

Dear Friends of the Fruiting Plants:



Picture by Tom Ogren

Thank you to everyone who contributed articles to the September newsletter! Here are the stories and tips.

We are eager to see what you've been up to. Send your story and pictures to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com October newsletter deadline is Sunday, October 18th.

Please consider contributing. It can be a few sentences or span several pages. You can send your text and pictures in different emails- whatever is easiest for you.

In Remembrance

Barbara Overley

The Central Coast CRFG Chapter expresses its sympathy to Lyle Overley and his family upon the death of Lyle's wife Barbara. Barbara passed away February 28, 2020. Lyle and Barbara have been members of the Central Coast Chapter for over 20 years. Lyle and Barbara, owners of the Nipomo Overley Family Farm, have been regular San Luis Obispo Farmers' Market Association vendors for many years. We will miss Barbara's friendly personality.

Floyd Zaiger

John Venezuela alerted Joe that Floyd Zaiger passed away in June 2020: [Prolific fruit breeder who brought new flavors to our lives, dies at 94.](#)

Free Trees, Vinyl Fence & Gate!

Tania is offering the following for free. You must be able to dig them up and transport them yourself:

- 225 feet of vinyl coated steel fencing secured to tposts with zip ties and a latching gate. The fencing can be removed anytime but it may get easier to get the tposts out when the ground is wet.
- Tania can wait until the trees go dormant:
 - 2 loquats (about 9 years old), 1 has already had a large crop
 - 1 Santa rosa plum
 - 2 Blenheim apricots (1 has had a large crop)
 - 4 pears- different varieties (one has had some pears)

Tania would like to have the fence and gate removed prior to removal of any fruit trees.

If you are interested or want further details, please contact Tania at taniaca@aol.com



[New Wave Varieties Upset The Apple Cart](#)

Thank you, Larry Hollis, for this link to the 2018 article by Olivia Miltner in OZY.

In The CRFG Demonstration Orchard

A report of this year's fruit in the CRFG Orchard is being prepared by Jesse, Manny, and Dara for the November newsletter. In the meantime, here are some



of the events that have happened this year:

This good-looking and well-nourished deer was spotted in the orchard in the early part of June. Among the other delectables it sampled the Mexicola Avocado, a tree that has been repeatedly snacked upon by this ardent avocado leaf lover and its ilk. Nevertheless it continues to grow.



Jesse and his family visit the orchard frequently to thin fruit. Jesse has even recruited friends to help with this ongoing effort!

In May a big branch broke on a nectarine tree toward the back of the orchard. Here, Jesse's daughter, Maggie, gives her assessment of the situation.



Throughout the year, Manny and Dara check the orchard's drip lines and replace split sections and broken emitters. As the lines are both older and are exposed to lots of sun, they need repair almost every month.

In July one of the riser's hoses popped off while the orchard was being watered. The break was noticed and fixed by the Cal Poly Facilities department. Since then Manny and Dara bought and installed a new valve.



In August Dara mowed the orchard and Manny cut back limbs from some of the large trees that were overshadowing the southeast side of the orchard. Now the pawpaws and mulberry trees have a lot more light

We Want Your Opinions On The Orchard's Fruit!

We've been taking notes during the past two years on which trees bear fruit, which are our favorite fruits, and which are less than inspiring. Knowing which fruit trees are lackluster will help us decide which trees to either remove to make room for other trees, or focus our grafting efforts on next winter. If you have favorites in the orchard, trees you think the orchard could do without, or trees you'd like to see planted in the orchard, please let us know at crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com.

Fruit Report

Tom Ogren, San Luis Obispo



Seems like there's always something to eat in my gardens. The last of the Damson and Flavor Grenade plums are gone now, alas. But, worth noting, Flavor Grenade plums I picked weeks ago are still good. They've shrunk up some but still taste awesome.

Almost as soon as all those glorious plums are gone, the grapes start getting ripe. Most of these photos here are of my Concord grapes...and also a shot of some green seedless grapes in my brother, David's yard...those are called Perlite grapes, and they are super productive in our area... and fast growing... very sweet, too.



At left and below are a pictures I took of my friend Richard Becker's avocado tree. It is a small tree and always loads up big with extra-large fruit. Those in the photo still need a few weeks or a month to harvest.... each fruit is the size and shape of a softball. Cultivar is called Reed, and is kind of hard to find.

