and our propagation meeting in mid-March. The timing of the scion exchange didn't leave time to write much about it in the February newsletter, so we'll report on it here, along with the March meeting:

## **Scion Exchange, February 28, 2026:**

Our chapter's annual scion exchange took place on February 28, 2026, at the Cal Poly Crops Unit. As always, a lot of preparation went into the event. Rootstocks were ordered last summer for sale at the exchange and for schools and other organizations which use them for teaching grafting to their students. For weeks beforehand, chapter members were cutting and storing scions from their own trees and those of friends and local growers, most notably Mike Cirone of See Canyon Orchards, who has let us take scion wood from his orchard for a number of years. John Valenzuela and Gabrielle Robbins brought scion wood from other chapters whose exchanges happened earlier in the year.

On the evening before, volunteers met to label the hundreds of rootstocks we'd purchased and bundle them for people and groups who had pre-ordered them.

On the day of the exchange, the weather was sunny and warm, and we had a lot of visitors collecting scion wood, buying rootstocks and grafting supplies from our store, grazing on fruit and snacks at our refreshment table, and watching our gifted grafters give demonstrations of the art of building trees. We had invited our five scholarship recipients to come and receive their checks at our meeting, and three were there; it was a pleasure to meet them. We sold out of nearly all varieties of the rootstock we ordered. The store sold over \$3,200 in merchandise, and we took in \$597 for our scholarship program from donations and payments to our grafting experts for grafting trees for attendees. 31 new members and 8 returning members signed up at our membership table. All in all, it was a fun and productive day for chapter members and guests alike.



Customers in the CRFG Store.



Guests and CRFG advisors (red aprons) in the scion room



Craig Righetti grafting an avocado.

### Propagation meeting, March 14, 2026:

At this year's propagation meeting, we decided to try something new and demonstrate not just cleft grafting apples, but other kinds of propagation as well. We met in the pergola in the SLO Master Gardeners demonstration garden in SLO and set up four separate tables where members showed different ways of grafting and growing plants.

Walt Mark demonstrated grafting apples, using a simple cleft graft, a good way of introducing people new to grafting to the process, because cleft grafts are easy to do and succeed well on apples and pears. Our cochair, Manny Magaña, demonstrated grafting mulberries. Robert Scott showed how to do whip and tongue grafts, demonstrating them on sapotes. And Sharon Lovelady showed a unique way of rooting cuttings, using rooting hormone mixed with water into a paste, and covering the pot with the cutting with an individual "greenhouse" made of a ziplock sandwich bag.



Marv Daniels bringing cherimoyas as gifts for new members and guests.



A miniature greenhouse for a lavender cutting.

**March 17: Working with the SLO Master Gardeners to teach grafting to their 2026 class.**

On March 17, a few days after our meeting, we taught basic grafting to this year's Master Gardeners class in San Luis Obispo. We were joined there by five great student volunteers from Dr. Lauren Garner's plant science class. Walt Mark and Manny Magaña gave a talk explaining the process, and each person in the Master Gardener class was given two rootstocks to graft, with hands-on help from CRFG volunteers and Dr. Garner's students. Everything went well, and we were happy to send the future Master Gardeners home with their own new trees to raise.



Cal Poly student volunteers listen as Walt and Manny discuss apple grafting at the Master Gardener class, March 17.

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## What We Do: Grafting in Schools and The Great AGventure

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By Walt Mark

[Introduction by the editor: For many years, one of our chapter's biggest outreach ventures has been our grafting in schools program. Participating schools order rootstocks through our chapter, and starting early in the year, teams of volunteers go to high schools in Santa Barbara, SLO, and Monterey Counties, teaching students basic grafting techniques. This year, the program coordinator is Walt Mark. Walt summarizes this year's work, with a shoutout to all the volunteers who help make this program a success.]

The **Central Coast Chapter Apple Grafting Program** has had a busy, and productive season. The team members consist of Walt Mark, Manny Magaña, Dara Manker, Marvin Daniels, Nob Furakawa and Mark Guy, along with over 20 Cal Poly students from Dr Lauren

Garner's Plant Science classes. A special thanks to Dr. Garner for coordinating student participation with us.

We started the year by collecting scions to supply all the classes at Mike Cirone's See Canyon Farm. A special thanks to Mike for allowing us to collect scions in his orchards. Hundreds of cuttings were collected of the varieties Red Fuji, Braeburn and Cameo. These all had to be processed and stored under refrigeration for use later in the season.

Grafting classes started in January in Capitola with the Santa Cruz Master Gardeners. Our high school classes have been conducted from February 24 through March 31 at the following high schools: Arroyo Grande HS, CCNTH-Nipomo, San Luis Obispo HS, Templeton HS, Greenfield HS, Santa Maria High Schools (Pioneer, Righetti, and Santa Maria) at the Mark Richardson CTE Center, Atascadero HS (3/21), and Dunn School (3/27). We have also demonstrated and taught grafting at the San Luis Obispo Master Gardeners, Hesperia Hall, and the CRFG Central Coast Scion Exchange and the March Chapter meeting. By the time we finish with Atascadero HS in March, we will have taught apple grafting to over 550 people with almost 500 of those being high school students, and we still have the Great AGventure to go.

The Great AGventure – South County, is in its ninth year. Held the second Friday in May at the Arroyo Grande High School Tech Department, Great AGventure – south, hosts 15 fourth grade classes with over 500 students, teachers, and chaperones. The Arroyo Grande FFA students are an integral part of the event as they assist in presenting the farm animals, roping, and acting as rotation leaders with the classes.

These Great AGventure events are very popular and help to educate our county's youth as to the importance of the bountiful San Luis Obispo County agricultural industry. More information about it can be found at

<https://sites.google.com/view/slocountyagedcommittee/who-we-are> Volunteers are always needed for this effort.



Photo by Dara Manker

Central Coast Chapter CRFG Apple Grafting Team along with Cal Poly Students from Dr Lauren Garner's Plant Science Classes.