



Central Coast Chapter CRFG March 2021 Newsletter

by CRFG CC Chapter Members
Edited by Dara Manker

CRFG Song!

Thanks to the LA Chapter, [CRFG now has its own song!](#) Written by Emory Walton and sung by Michael Falcone, this upbeat, informative song is sure to get your toes tapping and have you cha-cha-cha-ing around the house! Take a listen and celebrate why the CRFG is for you!



Help Us Help Your Favorite Non-Profit!

Are you part of a non-profit that is fundraising this year? Or do you have a favorite non-profit that will be holding a raffle or auction?

Let us know! We have a limited number of grafted apple trees and we would love to donate to them on behalf of our CRFG Chapter.

Marv started the tradition of grafting apple trees and donating them to local non-profits. Tucker joined the grafting effort, and last year Manny and Dara joined them. Last year we grafted 30 trees. We donated two to [Big Brothers Big Sisters of SLO](#), and two to [El Camino Homeless Organization](#) (ECHO).

Because most of last year's fundraisers were canceled due to the pandemic, we now have one-year old Pink Lady and Gala apple trees to donate! They are bigger and better than ever before!

Please send contact info about the non-profits to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com. We will contact them to offer these trees for their fundraisers.

April Chapter Meeting

April's Zoom Chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, April 10th. The agenda is still to be determined. There was also a discussion during the February meeting about changing the time that still needs to be resolved. Please look on our website for details about meeting subject and time closer to the event:

<https://www.crfg-central.org/calendar>

March Meeting

The chapter held a "members only" mini-sale of rootstock, pheromone loops, grafting tape, and goop on Saturday, March 13th at Strother Park in Arroyo Grande. There was also a mini-scion exchange.

As always, most money from the sales will be used for scholarships for future students. For pictures and more details, see the article at the end of this newsletter.

Articles Needed For The April Newsletter

Please send your story and pictures to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com. The deadline is Sunday, April 18th, 2021.

How To Get Pruning Help by Jenny Weaver

I got this information from Cal Poly's Dr. Lauren Garner because I've had several requests for pruning help. Many of us are already too busy pruning and grafting our own trees, friend's or the CRFG demonstration orchard.... Some of us "old folks" now have bad knees or backs!

It may be a little too late for pruning deciduous trees, but folks may want help other times of the year.

Dr. Garner replied:

"Hello! Our department posts job opportunities (from jobs like the ones you are describing to full-time permanent positions) on our department's student job, internship & scholarship site. If you or others have jobs you would like posted/shared, I'm told this is the procedure:



"Send email to aeps@calpoly.edu with a brief description of job and your contact info. Job postings, scholarships, and other opportunities are posted and shared directly with our students weekly."

Virtual Avocado Field Day April 14, 2021 (1 – 3pm)

A message from Claire Balint
Center for Sustainability, Cal Poly

"I wanted to let you know that the CRFG Movers and Shakers are very much invited to attend the Virtual Avocado Field Day that we are putting on with Ben Faber on April 14th. Students from the Brock Center have been helping me create video segments with Lauren Garner and David Headrick."



Registration is free at: <https://cfs.calpoly.edu/avocado>

Zooming to Healthier Trees and Soils

Speakers

Pruning strategies for optimum yield and quality
Gabriel Filipe, Sr. Director of CA Sourcing and Farming, Mission Produce

Trialing new rootstock varieties
Lauren Garner, Professor of Horticulture, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Scouting for pests and updates on biological pest control
David Headrick, Professor of Entomology, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Building berms for hillside orchards
Johnny Rosecrans, Sr. Farm Technician, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Cover crops and soil health
Charlotte Decock, Asst Professor of Soil Science, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Moderators

Ben Faber, Soils/Water/Subtropical Crops Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension

Claire Balint, Interim Director, Cal Poly Center for Sustainability

Presented in partnership with the California Avocado Society, Inc., California Avocado Commission, and UC Cooperative Extension as part of the [California Avocado Growers Seminar Series](#) and the [CDFA Healthy Soils Program](#).

Flavor Grenade Planting by Jesse Englert

At the end of February I planted a Flavor Grenade Pluot in the Demonstration Orchard next to the old Dapple Dandy Pluot that sadly had to be cut down due to disease. I grafted this tree last year after buying rootstock and finding scions at our 2020 scion exchange. Since I also grafted one of these scions to my Santa Rosa plum, and have limited space at home, I figured the orchard would make a better home for this tree.

