



Central Coast Chapter CRFG

April 2022 Newsletter
by Jenny Weaver & Tom Sheldon

Next CRFG Meeting

Where: **City Farm SLO**
1221 Calle Juaquin, SLO

When: **May 14, 2022**
1:00 -3:00 p.m.

Note: We will have the **tour FIRST at 1:00.**
Meet at the pergola (large structure in main garden area)
Meeting, snacks, and socializing are AFTER the tour.



City Farm SLO can be seen from the 101 and is next to the BMW dealership

- From 101 N or S: take the Los Osos Valley Rd (LOVR) exit. From the S, turn left on LOVR. Turn right on Calle Juaquin. Go to the end of the road.
- From N, turn right on LOVR and turn immediately right on Calle Juaquin. Go

to the end of the road.

- From LOVR near Whole Foods, turn left onto Calle Joaquin Rd. Go to the end of the road.

Parking: Park in areas 1, 2, 3 as shown on the map below.



Refreshments: Evelyn will bring coffee and the “fixins”.

Bring something for yourself or to share. Please bring your own water, preferably in your own container. The large pergola will be reserved for our use. Picnic tables and benches are available.

Note: City Farm SLO is a “pack-in, pack-out facility”.

Tour will be led by either Kayla Rutland, Executive Director or Shane Lovell, Farm Manager. Here are their Bios from their website.

“Kayla has been involved as a volunteer then Vice President of the Board of City Farm SLO since moving to San Luis Obispo County in 2017. In 2021 she became Executive Director, bringing experience from the Health Promotion Division of the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department and previous roles in nonprofit organizations. Kayla’s personal mission is to advance community health and climate resiliency by helping all people connect with food and where it comes from. She is grateful for the opportunity to work towards this mission every day. In addition to this work, Kayla enjoys trail running, mountain biking, and backpacking in our incredible Central Coast. Kayla earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Nutritional Science from the University of Connecticut with a minor in Sustainable Crop Production”.

“Shane is passionate about designing ways for natural ecosystems and our modern ways of life to thrive together. He earned a bachelor’s degree of Industrial Design at The Art Institute of California then worked as a furniture designer for several years. While this was an engaging and creative career path, he longed to take his design interests into the natural world. With growing interests in gardening, natural ecology, and regenerative agriculture, he decided to pivot his career into farming. He discovered City Farm in 2019, and after a brief period of volunteering, he joined the team as Site Manager. In 2021 he became Farm Manager, overseeing the educational gardens and general farm maintenance. His focus has been to design a system that encourages people, ecology, and agriculture to all flourish simultaneously.

Outside his work on the farm, he enjoys being in nature. Whether it’s hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, or just relaxing under the trees, he is rejuvenated by observing the natural world”.

City Farm encourages layered clothing (it can be windy there), sun protection, hats, sunscreen and shoes that can get dirty.

City Farm does not have a produce stand but our group is welcome to purchase City Farm SLO produce online.

<https://www.cityfarmslo.org/shop>

Announcements

May 1, 2022 Cambria Bee and Butterfly Faire 12-4:00 p.m.



Cambria Bee & Butterfly Faire

The 5th annual Cambria Bee & Butterfly Faire will take place on Sunday, May 1, at the Cambria Historical Museum. Join us for:

- Music by Marcus diMaggio and Barry the Strolling Mandolinist
- Face painting
- A scavenger hunt for kids
- A stunning photo exhibit
- Regional honey products
- Local ciders from bee-pollinated apples

For more information, click this link:

<https://beautifycambria.org/projects/bee-faire/>

Cuesta College North Campus News

Dean Harrell wanted to share this with our group.

“The plant science class for summer is Introduction to Plant Science (AGPS 242). It is a six week class starting on June 14th going until July 21st. Class meets Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8 am -12 noon. We will be in Paso Robles at the Cagliero Plant Science Facility two days a week and on the third day will work on different farms in the area.

