

# The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter  
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## Happy New Year!

### 2008 – The Year of the Avocado

*Persea americana*

Lauraceae



We've likely all done it—grown an avocado tree from a seed suspended by toothpicks in a glass jar. We were probably in first or second grade and absolutely amazed by the white roots growing into the water and the shoot coming up out of the brown seed. Maybe you lived in an area where you actually planted your seed outside and it grew into a tree. Unfortunately, while the seeds are easy to germinate, that is not the best way to grow an avocado for your backyard orchard unless you have 15 or 20 years to wait for your first crop! A grafted tree only takes 2-3 years to produce a crop! (The photo of the avocado seedling is from [www.avocado.org](http://www.avocado.org))

The avocado tree is related to the laurel and is the fruit of the genus *Persea*. Avocados are native to Mexico and south to the Andean area. Archeological evidence of the wild trees being cultivated comes from as early as 750 BC. They were likely one of the first fruits discovered by the Conquistadors in the 1500's. In 1526, Oviedo, historian to the Conquistadores, wrote a description of the avocado and gave the first directions in how it should be eaten.

The three strains of avocados that now exist--Mexican, West Indian and Guatemalan--were first listed in 1653 by a Spanish padre named Bernabe Cobo. These strains include hundreds of avocado varieties which come in a myriad of shapes--round, pyriform (pear-shaped), and crook-necked; a number of skin colors--green, purple, maroon, and even black; and skin textures from smooth to pebbly.

The first planting of avocados in California was recorded in 1848, by Henry Dalton near what is now Azusa, a few miles east of Los Angeles. All evidence of the 1848 planting has long since disappeared, but trees set out in Santa Barbara by R. B. Ord in 1871, thrived until recently. In 1910 and 1911, employees of the West Indian Nursery in Altadena, California,

went to Mexico to search the marketplace for avocados of outstanding quality and to locate the trees from which they came. They cut budwood from the best trees, numbered each, and shipped them by Wells Fargo to Altadena. Many buds couldn't adapt to the soil and climate of California, but number 15, sent by a young man named Carl Schmidt which he had cut from a tree in the garden of Alejandro Le Blanc, flourished. When it survived the great freeze of 1913, its strength was officially recognized and it was given the name Fuerte which is a Spanish word meaning vigorous and strong. The Fuerte tree that Schmidt found pretty well created California's avocado industry. (The avocado had a reputation for inducing sexual prowess and wasn't purchased or consumed by any person wishing to protect their image as "proper" citizens. Growers had to sponsor a public relations campaign to dispel that image before avocados became popular.)

California now produces 86% of all avocados grown in America, followed by Florida at 14%, and Hawaii at 1%. (Mexico is still number one in world production.) The dominant variety of avocado grown in California is the Hass (85%), while Florida grows more of the larger West Indian types, which are less oily, such as Booth and Lulu. The Hass was a "chance" seedling grown in the late 1920's by a postman, Rudolph Hass. Hass patented it in 1935 (first tree patent!) and then made a deal with H. H. Brokaw of Whittier to produce the trees. The rest, as they say, is history. (Photo of "Hass" variety avocado is from the Cal Poly Santa Ana website.)



Avocados are readily available year 'round in California, but there is still an allure to the home gardener of going out into his/her own back yard and plucking an avocado right off the tree! (Of course, we all know you can't pick a "ripe" avocado. They have to be selected when they look mature and taken into a warm place to ripen for several days to a week until they are soft enough to eat.) The avocado is a beautiful tree, with large, shiny green leaves and a height of 20-40 feet or more at maturity. Unfortunately, most of us don't have space for a tree that large in our home garden, no matter how delicious its fruits!