Flavor Grenade requires 300-500 chill hours below 45°F and is pollinated by asian plum or other pluot varieties. It's planted in the same row as the Flavor King and Flavor Queen pluots and is close to a small multi-graft tree with a Santa Rosa plum.



From the Flavor Grenade [patent](#) I learned that this variety is a cross between a Flavor Queen and another unnamed interspecific plumcot with Mariposa Plum and Red Beaut Plum in its ancestry. I also learned that the patent expired on 1/19/2020 which means this tree was propagated legally (barely!) since our scion exchange occurred on 2/22/2020 (pew!).

Patent description:

"Our present new and distinct variety of interspecific tree is of large size, vigorous, upright growth and is a regular and productive bearer of medium size, yellow flesh, semi-freestone fruit with excellent flavor and eating quality. The fruit is further characterized by having very firm flesh with good handling and shipping quality, having relatively uniform, medium size fruit throughout the tree and the fruit holding firm on the tree 3 weeks after maturity, the fruit having high soluble solids of 22° Brix and relatively uniform maturity throughout the tree. In comparison to the interspecific tree 'Flavor Queen' (U.S. Plant Pat. No. 7,420), the fruit of the new variety has firmer flesh, higher brix, and is approximately 15 days later in maturity."

Planting the tree was a fun experience with my daughter Maggie (5 yr old) and son Henry (3 yr old). We began our adventure by first figuring out how to get the tree to the orchard on our bicycle. Our family has a goal to replace as many in-town trips as possible by biking & walking rather than using our car. We do this to reduce our carbon footprint and set an example for others that it is possible and fun to get around town without a car.



Fun fact: the City of SLO has a goal to have 20% of all in-town trips made by bicycle by 2035.

The 15 gallon pot luckily fit in the front basket where I could secure it with two bungee cords. Our cargo bike has an electric motor which made it easy to pedal the 1.5 miles from our home to the orchard with a heavy load. If any CRFG members are interested in getting an "E-Bike" I highly recommend it and encourage you to contact me with any questions at jenglert@gmail.com.

Once at the orchard it took about 30 - 45 minutes to dig the hole. We used a garden fork and pick axe to help break up the heavy clay soil. What a wonderful way to spend a Saturday morning.



Goldenberry by Jesse Englert

Photos from 2/27/2020 in Demonstration Orchard

A relatively new addition to the Demonstration Orchard is a *Physalis peruviana* commonly known as Cape Gooseberry or Goldenberry. It arrived in the orchard as part of a donation of a Cherimoya tree by Jenny Weaver- it was in the same pot.

I've never heard of this plant so I did some research and found a few facts:

- It is a South American plant native to Brazil but long ago became naturalized in Peru and Chile
- Cultivation in South America is traced to Inca and has been cultivated in England since the late 18th century, and in South Africa since early 19th century
- It's in the nightshade family; closely related to the tomatillo and Chinese lantern
- An annual in temperate locations; perennial in the tropics
- Sweet when ripe, with a characteristic, mildly tart grape or tomato like flavor
- Soft-wooded, somewhat vining plant usually reaching 2 to 3 ft. in height. Under good conditions it can reach 6 ft. but will need support.



Unripe Goldenberry on bush

- The cape gooseberry seems to thrive on neglect. Even moderate fertilizer tends to encourage excessive vegetative growth and to depress flowering. High yields are attained with little or no fertilizer.

My observations:

- Appears to be perennial in SLO, at least this year when it has been warm through winter
- Produced a handful of fruits in 2021 during its first season
- Subtly sweet and delicious

Learn More: [CRFG Fruit Facts](#)



Goldenberry found on ground under bush



Goldenberry unwrapping



Goldenberry inside

In The Orchard

Theft

We are very sad to report that two items were stolen from our orchard: the orchard ladder, and the apple-shaped CRFG sign that greeted visitors at the gate. Cal Poly police have been notified.



New Orchard Ladder

Manny and Dara bought a new 8' orchard ladder at Farm Supply in SLO, along with a chain and combination lock.

The ladder is now locked to the kiosk when not in use. If you need the combination, please contact Dara, Manny, or Jesse.



Git Yer Bamboo Stakes Right Here!

Larry Hollis donated bamboo stakes for use by all CRFG members. They're in the orchard, so if you need them, you know where to find them!



Dear Abby: I'm In the Orchard And The No-See-Ums Are Eating Me Alive!

Dear Reader: I'm sad to say that by the time you read this, you have probably died a horrible death. How you read so well when dead is a mystery even to Dear Abby. While my advice comes too late for you, it may still help other readers. Here it is: the Orchard managers have bought some DEET-free, plant-based insect repellent and you'll find it in the tool shed. Please use it to protect yourself from those miserable, malevolent, minacious midges!



