

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter
Volume 11 • Issue 4 • July-August 2008



2008

The Year of the Avocado

Celebrate Our 40th Anniversary

California Rare Fruit Growers

2008 Festival of Fruit

CSU-Fullerton

September 19 & 20, 2008

Meet members from other chapters!

Local members will be giving tours of their gardens.

Event Location

Cal State Fullerton

Titan Student Union

800 N State College Blvd

Fullerton, CA 92831

Try Looking Up!



Higher oil prices are affecting not only our driving habits, which to some degree we can alter, but even more the cost of oil is affecting the prices of our food. About the only way one can do anything in terms of lowering food costs is to eat less or to grow it! Unfortunately, many of those who may need it the most are also those who have limited space for growing. Is there any hope? Yes, there is! Try looking up!

Hanging baskets have always been popular for adding color to small spaces by planting them with flowers, but the same idea can be used with vegetables and herbs. Use 14-inch-diameter baskets (cost about \$7 at places like Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and K-Mart) for most vegetables and 16-inch or larger for petite

varieties of watermelon and zucchini. While these baskets may cost a bit in the initial outlay, they should more than pay for themselves with fresh produce, and they should last many years. (Photo Credit: David L. Morgan at Lean2Grow.)

First line the baskets with sphagnum moss or premade liners. Then, add good quality potting soil and granular fertilizer (slow release) made for vegetables. After planting, hang the baskets where they receive **at least four to five hours** of sun. For even growth, rotate the baskets every couple of days. Swivel hooks make this chore simple. There is one caution here, though—hanging containers dry out very quickly. You must be diligent about checking for dryness. Investing in a hose end nozzle with a soaker attachment on a longer arm is a good idea. If the leaves start looking pale, use a mild, liquid fertilizer when watering.

Plant hanging baskets with smaller versions of vegetables such as lemon cucumber, bambino eggplant, a compact summer squash called Eight Ball and small tomato plants including Sweet Million, Sun Gold and Pixie. There is a petite watermelon called Garden Baby, which can grow in a basket. Of course, salad greens are perfect for a container, as well as being very beautiful. “Baby” carrots are lovely with their ferny tops. Bush cucumbers, which are really small vines, look great, too.

Pests are easier to control as they are at eye level. No chemicals should be necessary! So have fun, beautify, save money, and eat well!

May Meeting

Did you ever wonder where the broccoli you purchased at your local market came from? Chances are it was grown on the Ikeda Farm in Arroyo Grande! At our May meeting, Tom Ikeda, the vice president of operations for the Ikeda Brothers farming operations, gave our group a tour of their vegetable farm. (The photo below shows our group once they actually found the farm after all the confusing directions because of a road construction detour on Highway 1. Thanks for the photo, Paul Moyer!)



Tom is a third generation farmer in the Arroyo Grande Valley and a passionate grower. Ikeda Brothers currently farms a total of 650 acres with a diversified crop mix: celery, bell peppers, broccoli, red and green cabbage, Chinese Napa cabbage, spinach, cilantro, cut flowers, various types of lettuce, and avocados. They try to diversify to limit crop loss (as during the big freeze several years ago when the avocados were especially hard hit) as well as stay

ahead of vegetable “trends”. Farming vegetables on the scale that the Ikedas do is still a risky business, but Tom loves his job. He used the word “passionate” often.

While most of our group can relate to Tom’s “passion” for growing, the logistics of being a commercial grower seemed pretty overwhelming. As a commercial vegetable farmer, not only does he have to plan what crops to grow, he has worry about fertilization, chemical treatment, farm equipment, farm labor--the list seems endless. Tom and his cousins, Vard, Stan, and James, as well as some other family members, have been in charge of the farming operations since the late 1970’s.