Now, however, there are several "dwarf" varieties available for the home gardener. One is known as "Don Gillogly" and is being sold by several nursery suppliers including Home Depot Online, Wayside Gardens, Park Seed, Roger's Gardens, and Yamagami's Nursery. (I'm not touting any of these places, just letting you know where I found the trees available.) Here is the "blurb" on this tree: "Fast-growing and pest-free, this tree produces two crops a year of soft, black-skinned avocados with a flavor so rich you need nothing else for a scrumptious guacamole! Self-pollination follows the winter blooms, and the fruit ripens year-round (though the first crop may take up to 14 months). Capable of reaching 10 feet tall, but simple to keep pinched back to any desired height and width, the Gillogly Avocado is both attractive and productive."

There is also another dwarf, slightly weeping variety of avocado called "Holiday." It is a heavy producer and the fruits look (to me any way) very much like a Hass. It is available at Armstrong Garden Centers and at Growquest.com. Growquest says this about the Holiday: "Holiday is an awesome plant. I have been watching Holiday grow in its popularity for the last 5 years. It is compact tree, reaching about 12 feet without pruning, kept smaller with some pinching of growth. Holiday produces excellent Hass like fruit, during, well, surprise, the Holiday Season in the early winter--perfect timing for holiday season cooking.

Holiday can produce fruit indoors. Make sure there is some intense lighting with good 12 hour "days." (Put the lights on a timer.) Holiday should be planted into a container at least 30" inches wide by 24" deep—perfect for half a wine barrel. Soil should be very sandy with about 50% organic matter or mulch. This dwarf tree has very large fruit. It is a beautiful tree with a spreading, umbrella shape that skirts the ground."

There is loads of information on actually growing avocados, both standard and dwarf, on the internet, especially at our very own CRFG website. I found this very good, brief information on where and how to plant your (full-sized) avocado at the Avocado.org website:

"California avocado trees are one of the most popular tropical fruit trees used in landscaping in zones 9, 10 and 11. They like soil ph of 6 to 6.5. It is a shallow rooted tree that needs good aeration and does best when mulched with coarse material such as redwood bark or other woody mulch about 2" in diameter. Use about 1/3 cubic yard per tree, but keep it about 6 to 8 inches away from the trunk. Plant it in a non-lawn area with full sun, protected from wind and frost. The ideal time to plant is March through June. During summer there is risk of sun damage since young trees can't take up water very well.

The hole should be as deep as the root ball and just a bit wider. Gently place the root ball in the hole taking care not to disturb the delicate root system. If the ball is root-bound, carefully loosen up the soil around the edge and clip away any roots that are going in circles. Back fill the hole with soil. Do not use gravel or potting mix.

The major nutrients needed by avocado trees are Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (NPK) in a 7-4-2 fertilizer and Zinc. Feed young trees 1/3 to 1/2 pound of actual nitrogen per tree per year, spread out over several applications if you like.

When watering, it is best to soak the soil well, and then allow it to dry out somewhat before watering again. At planting, the tree can hold about 2 gallons of water. Depending on the weather, your tree may need a gallon of water a day along the coast. Typically, trees need to be watered two to three times a week. A mature tree will take about 20 gallons of water a day. (On another website, it was suggested that trees be watered with drip spray emitters, rather than regular drip as this keeps the roots from getting water-logged.)

This information was provided by Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia, Extension Subtropical Horticulturist, Kearney Agriculture Center, Parlier, CA. and Dr. Ben Faber, Farm Advisor, Soils and Water, Avocados and Subtropicals, Ventura County, CA. For more information about avocado horticulture, visit <http://www.ucavo.ucr.edu>.

If you need more information to get growing, and you don't have access to the internet, ask for help at one of our chapter meetings--who knows, Dave Righetti might even be there to give you an answer! The important thing is—if you don't already have one of these great trees in your home orchard—plant one this year in **The Year of the Avocado!**

## November Meeting at Elliott Paulson's Clearwater Color Nursery

This was an outstanding chapter meeting, not only because of the beautiful location in the Los Osos Valley with absolutely perfect (no wind!) weather, but because of the wonderful job two local high school FFA Chapters did on presenting their programs for using their school greenhouse for fun and profit. Over 85 people attended and were glad they did!