*Picture of a swarm
of No-See-Ums*

March 13th Meeting: Rootstock & Scion Mini-Exchange

To have a Scion Exchange or not to have a Scion Exchange, that was the question in this, the second year of the pandemic.

Clearly the traditional exchange that draws hundreds of attendees was out of the question. That left us with this poser: should we hold a modified exchange this year, or scrap it all together? And if we hold one, how should it be done safely?

It was decided that we should at least offer rootstock and pheromone loops. Joe ordered the pheromone loops and four types of rootstock: apple, cherry, apricot/plum, and plum.

Jenny came up with a solution for selling pheromone loops that proved very popular. She single-handedly masterminded the distribution. After picking up 400 loops from Joe, she took orders, packaged them up at home, and notified folks when their orders were ready. She made sure the orders were in a cooler outside her house. Her husband, Tom, even attached a locked mailbox for people to insert their payments. She received so many orders her supplies soon ran low. Manny picked up more loops from Joe, and sitting at a table outside Jenny's house on a beautiful day, he and Dara helped Jenny package them up. Thank you, Jenny, for stepping forward to handle the sale of the pheromone loops. You definitely earned your title of "Queen of the Pheromones!"

The next question was: where to hold a drive-through sale? Santa Rosa Park seemed like an ideal spot, with its central location and separate entrances and exits, but the City of San Luis Obispo did not approve the permit. Tucker came through by getting permission to use Strother Park in rural Arroyo Grande.

Saturday, March 13th turned out to be a beautiful sunny day. Volunteers showed up at noon and set up tables. They individually labeled the rootstock brought by Joe, and sold it at one table.



Pheromone loops in cooler outside Jenny's house, and locked mailbox ready to receive payments

Folks often have questions about the rootstock. The following is taken from the handout we usually provide at Scion Exchanges:

MM - 111 Apple Rootstock

Excellent all-around semi-dwarf rootstock for apples. Induces bearing at a younger age than standards. Tolerates wet soil, dry soil, poor soil, soil with high temperatures. Resists woolly apple aphids, collar rot and fire blight. Apparently resistant to oak root fungus. Trees dwarfed to 80-90% of standard (15 - 25 ft), but can be further controlled with summer pruning. Very cold hardy, does not promote early bud break. Rarely suckers. Used by CRFG for the high school apple-grafting project.



Cherry "Mazzard" – Sweet Cherry

Prunus avium

The most-common standard-size sweet-cherry rootstock. Produces a very vigorous tree with good anchorage. Some tolerance to root fungus. Will grow on a wide range of soils.



Myro 29C Plum, Prune, Apricot, Nectarine Rootstock

An improved selection of the most common myrobalan seedling rootstock. Excellent, all-around rootstock for plum, apricot, and most almonds. Shallow but vigorous root system tolerates wet soils and is widely adapted; is more deeply rooted than Marianna. Resistant to root knot nematodes and has some resistance to oak root fungus. Un-pruned tree height of standard varieties (15 - 25 ft), but can control size further with summer pruning. Do not use Myro 29C with peaches. Susceptible to bacterial canker.



"St. Julian Plum" Rootstock

Prunus insititia

This is a versatile rootstock. Zone 4 is ideal. It can be used for grafting and "building" related fruit trees such as: Peach, Nectarine, Almond, Apricot!! It offers minimal suckering, resistance to chlorosis and crown gall. Better adapted to wet soils. This is our only rootstock recommended for peaches.



Several yards away was the scion exchange table, with its Ziploc bags of scion wood. Gabrielle set up and organized the scion bags.



The scion exchange table early in the setup process



Art had ordered four large rolls of parafilm, which he divided up into smaller rolls for sale. These and some vials of goop were sold near the scion table.

Nell took on the job of collecting money for the event. Nell reported, "One remarkable thing that happened as a result of advertising that we didn't have change is that people walked up saying 'I owe ___ + \$___ as a donation - no change'. Very few people expected change and they were even eager to remark that they wanted the rest to go as a donation." Thank you, Nell, for handling this very important job.

All in all, approximately 40 people came to the sale. Lots of information was exchanged about personal experience with fruit trees, grafting and propagation techniques.



Volunteers help label individual rootstock for sale

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, and to those who purchased items and donated money. As you know, most of the money is used for scholarships for Cal Poly Fruit Science students.

Oh yes- last but not least. The exchange occurred during Joe's birthday week, and his truck was appropriately decorated!