The Ikeda Brothers operation is a true American success story. Tom’s grandfather, Juzo Ikeda, overcame an almost unbelievable amount of obstacles to found the farming dynasty. Juzo left Japan in 1905 at the age of 17 to work in the cane fields of Hawaii. A year later he left for San Francisco, arriving just in time for the big earthquake! He went south to the Salinas area where he found work in the sugar beet fields.

In 1913 the state of California passed the first “Alien Land Laws.” California residents ineligible for citizenship were no longer allowed to own property. That meant that a Japanese immigrant like Juzo could not own a farm in the state. He was later able to get around that by purchasing land in another man’s name, with the proviso that the land be deeded to Juzo’s oldest son, Kazuo, when he became an adult.

Juzo and his wife, Sei, had three sons, Kazuo, Seirin and Saburo. Juzo began farming in Oceano in 1929. His two older sons went to Cal Poly and played baseball there. Saburo had just entered UC Berkeley in 1941, and when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7th, his education there came to an abrupt halt. Many Japanese-Americans lost their land during that time, but thanks to a friend, Vard Loomis, who managed their land during the war, the Ikedas were more fortunate than many and had something to come back to after their “relocation” to Tulare. (This is an amazing story of friendship that has had long-term benefits, not only to the families involved, but to the community, too.) Juzo died in Tulare in 1943 from complications of an accident with runaway horses in which he broke his neck in 1941.

The Ikeda brothers, Kazuo, Seirin, and Saburo, took over the farm after the war, buying up land and increasing the size of the farm to 250 acres. They farmed Chinese Napa cabbage, green beans, Brussels sprouts, and snow peas, which were then the dominant crop, but were phased out in the 1970’s. (That’s Tom in the center of the photo on the right as he explains their farming techniques and the family story. The photo is by Joe Sabol.)



The fourth generation of Ikedas is now old enough to attend college and eventually take over the farming operations. Is that their goal? Tom would like to see that happen—but only if they are “passionate” about it!

June Meeting



Blue skies were the order of the day for our June meeting at Blue Sky Gardens Farm near Santa Margarita. A good number of members turned out for a very enjoyable afternoon of learning, picking, and eating hosted by farm owner, Colleen Childers.

Colleen and her husband, John, intensively farm about four acres of land nestled in a beautiful valley at the base of the Santa Lucia Mountains. They grow several varieties of blackberries, olallieberries, and raspberries which usually ripen

from late May to early August. However, the season was early this year because of warmer weather. The Childers also grow sweet corn, pumpkins, and other produce, such as several kinds of summer squash, heirloom tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, beets, and many herbs. Opening when the berries ripen in the early summer and remaining open until fall, much of their operation is “u-pick”, but they also operate a farm stand. Another attraction is the corn maze, which is open from the first weekend in October until October 31. If you go for the Corn Maze, you can make it even more worth your while and pick up some of their wonderful pumpkins or visit the haunted house!



They have eggs for sale from their free-range chickens which are available most of the year. They are also breeders of registered dairy goats, which include Nubians and LaManchas. The goats were a fun addition to our tour.

Not only is the name wonderful, the whole atmosphere there is delightful. It was a great place to be for a perfect summer afternoon—as Paul Moyer’s photos prove! If you missed the meeting, you can still visit the Blue Sky farm and maybe even pick

some berries or buy fresh eggs!

Congratulations Norman Beard!



Longtime member of the CRFG, Norman Beard, who is extremely active in both the Santa Barbara and Central Coast Chapters, recently won the Goleta Valley Beautiful's Lifetime Achievement Award given at the Annual Banquet on May 3rd, 2008. Actually, there was an award from the State of California and the County of Santa Barbara. Norman said he didn't know he would have to say anything, but with his usual aplomb he told the audience, "If it doesn't give you fruit, you don't need it. Dig it up and then come buy a quality fruit tree from me!"

You certainly deserved that award, Norman, because you have worked very hard to promote landscaping that is not only beautiful, but best of all, edible! (The photo of Norman

was taken by Joe Sabol at the 2006 Festival of Fruit.)

