

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter

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2004--The Year of the Berry

Persimmon

Diospyros kaki



Persimmon, the bright orange-red fruit so often associated with the autumn, is a true berry. The deciduous tree is a native of China (where more than 2000 cultivars exist) that was introduced to California in the mid-1800s. (The first persimmons brought in to the U. S. from Asia a little earlier were planted too far north and didn't do well.)

Relatives of the Asian varieties of persimmon include the **American persimmon**, *Diospyros virginiana*, native to North America, and the **black persimmon** or **black sapote**, *Diospyros digyna*, a fruit native to Mexico which has green skin and white flesh when unripe and turns black when ripe. There is also the

mabolo or **velvet apple**, *Diospyros discolor*, which is native to the Philippines. It is bright red when ripe.

The persimmon makes a lovely ornamental tree with its multi-trunked growth habit and lush, almost tropical leaves. It is perfectly suited to our coastal climate, since it needs no long chilling period and can't take intense summer heat. It prefers growing in a sunny location here, with wind protection. In its dormant stage, it can take temperatures down to 0° F, but if it starts to leaf out and is hit by cold temperatures, 26° F can kill the leaves. Persimmons do best in deep, well drained loam with a pH range of 6.5 to 7.5, but they are fairly tolerant of soil type as long as it isn't too salty. The tree has a strong tap root, so be sure to dig a good, deep planting hole. They will withstand some drought, but prefer deep, regular watering. They will prematurely drop leaves and fruit with prolonged drought. Propagating by seed works very well, but trees come truer to type when they are grafted. They are little bothered by pests or disease and those are usually easy to control.

Fertilize young trees twice a year during the growing season, in February and July, with a balanced fertilizer. Persimmons usually begin bearing at two or three years and in the third year, fertilize only once in early spring. Use a **low nitrogen** mix to avoid fruit drop.

The fruit of the *Diospyros kaki* is light yellow-orange to dark red-orange in color. The calyx often remains with the fruit after picking. Persimmons may be spherical, acorn or pumpkin shaped, depending on the type. They come in astringent and non-astringent varieties: astringent fruits make your mouth pucker until they become ripe--when they are custard-soft. Non-astringent varieties are less “puckery” when unripe, and lose their astringency earlier. Some popular varieties include: Korean and Hachiya (astringent) and Fuyu, Jiro, and Hanagoshō (non-astringent). Persimmons are highly nutritious, rich in vitamin C and beta carotene, high in fiber, and fat free!

The wood of the persimmon tree is extremely hard. In 1897 the Crawford, MacGregor and Canby Company produced its **first golf club**—made of **persimmon wood**!

In Asia, most persimmons are eaten fresh—like an apple. The pulp is popular for use in cooking, but there is only one persimmon recipe I think is even worth talking about and that is my maternal grandmother’s cookie recipe. Here it is—the epitome of Fall!

Grandma’s Persimmon Cookies

2 ripe persimmons, pureed	1 egg
1 teaspoon baking soda	1 cup white sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour	1/2 cup butter/margarine
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 cup raisins
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves	1 cup chopped walnuts
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg	
1/2 teaspoon salt	

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Dissolve baking soda in persimmon pulp and set aside. Sift flour, spices and salt together, set aside. Cream together the butter or margarine and sugar until fluffy, beat in egg and persimmon. Stir in dry ingredients. Stir in nuts and raisins. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet. Bake for 15 minutes. These cookies freeze well.

September Meeting

The biggest CRFG welcome sign ever greeted those who attended our regular Saturday meeting at the Tullock Farm and Antique Store in Paso Robles on September 11. (In this photo it may not be clear, but the white ball at the end of the boom says CRFG and it was visible from the 101 Freeway!)

Minutes for meeting, taken by secretary, Rhonda Underwood, are as follows: Prior to starting the business meeting, host Bob Tullock offered melon tasting outside the antique store where the business meeting was to be held. Roger Eberhardt called the



meeting to order at 1:40 pm. He introduced our hosts Bob and Janet Tullock, and then asked first time attendees to introduce themselves.

Roger reminded everyone that Hearst Castle is looking for heritage trees in 15 gallon containers. (See a list of trees needed under "Announcements".)

Joe Sabol discussed the possibility of buying more bird netting, and will be taking signups if anyone is interested. He also reminded us that the meeting in October will be held the 4th Saturday of the month instead of the 2nd (the 23rd of October) at a Pumpkin operation. He also informed us about the October 6th meeting on Measure Q. Joe set up on Sunday, October 17th for the Jujube tree to be planted in honor of Gerda Martinez, and we'll have a chance to meet her family at that time.

A trip to the mushroom farm has been tentatively scheduled for our meeting held in March of 2005. We've got an idea for a meeting in April, but still need ideas for June.

Joe announced that the state board meeting will be held at UC Santa Cruz in September 2005.

