

CENTRAL COAST CHAPTER CRFG

Editor: Linda Robertson

Next Meeting

Saturday, October 10, 2026

Visit to Home Orchard of 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 and your water bottle. Wear clothes and shoes suitable for walking in dirt.

Where:

1202 Twin Creek Road, San Luis Obispo.

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!"

Additional Info:

The public is welcome! Please bring a friend.

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

Restrooms will be available.

Map:



Announcements

Help save our demonstration garden!

Cal Poly is considering a plan that could replace nearly 40 acres of prime agricultural land—currently used for hands-on student instruction—with a hotel conference center, senior housing, student housing, and more. This land includes CRFG-Central’s demonstration orchard, a hub for our chapter and a community resource into which we have contributed countless volunteer hours. More information and ways to help can be found on our website: <https://www.crfg-central.org/>

Upcoming events:

October 18: San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden: “Boo-tanical garden, free family day”:

On Sunday, October 18, our chapter will have a table at the SLO Botanical Garden’s Hallowe’en-themed family day. We’ll be showing off some rare fruit varieties that can be grown in California. Come and enjoy the festivities, and help out at the table. The event is from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Costumes are encouraged.

What We've Been Up To: Preserving the Legacy of an Heirloom Avocado Tree

Last month, a local nonprofit, Smart Share Housing, asked us to help them preserve the legacy of a beautiful old Mexicola Avocado tree on the grounds of the Rosa Butron Adobe on Dana Street in SLO. The land on which the historical adobe sits is the planned site of a community of tiny homes, and it seems likely that the massive old tree, which may be more than a hundred years old, will have to be removed for the homes.

On September 2, several of us went to the adobe, collected avocados and removed their pits. When we had a bucket, we divided it for each of us to bring home and start as many seedlings as we could. The next step, assuming we're lucky and get enough seeds to sprout, will be to come back early next year and use our seedlings as rootstocks to graft cuttings from the tree. We'll need some of our gifted grafters for that part of the program, to graft some of the avocados and hopefully teach the rest of us the art of doing it successfully. More to come . . .



September Meeting: Finley Family Nursery

On September 12, we held our monthly meeting at the Finley Family Nursery in Templeton. The nursery, owned by Chet and Jayme Finley, is a beautiful jumble of food and landscape plants, with a U-Pick tomato garden, down a country road. The nursery sells perennials, landscape trees and shrubs and bare-root fruit trees, and Chet and Jayme also grow olive trees.

Chet talked to us about the care of bare-root trees, explaining that the worst enemies of young trees are probably sunburn and overpruning (which leads to sunburn.) He passed along some useful tips for healthy soil and plants: His favorite fertilizer is Neptune's Harvest, a fish-seaweed emulsion. He also finds that alfalfa pellets, sprinkled on the soil surface, make an excellent fertilizer. In his soil he also uses beneficial nematodes, which you can order online. Rice hulls are a good soil amendment because they are slow to break down and help soils hold water; they're also good as a medium for starting cuttings.

After the meeting, we looked around the garden, as Jamie explained it to us, or picked tomatoes. It was a fun opportunity to see one of the many gems of properties and small businesses here in SLO County.



Chuck Finley, our host.



A bench of plants



Another view of the nursery

Learning to Pollinate Dragonfruit

Linda Robertson, CRFG chapter member:



Thanks to Joe Sabol's enthusiasm for dragonfruit, a lot of members of our chapter, including me, have been given cuttings over the years and planted them, and now we have these strange ungainly cactus-like vines scaling fences and small trees in our yards. For ten years or so, my dragonfruit plants just kept climbing and branching, while I occasionally glanced at them and wondered whether they'd ever do anything else. Last month I was surprised to see that one of the vines had two bumps sticking out of it that looked a lot like giant flower buds. I sent an SOS by e-mail announcing that I thought my dragonfruit was expecting and that I needed advice. Larry Hollis answered, and I sent him a photo of my plant. Sure enough, it was budding. Larry advised me what to look for and expect as the buds grew and began to get close to flowering; he and his neighbor both had dragonfruit vines, and his neighbor's were starting to bloom, too.

I'd heard Joe and other people talk about pollinating dragonfruit. Some dragonfruit are self-fruitful; others aren't; and I had no idea what variety my plant was, so cross-pollination was a good move if I wanted to be sure of getting fruit. But pollinating dragonfruit seemed like an arcane and complicated procedure, where you gathered pollen into a little cup and stored it in the fridge and then sneaked up on the flower late at night and brushed pollen onto its unsuspecting pistil. Larry told me that another option – with better visibility – is to pollinate the flowers early in the morning when the sky is light, but the sun hasn't risen. The flowers are

ephemeral; they open in the evening and start to wilt as soon as the morning sun reaches them, so once they bloom you have to work fast.

I waited as the buds grew longer and looser, until they were the length of a banana and seemed very close to opening. Then Larry gave me a little jar of pollen from some flowers which had recently bloomed on his neighbor's plant. On the morning after my plant bloomed, with two spectacular tropical-looking flowers the size of my head, I took the jar of pollen from the fridge and went outside with it and a small soft brush. First, I brushed as much pollen from my flowers as I could get into a separate little jar, to give to Larry for his neighbor. Then I took the pollen Larry had given me and brushed my flowers generously with it. That was two weeks ago. Today I have two baby dragonfruit, about three inches tall. Larry's neighbor did well with their plants, too, using the pollen from mine. So thanks to Larry's help and beginner's luck, I'm feeling quite the expert on dragon fruit and looking forward to next year's crop. As Joe used to say, it's really a wonderful thing to be a member of CRFG.

A bud just before blooming



New dragonfruit 2 weeks after pollination