The Feijoa crop looks to be a good one this winter, too.



The big pear below is a Bartlett pear...small tree, lots of fruit every year.

Second shot is of some smaller Sugar Seckel pears. These are grafted on my Bartlett pear tree. The grafts always produce good pears. If you've never grown Sugar Seckel, try 'em! Good to eat while still firm... & long lasting after they're picked. Easy to graft, too!



Besides the figs now ripening I realized I had this one, ready to pick now. Not a tree perhaps, but certainly a fruit!

It's growing in a pot with a silk floss tree.

Stay well, stay safe,
Tom



Yellow Houseplant Mushroom

by Dr. Barry Dorfman

Amazing and beautiful, but not exactly what you want in your tomato plant pot. *Leucocoprinus birnbaumii* spores can come through the air or from the potting soil. The mushrooms are pretty harmless*, as they won't hurt the plant, and could be a focal point for an interesting conversation with friends.

Over watering, leaving the soil constantly moist, provides the perfect breeding ground for these little guys. So, watering and then letting the soil dry out will decrease their numbers, and also save your plant from rot and infections.



*One last thing. **Don't eat this brightly colored little mushroom.** It is toxic and not good for your tummy.



Ideas For The Newsletter & Garden Report by Evelyn Ruehr

[Editor's Note: Evelyn sent some ideas for the newsletter that we're passing on to you. I hope they will catch your fancy and inspire you to submit some pictures and/or articles for future newsletters!]

I hope you are doing well. It occurred to me we could go different directions. What are folks doing with current fresh fruit?

Also thought might be fun to post pictures from past meeting either to view, guess who, where was this, when did we have this meeting, etc. Joe probably has lots and I am sure our photographer does as well.

So... let's try it out! Name the year and event!

The first person to submit the correct year and event of the picture below to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com wins a 6 month-old Pink Lady apple tree!



As for gardening this year - the beasties got the best of me. I have had damage/loss from gophers, possums, raccoons, ground squirrels, rabbits, rats, crows and other birds. Avocados and pluots stolen, blueberry bushes, grape leaves and rhubarb leaves eaten and peas, carrots, beans, tomatoes all eaten off. Gophers got to all my artichokes even though I had them in gopher wire baskets - broke right thru them.

I actually did harvest lots of plums and made fruit leather. Also was able to harvest and enjoy avocados from March till late August. My tree was loaded. My loquat had just enough to pick and eat fresh off the tree. Cutting all three back in a week or two since Mexican lime is also done fruiting and are getting out of control for a backyard garden. So very little or no crop for a year or two.

Fried Apples

by Evelyn Ruehr

Fall is nearly upon us and I am reminded of all the many ways I enjoyed apples this season and thru the winter growing up in Ohio. One of my favorites and the one that makes some raise their eyebrows was and still is Fried Apples (after a good tart fresh one, of course). My grandmother made them to go on pancakes and often to serve as a side with pork dishes. I have made them for my kids and grandkids and my grandson especially loves them on



pancakes/waffles/French toast, whichever we have weekly as I am his school site for distance learning while his parents' work and is always preceded by this breakfast. If you are interested, here are the directions.

Recipe for Fried Apples

Decide how many apples you need (I usually do one per person) core and cut into approximately 8, 12 or 16 wedges according to size of apple.

Melt about ½ Tablespoon butter in skillet per apple more or less

Add ½ teaspoon or more brown sugar depending upon how sweet/tart your apples are.

Add cinnamon to taste and just a dash of salt and heat till all ingredients are combined and melted together.

Add apples and sauté over medium heat, stirring until all are coated and starting to soften. Turn to low, cover and let cook for 5-10 minutes till tender.

Serve warm on pancakes/waffles/French toast, in oatmeal or as a side at other meals. No need for syrup and butter. Most recipes I have seen use more butter and sugar than I use. I like to taste the apple flavor.

Fabulous Figs: Fun, Flavorful, Lessons Learned!

By Jenny Weaver

Edited by Tom (Strunk & White) Sheldon, a fig bar lover

My Mum used to be known in the neighborhood as the "Fig Lady"! She would bravely go to every home in the neighborhood and ask "Are you going to eat the figs on your tree?" Most said "Have at it." They either didn't like figs or were oblivious to the fact that they even had a fig tree. She continued to harvest the neighbor's figs into her 90s.