Marv Daniels gave a report on the community orchard, and invited volunteers to help out with chores. Recent projects have been repairing the wheelbarrow and spreading mulch in the orchard.

Art DeKleine reported that he's gotten a new domain name for the website and is currently working on it.

David Maislen presented chicken manure facts, and is taking orders for 50 lb bags of Perfect Blend fertilizer.

Lark Carter has been working on the scholarship research and is currently looking for ideas to take to the board meeting. He's looking for ideas such as who should be eligible and what criteria to use.

Roger said there would be a board meeting soon, and they're looking for people interested in volunteering for offices. He also mentioned we need help for refreshment setup for the October meeting, as the people normally responsible won't be able to attend.

David Maislen reminded everyone involved with the Organic Advantage testing that they're 1/3 of the way through the test period, and to please keep taking notes for the company information.

Roger presented Bob and Janet Tullock with official CRFG hats.

Doug Allen held the plant and melon raffle, which netted \$142 for our chapter.

Bob Tullock then gave an entertaining presentation to the group. He discussed a variety of topics such as the property, his main crops, his sales technique, and his irrigated vs. non-irrigated crops. He also had a Q & A session with the attendees. We adjourned at 3:15, and at that time he gave us an interesting tour of the grounds.

CRFG/Cal Poly Orchard Update

Gala apples are a real treat! Are you one of the fortunate people who has tasted one of those crispy beauties from our orchard? What about the yummy Asian pears or Feijoas? You probably have sampled delicious fruit from our orchard if you have shown up for any of the Saturday/Sunday morning work parties organized by Pet and Marv Daniels. Like the Little Red Hen, if you work, you will reap the benefits! There is always a task—are you the **volunteer** to do it?

Meet Your Board Members

Art and Doris Henzgen

Their smiling faces are the first thing most of us see when we arrive at a meeting. Art and Doris Henzgen, presiding over the boxes of name tags, greet everyone warmly with handshakes and hugs. Currently, Doris is the Friendship Chair and Art serves on the Board of Directors, but more importantly, they are the founders of our chapter!



Over ten years ago, Art was talking to a man named Mark Gordonier about the difficulty of going to CRFG meetings in Ventura or other points south. Art and Doris had belonged to the CRFG organization for about five years then, and were wishing they could meet with like-minded people closer to home. Mark introduced them to Jack and Mary Kay Swords,

who were also avid CRFG promoters. With \$100 in backing from the State organization, Art, Doris, Jack, and Mary Kay sent out invitations to people they thought might be interested in forming a local chapter of CRFG. They met in a Mid-State Bank community room on January 20, 1994. The rest, as they say, is history! Art and Jack served for three years as co-chairs of the newly formed chapter. Mary Kay was secretary for the first year and Doris was secretary for two years after that.

The Henzgens began their life together in 1977. They had both been previously married and Art was the father of a boy and a girl, and Doris was the mother of four boys and a girl. Between them, they have a total of 23 grandchildren! (No wonder they are always smiling!)

As involved as they are with CRFG, you might think that their only interest lies in that direction, but, according to Art, that is not true! They both love to fly fish in streams and were even avid backpackers, hiking into the high mountains in search of the elusive native Golden Trout. They just returned from a wonderful Alaskan Cruise, doing all the “touristy” things like seeing glaciers up close and viewing wildlife in the wild, but mostly enjoying the relaxing

atmosphere of the ship. Art volunteers at the Growing Grounds once a week, is a Master Gardener, and also sells plants at the Farmer's Market. Doris is an accomplished poet, with several published poems to her credit, and she enjoys involvement with local literary groups.

In my mind, Art, with his knowledge of plants, had to have grown up on some mid-western farm. He sure set me straight on that! He is a California native who grew up in Downey where his father was a dentist! However, Art's dad had a love of gardening and was especially interested in growing unusual sub-tropical plants—and he sparked that interest in Art. After graduating from college, Art taught school in Colorado for a couple of years where he had to work at two to three other jobs to supplement his measly \$2800 a year stipend. He moved back to California, teaching first at Sonora, then Tuolumne, and finally Morro Bay. He took a sabbatical, earned his Master's Degree at Cal Poly, and then taught at Laguna Junior High until his retirement in 1985. That was when he really began raising things!

He had three acres in Nipomo where he grew plants until a heart attack and subsequent doctor's orders put an end to the work. He and Doris purchased a condo near Laguna Creek which is where he now maintains over 200 potted plants for his Farmer's Market sales. These two energetic people seem able to grow anything—anything, that is, except grass under their feet!

Dave Wilson Nursery Fruit Tasting



The Dave Wilson Nursery Fruit Tasting Event was a huge success! Thanks again to the THREE shifts of volunteers who helped make the tasting go so smoothly and for the warm

welcome you gave to the public. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed tasting and

commenting on **46** varieties of fruit provided by Dave Wilson Nursery! The photo is of our happy FIRST shift volunteers.

