

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter

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Editor's Note (Sandra Pirghaibi): Members of the Central Coast Chapter CRFG or those on our courtesy mailing list receive this newsletter. If you would like to unsubscribe, please e-mail: handynana@hortons.us

As many of you are aware, John and I have our Nipomo property on the market and plan to leave the area after it sells. Therefore, I am “passing the baton” on to a new editor, beginning with this issue. Under my guidance, *The Leaflett* has gone through many changes in the past two years; most notably that it is now being delivered by e-mail, at a substantial savings to the chapter.

Meet your new editor: Lennette Horton, a member since July, has graciously agreed to take over the publication of *The Leaflett*. She looks forward to editing the newsletter as a way to let her creative writing talents find an outlet! Lennette and her husband, Bernie, bought a boutique vineyard of five acres in Nipomo and just moved there in June. They have Syrah grapes and 60 gallons of wine from the 2002 crop that is ready to bottle. Anyone interested in a bottling party?

2003...Year of the Citrus Calamondin

By Lennette Horton

What the heck is a **calamondin**? I'd never heard the name, although I'd seen the plant, especially around Christmas—tiny trees with bright orange fruit on the grocery store florist shelves. I'd never purchased one because I thought they looked like they'd take too much care. However, in doing research for this article, I decided I was wrong about them. They are hardy to about 15 degrees Fahrenheit outdoors where they send down deep taproots and can grow from 6 ½ to 25 feet high. They also make wonderful potted plants, especially indoors, where they take surprisingly little tending and can fill a room with their delightful fragrance.

Description: The calamondin tree is erect, slender, and densely branched beginning close to the ground, and only slightly thorny. The evergreen leaves (technically single leaflets) are oval, dark-green and glossy. The sweetly fragrant flowers have pure white petals and are about 1 in. wide. They are borne singly or in 2's or 3's terminally or in the leaf axils near the branch tips. The showy fruits are round or oblate and 1" to 1 ¾" wide, with a very aromatic, orange-red peel. The pulp, in 6 to 10 segments, is orange, juicy,

highly acid, and seedless or with 1 to 5 small seeds within. The skin can take up to one year to turn orange and fully ripen.

Propagation: Calamondin trees may be easily grown from seeds. Propagation by cuttings rooted under constant mist is the more common commercial procedure for pot culture, but even leaf-cuttings will root readily. Plants grown from cuttings may fruit during the rooting period and will reach 18" to 24" in height in 10 -11 months. The flowers are self-fertile and require no cross-pollination. Transplanted into a large container, a calamondin will grow about 1 foot per year; will produce an abundant crop of fruit at the age of 2 years and will continue to bear the year around.

Pests and Diseases: The calamondin is a prime host of the Mediterranean and Caribbean fruit flies. (See the November/December issue of "Fruit Gardener" for how to control these tenacious pests organically with worm castings!) It may also be attacked by other pests and diseases that affect the lemon and lime including the viruses, but it is **immune** to canker and scab.

Food Uses: Calamondin fruit may be small, but these tiny squirts do contain Vitamin C like their other citrus counterparts. Calamondin halves or quarters may be served with iced tea, seafood and meats, or squeezed for the acid juice. The juice is primarily valued for making beverages sweetened with sugar. It is often employed like lime or lemon juice to make gelatin salads or desserts, custard pie or chiffon pie. Some people boil the sliced fruits with cranberries to make a tart sauce. Calamondins are also preserved whole in sugar syrup, or made into sweet pickles, or marmalade. A superior marmalade is made by using equal quantities of calamondins and kumquats. The preserved peel is added as flavoring to other fruits stewed or preserved.

Give this "rare fruit" a try in your home or garden, if for no other reason than it is beautiful!

Recent Happenings

September Meeting--Cliff Chapman's Home: Those 70 plus members and guests who attended this special tour saw an incredible collection of flowers, vegetables and deciduous fruit trees flourishing right at the edge of the Pacific Ocean! There were hundreds of gorgeous begonias in full bloom; many in stunning colors not often associated with the species. Cliff generously shared his keys to gardening so close to the salt air, but the biggest secret to the success of his "hobby gone mad" seemed to be persistent hard work! We enjoyed tasty refreshments and Cliff's talk while seated beneath and around his newly installed Japanese-style pavilion and koi pond. In addition to gardening tips, he gave a brief history of the area in Shell Beach where he lives, as well as information about his home, which was most interesting. Many members stayed well after the meeting talking to our genial host and found it difficult to leave his shorefront paradise. We extend many thanks to Cliff for opening his garden to us!