Here is a link to the class:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tCI4luytX9iw_8-kx-a3GjScJ7bQ-IQx/view?usp=drivesdk

Past Meeting

Halcyon Farms

By Seth McMillan

CRFG Meeting on April 9th, 2022

Our gracious host, Ariela Gottschalk is the new operator/ owner of Halcyon Farms, formerly Rutiz Farms. She gave us a quick history of her background, farming ethic and history of the farm. We then headed off on a walking tour of the 30 acre farm.



It's good to be back in person



Ariela shares her sage wisdom

On the farm Ariela and her team of 4.5 (yes there's a ½ timer) field employees cultivate row crops and perennial vegetables, cut flowers and pollinator/ beneficial plots. They practice a 3 to 4 year crop rotation and said she is more of a spreadsheet minded farmer and is working on gathering information to better document these rotations. After each crop they grow a cover crop. She says they like a mix of oats, vetch, and bell bean.



Cover crop of oats, vetch, and bell bean



Emerald Star are still their best artichokes

Halcyon Farms uses well water to irrigate and try to use drip whenever possible because of its lower water use. Some crops are not well suited to this and starting from seed still requires the use of overhead irrigation. She desires to use cover crops to build the soil, but the use of additional irrigation water can limit this. She really conveyed an awareness of the careful balance of production required for a

viable business, available resources, and stewarding the farmland. The farm has a history of and continues to offer acreage on the farm for the employees to grow their own crops and the farm then buys back from them!



Strawberries with plastic mulch. Dust fence in the foreground. Bare spots are from gophers!

They grow strawberries on the farms and are picked daily. Chandler variety is their favorite which are more delicate but work well with the soil, heat, and organic practices on the farm. The yield is low, but the quality of the fruit is excellent. They plant the berries twice a year from bare root and cover with plastic mulch which the workers then “pull through” the bare root starts. I still want a demonstration of this! The plastic mulch offers reduced water use, improved fruit quality but can disguise the gopher damage.

Speaking of gophers Ariela says they are actively attempting to control the gopher population. A worker sets traps at least three times a week. They use the Gopher Hawk which she explains that Halcyon Farms must have stock in as they use so many on the farm. Along the roadways they use fencing to keep down the dust. The dusty environment can promote populations of mites. They will also use predatory mites to help control them.



Farmall nostalgia



Admiring the flowers

There were many crops under current cultivation; asparagus, potatoes, onions, leeks, beans, corn, artichokes, blackberries, and a variety of cut flowers and pollinator plants. There were some fun questions and many discoveries, too many to mention here!



So much to see!



Halcyon Farms farmstand

Our walking tour concluded back at the farm stand where there is a great selection of produce, flowers and veggie starts for sale. Please check out their farm stand at 1075 The Pike in Arroyo Grande. You can find them on social media @halcyon_farms and their website for more information. You can also email Ariela and her team at halcyonfarmsag@gmail.com.

Thanks again to our Host Ariela Gottschalk! We look forward to stopping by again soon. We hope for your bountiful harvests and admire your stewardship as a farmer!



Ariela Gottschalk, Jeff Pienack and their daughter Olivia

Orchard Update

By Dara Manker March 26, 2022

In February Manny and I planted two new trees in the orchard:

The first tree is a new Leah Cot Aprium planted in memory of our CRFG Chapter member Grace Gelling, who passed away on August 20th, 2021. When asked what type of tree would be a good choice for a memorial tree, her daughter June wrote to me, "Grace's favorite fruit to eat were Cherimoyas and Mangoes and Fuyu persimmons. Grace grew a variety of fruit trees including Blenheim apricots, Fuji Apples, 20th Century Asian pear, Black Mission fig, Snow Queen nectarine, just to name a few. You can plant whatever tree is readily available or graft a new variety onto an existing tree. It would be great if it is different from the fruit trees already planted." Since we didn't yet have an Aprium in the orchard yet, this tree seemed like a great choice. It has already leafed out.