Art DeKleine, our program chair, worked with the leaders of both the Morro Bay and SLO High chapters of the FFA to co-ordinate this competition. The team-members from each school presented a 10 minute program on "Opportunities in the Small Greenhouse." The professionalism of these young people was amazing! SLO High team members won first place and \$150 for their chapter, with Morro Bay winning \$125 for theirs. (The photos above by Ron Blakey show SLO High students on the left and Morro Bay High team members on the right.) Elliot Paulson, the owner of Clearwater Nursery and a greenhouse expert, critiqued the ideas that were presented and even gave the teens more ideas on using what

current facilities they have to grow more for fun and profit! Out of the presentations grew the notion that our chapter (and CRFG as a whole) would certainly benefit if we could encourage more young people to be part of it. You will hear more on this later!



Elliot Paulson then gave a talk to all of us on the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of being a commercial grower. He is an excellent and interesting speaker. The tours of his facilities were amazing, too. (The photo on the left was taken by Joe Sabol of Elliot and Megan Paulson and Art



DeKleine.)

Also, Art DeKleine put together a great greenhouse primer that he handed out to those in attendance. If you didn't get one and if you are interested in having a home (hobby) greenhouse, contact Art at [adeklein@calpoly.edu](mailto:adeklein@calpoly.edu) or see him at one of our meetings and ask for this very helpful primer with many ideas contributed by Virginia Walter and Joe Sabol.

As this meeting was held on Memorial Day weekend, it opened with a flag salute led by Veteran Dick Pottratz. Recognition was given to all Vets in attendance with a standing ovation.

Our very own expert giant pumpkin sculptor, Nancy Lehman (and Paul) were lauded, too! They were featured on the front page of the Telegraph-Tribune the morning after the Farmer's Market Competition! Way to go! What a talented number of people we have in our little chapter! (Thanks for the photo, Joe Sabol!)



This was certainly a meeting to remember and Elliot enjoyed it so much, he said he'd be willing to host such a gathering **every** November!

## December Meeting and Potluck

By Art DeKleine



The CRFG Central-Coast Chapter had another pleasurable [Annual Holiday Potluck Luncheon Meeting](#) at the [PG&E Visitors' Center](#) in [SLO](#) on December 8. Over 80 people enjoyed the luncheon, program, and plant exchange. The attached pictures give an indication



of the variety of holiday dishes available, the festive mood, and the over 100 plants available. Paul Ogren shared with us his dream for propagating the SLO Mission Floss Silk Tree cuttings over the next couple of weeks and months.

Pamela Broch, NASDA Supervisory Enumerator, and Sarah Hoffman, Deputy Director, shared with us information about the National Agricultural Statistics Service and its responsibility for conducting agricultural surveys. Sarah noted that the 2007 mandatory Census of Agriculture will be conducted this coming year.

The Census of Agriculture, taken every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and many other areas. For America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future and their responsibility.

It is important for us to know the kinds of surveys NASS conducts, what our legal and cooperative responsibilities are regarding participation, where the resulting information can be obtained, and why these surveys are important. This helps our organization stay in touch with California agriculture, appreciate the services available to us, and understand the obligations that we have as part of that community.

The latest survey information can be found at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/>

Marv and Pet Daniels organized an impressive plant raffle and plant exchange! (See photo above by Paul Moyer as people check their lucky numbers!) The highlight of the raffle was a giant (60#) squash grown by Henry Mulder. Marv and Pet were the winners of this squash (which they have been eating boiled, baked and maybe even barbequed, besides sharing half of it with Paul and Marie Moyer). Henry says: "I got a few seeds of this squash on our trip to Morocco two years ago. The fruits of the first crop last year were the same as the ones I got the seed from. I believe it is an heirloom variety. It was grown among other squashes and pumpkins. This year's fruit were again the same as the original. It is an excellent eating squash. It has very





thick orange flesh and just a small seed cavity in that large fruit. Marv and Pet could testify about its taste.” (The photo of the cut squash is from Henry.)