October Meeting--Mike Cirone's Ranch: The weather was perfect for a tour of the orchard of sapotes, cherimoyas, mandarin oranges, and avocados that cover the hillsides of this multi-acre ranch east of Morro Bay. According to Mike, sapotes are much easier to grow in that area than avocados, mostly because of the wind. (As a sidelight, he also talked about cherimoya culture, which is very high maintenance as each tree needs to be hand

pollinated.) Although the hillside was steep, members wandered among the orchard as we listened to the trials and tribulations of life as a grower. Mike really loves sapotes, having first tasted them from a huge tree in San Luis Obispo when he was young. He believes they are a wonderful farmer's market crop, much under-rated, and that more people would eat them if they knew about them. Many members, who scavenged ripe fruit from the ground, agreed with him! Our appreciation goes to Mike for the informative talk and interesting tour. (Mike also raises apples in See Canyon and it was especially kind of him to take the time to give us this tour during his busy season!) Thanks, again, to Laura Lopez for the contact.

Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire

By Carl DeKleine

(Art DeKleine sent a copy of this e-mail from his brother to several members of the CRFG and I thought it should be included here. Art noted that his "other obsession" is growing chestnuts! As Californians, we may not think of chestnuts as being part of our holiday traditions as much as they are considered to be in other parts of our country, but after reading this, it appears we may be missing out on a lot of fun!)

Hi, Art,

I had a very enjoyable day yesterday at MSU. Dennis and the researchers invited all the Co-op members to spend a day cooking chestnuts that we had peeled and frozen last fall. I would guess there were about 30 people, including spouses. We began by sampling 10 different groups of chestnuts and rating them based upon several factors. They were cooked either grilled or boiled. The worst sample was a shipment from a member that pulled immature nuts from the burr and let them mature in storage. You could not eat them!

Dennis provided the food science kitchen at MSU. Everyone could claim a stove which included pots, pans, utensils, etc. There was a huge room with basic supplies such as flour, sugar, and spices and a refrigerator with milk, eggs, butter, etc. Between 12 (noon) and 3 everyone made a dish to share. I made a topping for ham and a mixture of chestnuts and blueberries. There were 27 dishes made which included soups, stuffings, cabbage, asparagus, cakes, cookies, goodies, dips, etc., etc.

Carl

Upcoming Events

See the end of the newsletter for a current event list. Dr. Joe will send details to members via e-mail as meetings get closer. For those still on snail mail, you can contact Dr. Joe at 544-1056.

Business meetings are usually held at 1:30 p.m. the second Saturday of the month prior to the program.

Announcements

Join the State Association: Many of our chapter members are also members of the State association and those who aren't should consider joining. With state membership you receive a wonderful color magazine filled with all sorts of great articles, news, chapter activities and contacts. Yearly dues are \$25 and applications are available from Joe Sabol.

Newsletter Update: Have an interesting article to contribute or comments on how to improve chapter communication? Send them to your newsletter editor, Lennette Horton, at handynana@hortons.us

Newsletter costs are way down this year due to electronic distribution. We have over 100 members on our e-mail list. Please keep membership coordinator, **Dick Pottratz**, updated on your current e-mail address. Contact Dick at Pottratz@sbcglobal.net Newsletters are distributed every two months the first week of the distribution month (i.e. first week in November for November/December issue).

Check out the Central Coast CRFG Website: If you haven't done so, visit our chapter website. It is great! Go to www.kcbx.net/~crfgslo/index.htm

Welcome New Members! Since May 2003 these members have been added to the Central Coast CRFG roster: Mary Giambalvo, Teresa Martinez-Smith, Bernie & Lennette Horton, Wally & Dorothy Seelos, Mary Ann Vasconcellos, Mary Matakovich, Peggy Sonoda, Fidel Villanueva, Susan Pilj, James & Lisa King, David & Joan Maislen, Evelyn E. Cunningham, Alan & Liane Barta, Robert & Zoë Sunderland, Dattatraya Paranjpe, Russee J. Parvin, Jan Miller, Bailey Smith, Chris Darway, and Glenn A. Britton.

Orchard Update

The chapter is looking for members for a committee to steward the Orchard. Pet and Marv Daniels and Laura Lopez have already volunteered their services, but many more able bodies are needed to keep our orchard healthy and growing. If you are interested in this wonderful, hands-on experience, contact Joe Sabol (also a member of the committee) at 544-1056.

Our January meeting will focus on pruning the 75 trees in the orchard—about 50 donated by Dave Wilson and another 25 from Burchell Nursery—which are mostly low-chill peaches, nectarines, apricots, Pluots, plums, apples, and Asian pears. This Community Orchard is a learning laboratory for us all.