Orchard Work Days

Thank you, to all 15 of you who showed up to work for those famous 50 minutes at the CRFG Community Orchard workday on Sunday, May 11th!



You accomplished a lot in under an hour! You did all of these things: Mulched a lot of young fruit trees; thinned all the peaches, plums, nectarines, apples, Asian pears, watered all the young trees and a few older trees, raked up all the brush, weeds, pruning trash, sticks and stones and hauled them to the "chip pile" outside the gate; pulled all the suckers, water sprouts, peach leaf curl,

dead twigs, etc., ate delicious strawberries thanks to Sharon W.; talked of covering the orchard with bird net, adding more drip lines and emitters; told a few stories, swapped lies, sang songs, dreamed of planting fig trees; and even took home a few pumpkin plants! WHEW!

The photo by Paul Moyer shows all those hard workers, except for himself and two others who came just after the photo session. Good job!

Seventeen more happy and hard workers turned out on Sunday, June 8 for 40 minutes of chores and 20 minutes of fruit tasting. Joe Sabol brought 5 ripe Stark Crimson Low Chill cherries to share. Fortunately, there was plenty of other ripe fruit in the orchard to eat/taste! Those smiles prove the "tasting" was a success. (Joe took the photo.) Join in the next orchard workday for the joy of it!



Paul H. Thomson, Pioneer and Founder

1916-2008

Our good friend and co-founder of CRFG, Mr. Paul Thomson passed away on May 31, 2008. His full story was featured in the March-April 2008 Fruit Gardener Magazine as a tribute to him and to the 40 year anniversary of the CRFG. Paul was a researcher and an educator and President Bill Grimes called him "The personification of the organization." Paul continued to attend the annual Festival of Fruit meetings where many of our members got to know this very generous and visionary pioneer. (Photo was taken by Joe Sabol.)

CRFG Establishes a Scholarship

Long time Bay Area member Lloyd Ryland passed away last year and left CRFG over \$40,000, allowing us to establish a scholarship for college students. A committee was established, and soon developed a procedure, criteria and an application to be "tested" at

only two universities, the two Cal Poly's. We enlisted Professors Dr. Lauren Garner (SLO) and Dr. Greg Partida (Pomona) to encourage the best applicants to apply, and we selected a \$1000 winner for Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and one for Cal Poly Pomona. Our committee unanimously selected Ms. Bridey Root (shown in the photo on the right taken by Joe Sabol) from seven very well qualified candidates at SLO. The Pomona selection was Mr. Mark Allen.



What lies ahead? We want to extend our coverage to all colleges and universities in 2009. The additional scholarships will require more resources. If you wish to make a donation to the CRFG Ryland Scholarship Fund or the new Paul Thomson Scholarship Fund, please write your check to "Development Fund" and specify Thomson Scholarship or Ryland Scholarship in memo field.

Send to:

CRFG Development Fund
c/o Robert Vieth
1407 Ellsworth Circle
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Announcements

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Jim & Carolyn Park, Arlene Sackman, Bridey Root, Joe DeClue, Laura Shigemoto, Phil Tillman, Mary Mitchell-Leitcher, and Sarah Walls.

CAL POLY ORGANIC FARM OFFERING CSA SUBSCRIPTIONS: The Organic Farm is now hosting its eighth annual Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Shares are available for pick up on-campus or at convenient county-wide drop sites. Along with the harvest share, members receive a newsletter each week detailing recipes and announcements. A small CSA share is available for \$19/week and a large share is available of \$26.50/week (plus \$1/week delivery fee for off campus pick up). For more information, please visit: www.calpolyorgfarm.com, call: 805-756-6139 or e-mail: orgfarm@calpoly.edu
ALSO: The Cal Poly Organic Farm welcomes VOLUNTEERS year round. Currently there is a need for docents to assist with the hosting of school field trips to the Farm. For more information or to be added to the Farm's volunteer contact list, please contact Anastasia Killham at: akillham@calpoly.edu or call: 805-756-6139.