When I visited her during fig season, she would greet me at her door with a cane and a large bag and say "Follow me"! She led us into people's backyards despite my protest, "You can't walk into neighbor's back yards!"

"Yes I can, I asked and they gave me permission!" That's when I learned that "It doesn't hurt to ask". So she held the bag and gave me the cane. I hooked the high branches and pulled them down so we could pick the figs, fill her bag and later her stomach!



34 year old Desert King

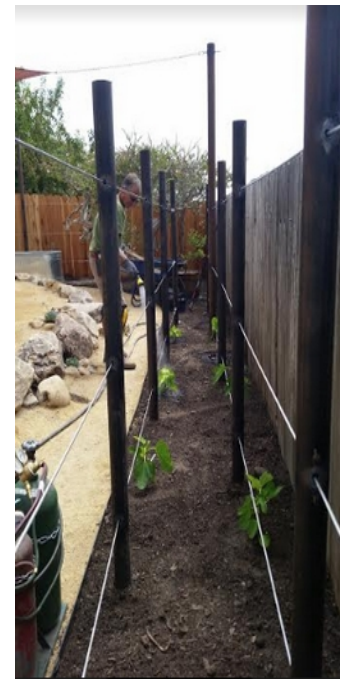
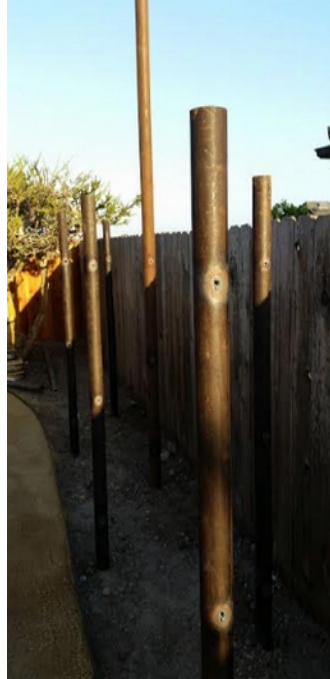
Eventually, I moved into her house in the fig neighborhood and decided that I'd rather just grow my own figs. She already had one large fig tree planted that was a cutting from a tree I had in Morgan Hill 34 years ago. She was growing it in Watsonville and then transplanted it in Pismo Beach. That tree has been around! Over the years, I've worked at the "Fig and Miscellaneous" table at our group's annual Scion Exchange. I often take the last scion or the rejected sad, skinny, crooked or unlabeled fig scions. At home I'd dip them in rooting hormone, pot them up and leave them to nature. Most grew so I had quite a collection when we decided to re-landscape our back yard. We wanted to remove all the non-fruiting shrubs and replace them with edible plants.

In 2016 we hired Gabriel Frank of Gardens by Gabriel to help design our back yard. I know HOW to plant and care for fruiting plants but I'm not very artistic so I wanted his expert, creative help. I told Gabriel that I had 9 fig trees that I

wanted to plant in our back yard. He said that fig trees get big, some up to 30', but he'd think of something! He came up with a great trellis system with two rows of figs along our southern fence. He used recycled iron pipes from oil rigging, drilled holes and strung 3 rows of cable between the poles so I could espalier the fig trees. One pole was taller so it could double for the shade sail connection. The trees were started from 2015 & 2016 scion wood and in one gallon pots when planted.