We have some trees planted "two to a hole" and "three to a hole" and "four to a hole" thanks to strong advice from Ed Laivo! The entire orchard is "close planted" and we do our best to keep the trees at a reasonable height. This is a valuable "lab" for the home gardener.

November Gopher-Getting Meeting

By Sandra Pirghaibi

This meeting at the Pirghaibi self-made avocado orchard will be loads of fun. Everyone seems to have a method to deal with these burrowing pests and we have plenty of victims for members to try their hand at exterminating. Several people have already signed up to demonstrate their favorite technique:

Smoke Bomb and Air - Mike Huston

Gopher Box - Chuck Atlee
Cinch Method (and others as time permits) - Al King
Macabee Trap – (**Need Volunteer**)
Underground Fencing - Doug Allen
Enticing Gophers into Your Trap - Dawn King
Biological Controls (i.e., gopher snake) - Bob Thomas
Cats and Spearmint Gun - Sandra Pirghaibi
T-bar Poison Tool and Auto Exhaust - Bernie Horton
Wire Cages and Baskets - Patti Schoeber

Wow! You'll learn all these methods, and more! Over the past year, John has patiently trapped over 100 gophers in the orchard (yes, we kept count) and provided lunch for the many red hawks that cruise our area. It has been exactly two years to the month when we hosted the last meeting and we look forward to having our place rid of a few more of these gnarly little creatures.

Calendar of CRFG Meetings - 2003

November 8: John and Sandra Pirghaibi's home in Nipomo. This will be a fantastic "Gopher Getting Workshop" like never before. Invited speakers will present and demonstrate their special methods of gopher control. Please bring refreshments **R through Z**.

Directions: From the North: Take southbound 101 towards Nipomo. Exit at Thompson/Los Berros Road. Go left on Thompson for about a half mile. Turn left on Sheehy (street sign is on the left side of Thompson) Follow Sheehy to Dana/Foothill. Turn left on Dana Foothill. (Sheehy jogs a little at Dana/Foothill.) Stay on Sheehy for another 1.5 miles. The address is 675 Sheehy and it is the last house on the left near the top of the hill. (Our CRFG banner will be out front as a guide.)

From Santa Maria and South: Take northbound 101 towards Nipomo. Exit at Thompson/Los Berros Road and turn right on Thompson. Then follow directions above.

December 13: Marv Daniels has reserved the PG&E facilities again for our December potluck meeting: PG&E Building, 6588 Ontario Road, (between Avila Beach Drive and San Luis Bay Drive), San Luis Obispo. More information to follow!

January 10, 2004: Cal Poly. This is our annual CRFG Orchard Pruning Meeting. We have invited Tom Spellman from Dave Wilson Nursery to be our "Guest Pruner". We've asked Tom speak to our group on a few "pruning principles" and then to head out to our Community Orchard (a very short walk) and give us a demonstration of his method of pruning deciduous trees. That's when the real fun begins! Members and guests are assigned to a tree and they go to work on it, under Dave's watchful eye. As pruning is a challenge for most home gardeners, we generally get a good turn-out for this annual event--there were 140 attendees last year! It is also a great time for us to "recruit" new members and do some public relations. Be sure and put this date on your calendar now!

We also conduct elections at the January meeting, as well as enjoy a terrific plant sale conducted by Dr. Robert McNeil and his students at Cal Poly. Bring your dull pruning tools to the orchard

and learn how to sharpen them! Contact Marv Daniels for details on tool sharpening. Please bring refreshments **A through H**.

February 14, 2004: 10th Annual Grafting Party and Scion Exchange. Todd Kennedy of San Francisco, a long time member and leader in CRFG, will be our guest speaker and grafter. He will demonstrate the classic Cleft Graft and discuss "Property Rights" in relation to patented varieties and propagating of the same. He is a well respected attorney. Todd is also a regular contributor to the Fruit Gardener Magazine.

March 13, 2004: The home of Kit and John Long. Kit is a Cymbidium collector and a new member of our chapter. She will show us her Cymbidiums, give us tips on growing these special beauties, and demonstrate her transplanting techniques. We will have a plant raffle in their driveway. She lives on Rancho Drive in SLO.

April 10, 2004: Paso Robles to "Trees of Antiquity". This is a commercial nursery with 3-year-old plantings of heirloom fruit trees. The owners (partners) took over the Sonoma Antique Apple Nursery and moved it south to Paso Robles. Check their website at:

www.treesofantiquity.com

Our contact is Tom Linden.

Program Ideas for 2004: If you have any program ideas for 2004, please call Joe Sabol at 544-1056 or talk to any officer. The "Festival of Fruit" will be in June of 2004 so we will have no local chapter meeting in June.

When attending program meetings, car-pool, bring extra chairs, and bring a friend!