Dara standing next to the Leah Cot Aprium



Leah Cot tag

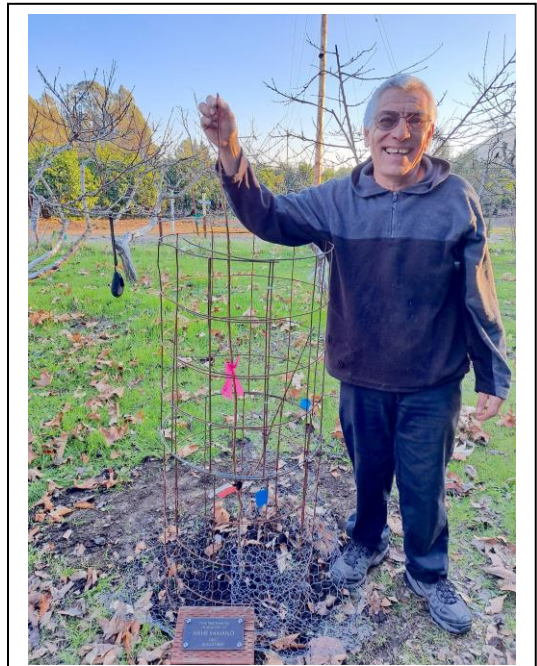
Editor's Note: Some of our members live on in the CRFG Orchard. The next time you are in the orchard, look for the trees that have plaques for Grace Gelling and Mehe Samono, as well as other departed members. Please visit the CRFG website where you'll find more info about more of our departed chapter members.

<https://www.crfg-central.org/in-memoriam>

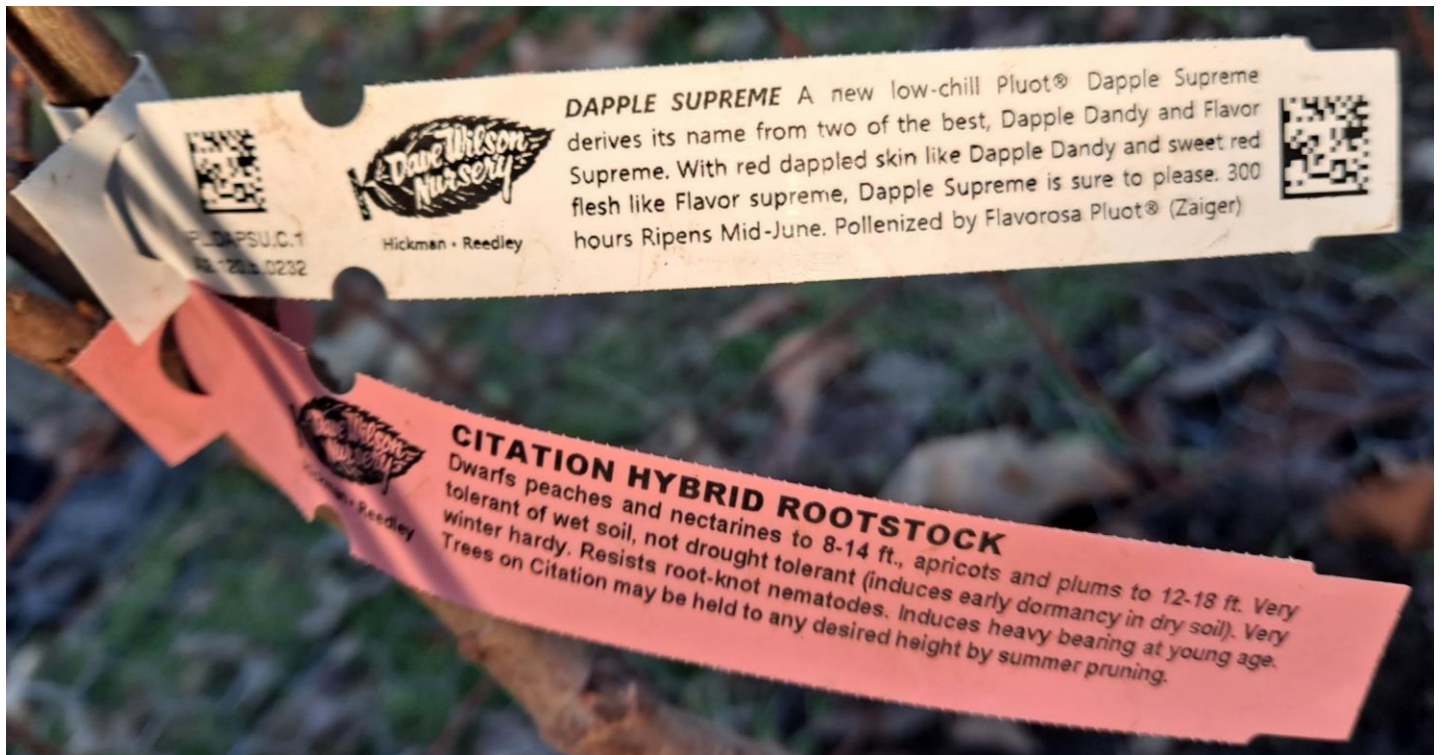
The second tree we planted is a Dapple Supreme Pluot that replaces the same variety of tree that was planted in memory of Mehe Samano in 2016 but had been struggling. The new tree already has leaves and is doing much better.