Gabriel in Jenny & Tom's garden

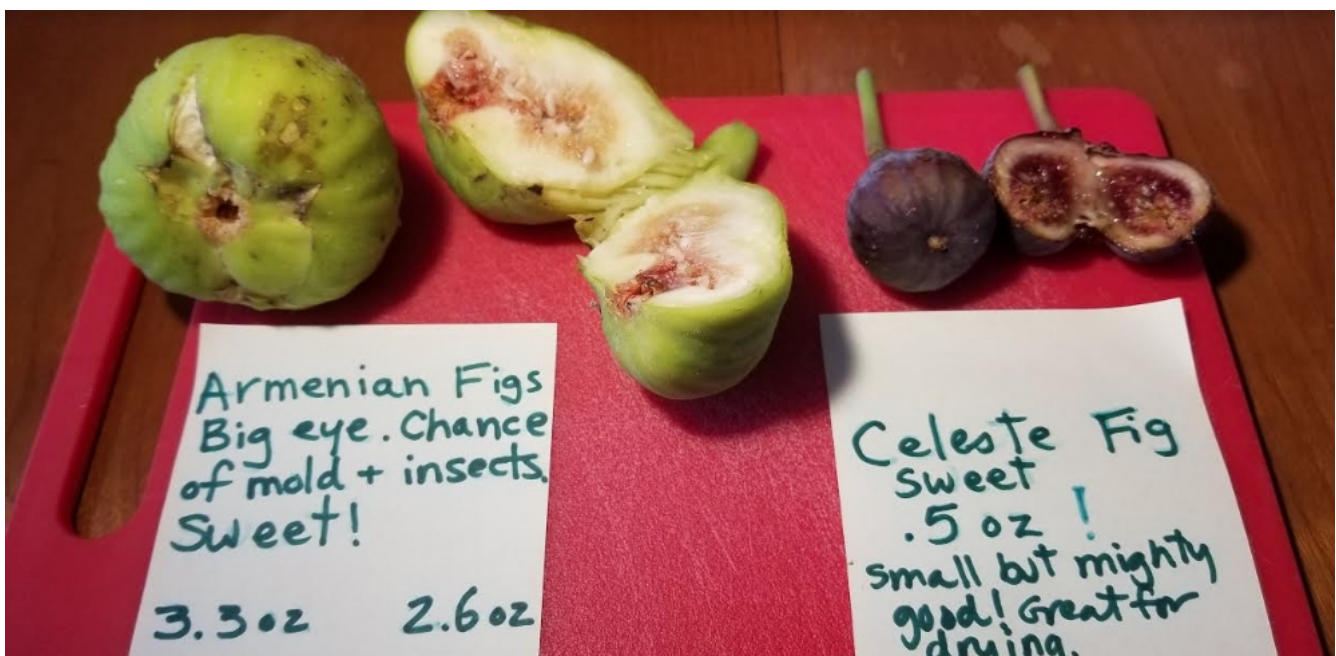


Fast forward to 2020. All the fig trees were doing really well except the Tiger/Panache tree that had lots of figs but they NEVER ripened. When I told Robert Scott, he said "Oh, those never ripen near the coast. They need LOTS OF HEAT." I wish I'd done my homework before I planted it in 2016. I struggled to dig it up and got it into a 15 gallon and gave it to Peter in Atascadero. I am hoping



with the recent heat that the figs are ripening for him. The lesson I learned is that it is so important for scion wood providers to label their contributions with the location where they were grown. This will help novices know which microclimate it thrives in.

I replaced the Tiger with a Black Jack, a nice natural dwarf size tree (8'). I also discovered that I had 2 Armenian fig trees. One of those had been labeled "Green Fig" at the Scion Exchange. Armenian figs are one of my favorite and I'd never tasted one until they grew in my yard. They're huge with delicate, yellow skins and have a very large "eye" (the hole at the bottom of the fruit). Because of the large eye, mold and insects can get inside the fruit. I learned to cut it open before taking a big bite!



I relocated one Armenian fig tree and planted an Osborne Prolific tree I got from the Santa Clara Festival of Fruit in 2018. The nursery owner assured me it would be happy by the coast. I'm still waiting for fruit! But I learned from reading that Osborne Prolific, also called Neverella, has a low heat requirement and will also fruit in part shade.

This year we covered the fig trellis with the netting that Joe sells (the best netting by the way). It was easy to cover the 2 rows because they are parallel to the fence. We attached it to the top of the fence then just draped the net over the top and front side of trees. We also covered the huge fig tree that was my Mum's, which I believe to be a Desert King. This is an assumption based on the

descriptions I have read: large breba crop, yellow fruit and amber pulp. The fruit is delicious and prolific. The birds, raccoons and possums also love them!! The Desert King tree was harder to cover in bird netting because it's about 10' tall. Some creature ripped the net and a bird got in. Then the cats got in. It was not a happy ending for the bird. I learned to inspect the nets occasionally and patch the holes.



I now have 13 total fig trees: Nine fig trees in the trellis system that are 5-6 years old. Celeste, Double Header, Italian, Osborne Prolific, Brown Turkey, Excel, Armenian, Black Jack and St. Vincent. One ancient tree that was my Mum's (Desert King). Three that are about 7-8 years old that are espalier against our northern fence. I don't know the varieties, either because there was no original name given at the Scion Exchange or I lost the tag. I have read that "Italian" can be purple or green! Mine are green. I have learned scion wood needs to be labeled better than "Green" or "Italian" and to label my trees better. But, Shakespeare said "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet". I say "a fig by any name would taste as delicious".