GREEN ACRES LAVENDER FESTIVAL: Don't miss out on the 3rd Annual Lavender Festival on July 12th and 13th. The lavender is in full bloom and it is spectacular this year! There will be live music both days, artists being creative, earth friendly booths, like Solarponics and the Atascadero Water Co., jewelry designers, and tons of lavender! Corinne West will be in concert on both nights at 7:00 PM along with other special guests. **From 9 to 5 the festival**

is free. Concert tickets are \$20 and doors open at 6. Bring a picnic, and enjoy the beautiful scent of lavender! The farm is located at 8865 San Gabriel Road, Atascadero. (805)466-0837

SAVE THE DATE: The **SARC's** fourth annual fundraiser dinner will be held on Thursday, October 2nd. This year, they are proud to host one of 'Cal Poly's Own', Tim LaSalle, who is currently CEO of the Rodale Institute. Rodale is America's leader in organic agricultural research. As always, the event will be a memorable showcase of some of the Central Coast's finest farms, vineyards and chefs. More information will come!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR WORLD HUNGER: Gleaning for the Hungry is an organization sponsored by Youth with a Mission. It is located in Sultana, in the Central Valley of California. The facility uses culled fruit and vegetables from the packing houses (which would normally be thrown away) to produce dried soup mix and fruits that are shipped around the world to some of the most desperately hungry people. Last year, their small facility sent out 19.8 million servings of nutritious soup mix. The facility has only a small paid staff and relies mainly on volunteer workers. They have room for volunteers to stay in dorms, as well as RV hook-ups. If this sounds like something you might have an interest in, visit their website at www.gleanings.org or give them a call at (559) 591-5009 for more information.

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.

Calendar of Meetings – 2008

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!**

July 12—Lotusland Gardens—Montecito: This meeting is closed since Pet Daniels did such a great sales job! There is even a waiting list!

August 9—Robert & Carol Scott's—Nipomo: Robert and Carol have an extensive collection of fruit trees, sub-tropical plants and ornamentals on 2 ½ acres. We will tour their orchard and see how they have built enclosures with netting, view the many espaliered fruit trees, check out the large vegetable garden and tour the greenhouse. The Scotts grow organic and use solar power. There will be a plant raffle. Please don't forget to bring chairs. **There is limited parking near the house, so please park on Winterhaven Way and walk up the driveway.** If you have any fruit ripening then, please bring it along for a tasting with a label of the variety. **Refreshments should be provided by the S-Z Team, please.**

Directions to the Scotts at 573 Winterhaven Way: From North: Hwy 101 South, exit at Fair Oaks and turn right, At Valley Rd. (signal) turn left and go to Hwy 1 (La Cienega) turn left and stay on Hwy 1 until Callender Rd. and make a left turn, go to Winterhaven Way and turn right.

From South: Hwy 101 North to Nipomo, exit at Tefft and make a left turn, go to Pomeroy Rd and turn right, at Willow Rd turn left and go until it stops at Hwy 1, turn right and go to Winterhaven Way and make another right turn.

September 19-20—No Local Meeting in September—Attend the Festival of Fruit which is hosted by the Orange County CRFG at CSU-Fullerton and the Fullerton Arboretum.

October 11—Talley Farms—Arroyo Grande: Details to follow.

November 8—Open

December 13—Annual Potluck

Central Coast Chapter CRFG Contact Information: Larry Hollis, co-chair, I_Hollis@hotmail.com or 704-1513; Patti Schober, co-chair, pwolfy@tcsn.net or 467-2706 ; Art DeKleine, program chair, adeklein@calpoly.edu or 543-9455; Joe Sabol, publicity, jsabol@calpoly.edu or 544-1056; Dick Pottratz, treasurer, pottratz@sbcglobal.net; or Lennette Horton, newsletter editor, handynana@gmail.com or 474-6501.