Richard Schmidt recently gifted a 3 year old, 3 foot tall Toka plum to the orchard. Richard grafted the Toka scion from the scion exchange onto Marianna 26-24 rootstock. Due to the water problems in the orchard in March we postponed planting this tree in the orchard. But now that the water pipe has been fixed, it has been moved to its new home. Learn more about the Toka plum in the May newsletter. To excite your tastebuds, it's called the Bubblegum Plum or the Candy Plum!

Thank you, Richard!



Manny standing next to the Dapple Supreme Pluot



Dapple Supreme Pluot tag

What's in Season

Loquats are getting ripe now!

By Jenny Weaver, April 21, 2022

My loquats are growing on two volunteer seedling trees in Arroyo Grande. Years ago the birds planted the trees for me! My philosophy is that if a tree wants to grow and produces fruit, it can grow where it wants. The fruit are very tasty but small with seeds that use a lot of real-estate as you can see in the picture. They provide a nice snack while working in the orchard. Someday, I'll graft some other varieties onto the trees!

My seedling loquats are not as big as the Big Jim variety developed by a CRFG founding member.

Here is what Nature Hills Online Plant Nursery says about the Big Jim loquat:

"Self-fruiting and resilient, the Big Jim Loquat Tree (Eriobotrya japonica 'Big Jim') is an amazing fruit, and lucky you - the Big Jim is the best of the best! It's one of the tastiest and fleshiest Loquat varieties you will find!"



Big Jim Loquat



Jenny's seedling Loquat fruit

"Who's Big Jim? Jim Neitzel was a visionary fruit grower and a founding board member of the California Rare Fruit Growers Organization. There's a reason he named this variety after himself - it's astounding! As a proponent of people growing their own fruits and veggies, Jim Neitzel developed many great sub-tropical varieties for backyard gardens!"

"Its fruit grows up to 2.5 inches in clusters of up to twelve, plenty for you

and your neighbors! These yellow-orange fruits taste like citrus-flavored Apricots, are easy to peel with a deep yellow flesh and few brown seeds."

Learn more about it here: <https://www.naturehills.com/big-jim-loquat>

The Big Jim loquat tree can be easily espaliered. It is also drought resistant once it is established. The tree can survive temperatures down to 12 degrees! But it flowers in late fall or winter so the blossoms are susceptible to freezing temperatures. However, I'm afraid it would not be safe in northern SLO county. Here's what the CRFG, Inc.'s Fruit Facts has to say about it:

"The killing temperature for the flower bud is about 19° F, and for the mature flower about 26° F. At 25° F the seed is killed, causing the fruit to fall."