## The Annual Pruning Event and Memorial Tree Planting

Do not miss this meeting! Come and learn some new (or perhaps forgotten?) pruning techniques presented by our chapter co-chair and pruning expert, Dr. Bob Tullock, Professor Emeritus at Cal Poly Pomona. Bob has an extensive "home orchard" just north of Paso Robles and his great crops prove that he knows his business! Then, stay to practice and entrench those new ideas as we prune our 86 tree community orchard! Invite a friend or neighbor to join you. This is one of those meetings that **always** bring in new chapter members.

This is also the meeting where we will vote on new chapter officers.

Just before the pruning begins, we will have a short Memorial Tree Planting ceremony in the orchard. We will be planting two "low-chill" cherries this year to honor the memory of former chapter member and board member, Bill Furtick, as well as Clytia Chambers, long time CRFG Member, who really "created" the Fruit Gardener Magazine. She was a super strong leader in State level CRFG for many years.

If you can't attend this meeting, but you need to know about pruning, Tom McShane (CRFG member and general manager of Bimark, Inc.) suggests: "Purchase "How to Prune Fruit Trees" by R. Sanford Martin on Amazon.com. Book is out of print but used ones are available if interested.

It covers deciduous, citrus, subtropical fruit trees plus berries and grapes. It is 90 pages of easy to follow instructions. Best book on the subject I have ever come across!

It is not intended for the commercial grower. The book is perfect for the owner of a few trees for home consumption. It was written in 1944 and has been through 15+ editions.”

## Lennette's Mystery Apple Update



Okay, now I'm really confused! I had some great responses to my mystery apple identification question, but I'm still not sure I know what it is! Here are some of the responses:

"I believe that you have an Anna apple tree. I have one and the apples look like that when not pollinated correctly to make the apple more round. Dorsett Golden is a good pollinator for the Anna." (Rome Malatesta)

"While I was a volunteer at the Growing Grounds, there were two apple trees at the back of the property that produce fruit that are just like yours. They are called the Banana Apple, probably because of their shape." (Dave Christie)

"I looked in my "Apples" book by Roger Yepsen and I believe you have either a Black Gilliflower (dark skin, greenish flesh, sweet taste) or a Kandil Sinap (thin skin, white flesh, sweet and sour taste, scented with grapefruit). They are both described as having an elongated shape." (Sheree Brekke)

I vaguely remember the name "Anna" so that may be what it is. I'll be looking for a "Dorsett Golden" scion, in any case, at our annual scion exchange just to see if that is my poor, misshapen apple's problem!

## Dormant Pruning and Saving Scion Wood

Many of us are pruning our deciduous fruit trees in December, January and February. We hope you will consider saving some of your best shoots for our annual Scion Exchange in February. There are two ways to do this: First, as you prune, save those freshly cut scions! Label them, bundle them up in 10 to 12 inch lengths, pencil thick, healthy wood only, and put them in a polyethylene bag with one moist paper towel, and place them in your refrigerator. The second method is, as you prune your tree do NOT prune the best scion wood. Leave those 10 or 20 shoots on the tree until February 15, the day before our Scion Exchange! You must handle these with great care because the buds may be pushing and more pronounced and more likely to be broken off with rough handling. If you do this pruning on the afternoon of February 15, label them, and place them in a poly bag with a wet paper towel (you will not need to put all these in a refrigerator). (Remember, we can't exchange patented materials!) Joe Sabol, (805) 544-1056

## Is Your Name Here?

Our trusty treasurer, Dick Pottratz, wants to remind everyone that Chapter newsletter fees are due in January! If your name follows, you are on his list! Stay off his list longer and pay your dues for five years at a time! Annual dues are \$6, but it is only \$25 for five years.