My figs started ripening in June. We can only eat so many figs! I give them to my neighbors and friends. I dehydrate the small figs whole and the large ones sliced. They are handy for making fig bars later in the year. I also make fig jams. Some of my favorites mixes are fig/goldenberry, fig/lemon/basil and fig/onion. The last two are good with crackers and cheese. You can also grill them or make martinis!

I got quite a few scions at our last Scion Exchange in February 2020. THEN in March Covid-19 brought on chaos, restrictions and delays. I usually get around to starting my fig scions in March, but this year the scion wood languished in the back of my fridge. In May, Tom said, "What are these sticks doing in the fridge?"!

I figured it wouldn't hurt to try to start them. Some looked dried up, some had green tips! The ones wrapped in buddy tape were the best looking! I potted up 9 pots with 18 cuttings. So far all but 5 have grown!! So, I learned how resilient fig cuttings are and how eagerly they want to grow, despite my neglect. Some pots have 5 cuttings that all grew! This winter, I will separate them and pot them up and give them to friends who want to grow figs. You know, if you give a friend a fig, you feed them for a day, but if you give a friend a tree, you feed them figs for a lifetime!



Fig trees are the easiest to propagate and prune. You really can't go wrong because the main crop is on current season's wood. They are easy to train against a wire, fence or house. They make great climbing trees for kids (except for the latex sap!) They also make beautiful landscape plants. I have a solar light that shines against the grey trunk and it is beautiful at night. Tom thinks figs are the best fruit to grow at home because they are usually too expensive or never "just right" like a fresh picked fig.

I have noticed some pests, some not too serious, some gross! There are occasional ants inside the big-eyed Armenian. We had whiteflies swarming earlier in the year but they have vanished. They lay white eggs a spiral on the fruit and leaves.



Whitefly eggs on leaf and fig

Fig trees are also susceptible to Fig Mosaic Virus/Fig Tree Mosaic that give fig leaves oddly shaped yellow blotches. It also affects the fruit, but I've never noticed it. One symptom is fruit drop. Unfortunately, is spread by mites, **cuttings and grafting**. I hope that CRFG members check their trees for this to avoid bringing infected scion wood to the Scion Exchange! It's worth investigating varieties that are immune to the Fig Mosaic Disease.

There is a lot of information on the internet. Here's one with recommended treatments for the fig mite:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/fruits/figs/treating-fig-mosaic-virus.htm>

This Oregon publication also has several useful links:

http://oregonstate.edu/dept/nurspest/fig_mosaic_virus.htm



Mosaic virus

A pest inside the fruit is the larvae of the small fruit fly *Drosophila suzukii* or Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD). This is not the familiar *D. melanogaster*, (common fruit fly, vinegar fruit fly) that is used in labs and would normally be found in rotting fruit. The SWD likes ripe summer fruit with thin skins. The ones we want to eat!

Wikipedia has a complete description at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drosophila_suzukii

Here are some excerpts:

“The economic impact of *D. suzukii* on fruit crops is negative and significantly affects a wide variety of summer fruit in the United States including cherries, blueberries, grapes, nectarines, pears, plums, pluots, peaches, raspberries, and strawberries and **“others”**. Damage was first noticed in North America in the western states of California, Oregon, and Washington in 2008.”

“The larvae grow inside the fruit. The oviposition site is visible in many fruit by a small pore scar in the skin of the fruit often called a “sting”. After 1 or 2 days, the area around the “sting” softens and depresses creating an increasingly visible blemish. The depressions may also exude fluid which may attract infection by secondary bacterial and fungal pathogens. Larvae may leave the fruit, or remain inside it, to pupate.”

Unfortunately, Figs are in the “other” category. Last year I discovered them in my figs!! Now, it’s a bit unnerving to crunch into a fig, wondering if it’s the seeds or larvae!! It is fairly easy to check for the “sting” area by cutting the fig to check just under the skin. You will see the tiny white larvae with black heads wiggling! The good news is that I haven’t noticed any larvae in my figs so far this year. But I did find them in my apricots this summer!

If you’re squeamish, just cook them into jam or a Fig Bars made with almond flour, which Tom highly recommends!! The larvae are extra protein! Lots of other cultures eat insect larvae either alive or cooked!

Bon appétit from the New Fig Lady on the block!