Loquats do not ripen after harvest. They are not commonly grown commercially and are labor intensive to harvest and package (each fruit must be cut off the cluster or skin will rip). It's a good rare fruit tree to grow in coastal San Luis Obispo County for a crop that's ready between citrus and early apricots.

CRFG, Inc Fruit Facts has much more information about growing loquats, grafting and pests. <https://crfg.org/wiki/fruit/loquat/>



And if you're lucky enough to have a producing loquat tree or know someone who has more fruit than they can use, check out Evelyn's recipes for Loquat Jam and Chutney. She says you can also make your favorite Crisp recipe by substituting loquats for apricots as they are very similar.

RECIPES

Loquat Jam – Shared by Evelyn

- 6 cups loquats, pitted and skinned
- 7 cups sugar Use less sugar
- ¼ cup lemon juice (I used three lemons)
- 1 ½ tablespoons butter
- 1 package Sure-Jell

Cut and remove the pits from the fruit and place it in a large bowl with the lemon juice so that the fruit does not discolor.

Editor's note: Some people have used a product call Fruit Fresh to keep pitted and skinned loquats from turning brown while being prepared.

Once you have all of the fruit prepared, toss the fruit with the pectin and put it in a large pot and bring to a boil. Once it is at a rolling boil, take it off the heat and stir in the sugar.

Put it back on the heat and bring back to a boil. Let it boil for 1 minute. Add the butter. Stir to blend. Skim the top of any bubbles/scum (keep the bubbles for home use). Ladle the jam into already sterilized jars. Don't ladle past the rim, stop right below the beginning of the lip of the jar. Try not to get jam on the rim. If you do, use a clean cloth and wipe the rim before you put on the lid.

Screw on the tops and the lids tightly. Invert immediately. Leave inverted for about 1 hour and then flip over. Let the jam cool before you move the jars. The jars should ping as they cool. If they do not ping the jar has not sealed. Refrigerate this jam and use in the near term.

Sterilize your jars and lids. We sterilize ours by running them through the dishwasher. Do not remove them until you are ready to fill them. The lids and rims should be boiled on the stovetop and not touched until ready for use. Any other implements (spoons, funnels) should also be dropped in boiling water before they come in contact with the fruit.

Loquat Chutney – Shared by Evelyn

This chutney is a nice accompaniment to roasted meats, lamb burgers, kabobs of all kinds, Indian food, vegetable fritters and many more things.

Ingredients

- * 1 1/2 pounds loquats -- washed, de-seeded and cut into small pieces
- * 1 pound onion -- chopped
- * 1/2 pound apples, grated
- * 1 pound sugar
- * 2 teaspoons mustard
- * 2 teaspoons sea salt
- * 1 teaspoon curry powder
- * 1 tbsp mustard seeds, crushed
- * 1 tablespoon molasses
- * 2 tbsp fresh ginger, peeled and julienned into thin strips
- * 1 pint (2 cups) apple cider vinegar
- * 2 cups water
- * 1/4 cup raisins or currants

Directions

1. Put all the ingredients in a large pot and bring to a boil. Cook gently until soft and a good color, about 1 - 1 1/2 hours, stirring regularly to prevent the chutney from sticking or burning.
2. Boil the canning jars (1/2 pint, 1 pint, etc., the size is up to you) and lids to sterilize them (you can also sterilize them in your dish washer if you prefer.) Pour the hot chutney into the hot jars, being sure to leave half an inch of headroom in each jar. Drop the sterilized lids on, cover with the rings and tighten until well closed.
3. Process the sealed jars for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath. Remove the jars from the boiling water bath and let cool in a draft-free place overnight. Check the lids to make sure they've popped down to ensure they're properly sealed (I love the sound the jars make as they seal.) If any of the lids have not sealed properly, refrigerate those jars and use them right away. The rest can be stored in a cool dark place for 9 months.