Memorial Tree Planting for Gerda Martinez

CRFG Member, Norm Beard, of Santa Barbara, donated a beautiful Jujube tree to plant in the Community Orchard. It is a 6-foot tall tree, in a 5-gallon container, and it has fruit on it! Gerda Martinez, a long-time and dedicated CRFG member who has passed on to that great orchard in the sky, especially enjoyed growing the Jujube and it seemed only fitting that this tree be planted in her honor. Angela Martinez, Gerda's daughter, and several other family members will join us at **2 p.m., Sunday, October 17th**, when we will plant the tree in the **Cal Poly/CRFG Community Orchard**. The date is propitious as Gerda's birthday was October

18! All who can attend this special event are welcome. (Remember, no parking permit needed on the weekend at Cal Poly!)

Announcements

Welcome New Members in September: WOW! We had a “bumper crop” of new members from recruiting efforts at the Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting and the Tullock Farm Meeting! At future events, we’ll be seeing the faces of: Dave Biddle, Paul and Kathy Madonna, Roberta Foster, Candice Evenson, Dorothy M. Laine, Karen Kolba, Don and Mary Pritchard, Morris and Irene Tracy, Maurice Elmore, James Best, Mark Woelfle, Bernard Diggins, Chuck and Jennifer Lenet, and Sara Schneider. Those who joined the **State** organization were: Eric Reinheimer, Paul and Kathy Madonna, Candice Evenson, Dorothy M. Laine, Karen Kolba, Don and Mary Pritchard, Maggie M. King, Jane A. Kulick, Maurice Elmore, and James Best.

Trees Needed: The "Friends of Hearst Castle" are seeking donations of citrus trees in large containers. Needed are: 5 – 15 gallon Tangerine "Dancy" or Satsumi; 1 – 24" box Kumquat; 1 – 15 gallon Calamondin; 3 – 15 gallon Orange Valencia or Washington. If you have access to trees like this, please contact Michael Rader, Executive Director of Friends of Hearst Castle.

Web Site: We are still at: <http://kcbx.net/~crfgslo/index.htm>

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, *The Fruit Gardener*, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, chapter activities and contacts. Yearly dues are **\$30**. Applications are available from **Joe Sabol**.

Local Chapter Fees: Are your dues current? A mere pittance of **\$6** will buy you all the wonderful benefits of our local **CRFG** for a year! Or, for **\$25** you will get **five** years of membership and save **\$5!** Where else can you have so much fun or learn so many interesting things for that price? Send your check to **CRFG Treasurer**, 2430 Leona Avenue, SLO, CA 93401.

Calendar of Meetings - 2004

October 23: Paul Rys' Pumpkin Patch. Paul is a champion pumpkin grower--he won the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin contest last year for "Most Beautiful." His winner weighed over 500 lbs, but it was the color, not the size that won him his prize! Big pumpkins seem to lose color, but Paul has been working on breeding the color back into the giants. Notice this meeting is in late October--not on our usual second-Saturday-of-the-month. We will need to do some heavy "publicity" on the date change, but it'll be a fun and informative time. Directions to Paul Rys' Pumpkin Patch at **657 Evans, San Luis Obispo:** Take Highway 101 to San Luis Obispo and exit at Los Osos Valley Road. Head south on Los Osos Valley Road, towards the airport. Turn left on So. Higuera for only 1/10 of a mile and quickly make a sharp right on Vachell Lane. Vachell Lane becomes Buckley Road, which curves around and heads towards the airport. Drive about 1.5 miles on Buckley and look for Davenport Creek Rd. Turn right on Davenport. Take Davenport about 4/10 of a mile to Evans, left turn on Evans, and Paul Rys' is the 5th house on Evans. **Refreshments S through Z!**

November 13: Rim Rock Vineyard, Nipomo: This micro vineyard of syrah grapes is owned by Bernie and Lennette Horton and managed by Greg Phelan and his brother, Robert. Greg, a Cal Poly graduate with a Master's in viticulture, will present an informative talk on growing grapes for fun and profit! (Hopefully, we'll also "taste" some of Rim Rock's 2002 vintage Syrah!) The location is at 265 Rim Rock Road in Nipomo. Refreshments A through G! Remember to car pool and bring chairs. The meeting will be held in the barn.

December 11: Annual Potluck at the PG&E Visitor's Center in San Luis Obispo— Please note, there will be a Plant Raffle and Plant Exchange at this meeting so, please propagate a few extra plants to donate to these special events! We may start this meeting at 1 p.m.

Note: If you are receiving this newsletter electronically and wish to be taken off the mailing list, please inform me at handynana@hortons.us or you may reach me by phone at **474-6501**. Lennette Horton, Newsletter Editor