**Robert Asbell, Wayne & William Bennett, Susie Allen and Ernie Block, Don & Arlene Boaz, Lora Bourdon-Snow, Michael Ferreri, Lane C. Lummus, Liese Rego, Ernest & Susan Righetti, Esther Rigoni, William Spencer, Gus S. Sundberry, Patricia Sutton, Jutta Thoerner, and Madeline J. Walker.**

## Announcements

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:** Jim and Ellen Kramme, Kevin M. O'Connor, Chris Anderson and Will Carlton, Joe Shennum, Doctor Saturnino, Vic Silveria, Inge Elbourne, Ursula Campbell, Priscilla Ko, Faylla Chapman, Marilyn N. Brannon, Wayne Trost, Lee Chivens, Margaret Groothuis, Marilyn and Harris Goldman, Darrell and Gloria Snow, Jane L. Beckett, John Robbins, and Larry Shore.

**2008 Apple Grafting Schedule:** Joe Sabol and his trusty team of grafting volunteers are firming up plans for the next high school apple grafting program which will begin in late February to early March. If you want to be part of this fun, educational, and very worthwhile



program, please contact Joe at **544-1056** and let him know of your interest. The only firm grafting date at press time is at the Master Gardener class, Thursday afternoon, March 6<sup>th</sup>. (No, the Master Gardeners aren't in high school, but they love to learn, and we love to teach, so they are included!)

**NEARBY SCION EXCHANGES:** If you don't mind traveling a bit, you might be interested in the following information gathered by Katherine Pyle of the Golden Gate Chapter.

- **Santa Clara Chapter** - Saturday, January 12, 2008, 11 am - 3 pm, Prusch Park (Barn [unheated] and Meeting Hall) at the intersection of Story and King Roads in San Jose (entrance is off King Road). Grafting demo at 11:15 am and 1:00 pm. Some rootstocks and grafting supplies for sale. Free to CRFG & chapter members; \$5 for the public.  
**Contact:** Karl Gross, (408) 733-5317, gross\_karl@sbcglobal.net
- **Monterey Bay Chapter** - Sunday, January 13, 2008, Noon - 3 pm, Santa Cruz Live Oak Grange, 1900 17th Ave, Santa Cruz. Free to CRFG members; \$5 for the public.  
**Contact:** Ellen Baker, (831) 662-2216
- **Golden Gate Chapter** - Saturday, January 19, 2008, Noon - 3 pm, UCSF Mission Center, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco. Donation \$3 for everyone. [see [http://www.crfg.org/chapters/golden\\_gate/scionex.htm](http://www.crfg.org/chapters/golden_gate/scionex.htm) for more details]  
**Contact:** Katherine Pyle, (510) 843-1657, kpyle@sonic.net
- **Sacramento Chapter** - Sunday, January 20, 2008, 10 am - 1 pm, Sacramento Cooperative Extension Center, 4145 Branch Center Road (at Kiefer Rd), Sacramento. Donation \$1 for non-members.  
**Directions:** From US 50 in Sacramento, exit at Bradshaw, and go south on Bradshaw. Turn right onto Keifer Rd. After approx. 1 block, turn right onto Branch Center Rd, then immediately turn left into the parking lot.  
**Contact:** Ray Sheehy, (530) 666-7239, NTRG@hughes.net, or Robin Cole, Twofurys@comcast.net
- **Redwood Empire Chapter** - Saturday, January 26, 2008, Sebastopol Veterans Memorial Hall, 282 High Street, Sebastopol.  
**Contact:** David Ulmer, (707) 824-1650, davidu9999@gmail.com
- **Mendocino Permaculture Winter Abundance Workshop** - Saturday, February 2, 2008, Boonville High School Domes, 10 am - 4 pm. Boonville. Mark Albert and Pat Schafer teaching hour-long classes on grafting, chip budding, cutting and seed propagation. Emerald Earth Seed Savers present all day with seeds of vegetables, herbs and flowers. Admission is free to all. Plan to spend the day "talking plants." Hot homemade lunch for sale.  
**Contact:** Mark Albert, albert@pacific.net

**IMPORTANT:** If you plan to attend an exchange, be sure to check in January regarding limitations on what you can bring, or whether the exchange has been canceled, because of new Apple Moth or Medfly quarantine rules.

**OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE (OLLI)--Winter/Spring Angel Meeting and Signup**, Thursday, Jan. 17, 1:00 pm, Ludwick Center, SLO : This is the best thing since the Saturday afternoon Matinee! It is continuing education from Cal Poly but better! No tests, no homework and almost all the classes are in San Luis Obispo County. The teachers are

volunteers, and students must be 50 years of age or older and wanting to learn something exciting! The class length varies from 1 1/2 hours to several sessions. To mention a few classes: history, finance, field trips, lunch trips, and so many others you need to go to [www.osher.calpoly.edu](http://www.osher.calpoly.edu) to look and see and read what is available presently.

Follow the link above to sign-up now or call 756-2053.

**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](http://www.calpolyorgfarm.com), call: 805-756-6139 or e-mail: [orgfarm@calpoly.edu](mailto: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](mailto:akillham@calpoly.edu) or call: 805-756-6139.

**LINDCOVE CITRUS FIELDSTATION:** You are invited to attend the tour at the Lindcove Citrus Fieldstation in Exeter on Saturday 19 January, 2008 at 10:00 AM. Lunch will be served by the Sequoia Chapter and a \$ 3.00 donation is appreciated. We at the Sequoia Chapter are very proud that we can offer this event to our fellow CRFG members. But please, let us know how many persons will be attending. See you at Lindcove. For more info and directions call Eva and Martin Berghuis at (559) 592-4664 or e-mail [martin@berghuis.us](mailto:martin@berghuis.us)

**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!**

**January 12— Annual Pruning Meeting — Cal Poly Crops Unit Classroom:** Vote for new officers—learn to prune—practice pruning—or buy a plant from the Cal Poly student growers. Don't forget to bring your pruning shears, clippers, loppers, handsaws, and gloves. (See directions below.) **The refreshments team is the S-Z group.**

**February 16—Annual Grafting Meeting and Scion Exchange—Cal Poly Crops**

**Unit Classroom:** This meeting is on the **third Saturday** of the month! Plan to arrive a bit early for this heavily attended meeting! We will have a scion exchange (check Joe Sabol's article on how to collect these), and grafting knives, Buddy Tape, and rootstock for sale (including a few low chill peaches). Cal Poly students usually have some great plants for sale, too! Todd Kennedy and Tom Burchell (Burchell Nursery) will be there to lend their expertise and be part of our day. Other well experienced grafters will also be on hand to **assist** novices with first grafts! Bring a U-Haul! **The refreshments team is the A-G group.**

**Directions to Cal Poly Crops Unit:** From San Luis Obispo, take the HWY 101 Santa Rosa exit (Hwy 1) towards Morro Bay. Go to Highland Avenue and enter the Cal Poly campus. You will see Mt. Bishop Road to the left. Turn in immediately and park. There is no parking fee on Saturday.

**Central Coast Chapter CRFG Contact Information:** **Bob Tullock**, co-chair, [tullock@tcsn.net](mailto:tullock@tcsn.net) or 238-2868; **Larry Hollis**, co-chair, [L\\_Hollis@hotmail.com](mailto:L_Hollis@hotmail.com); **Art DeKleine**, program chair, [adeklein@calpoly.edu](mailto:adeklein@calpoly.edu) or 543-9455; **Joe Sabol**, publicity, [jsabol@calpoly.edu](mailto:jsabol@calpoly.edu) or 544-1056; **Dick Pottratz**, treasurer, [pottratz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pottratz@sbcglobal.net); or **Lennette Horton**, newsletter editor, [handynana@gmail.com](mailto:handynana@gmail.com) or 474-6501.