



California Rare Fruit Growers – Central Coast Chapter

April 2019 Newsletter

by Linda Robertson



Surrounded by macadamias, cherimoyas, avocados and more, members chat in the backyard of Jack Swords' property. Photo by Joe Sabol.

April 13, 2019 Meeting: At Jack Swords' House

Spring and beautiful weather are here! We had a fine, sunny day for our April 13 meeting at Jack Swords's house in Nipomo, and a big crowd, including several out-of-town and first-time visitors, showed up to tour his amazing property.

Jack is a founding member of the Central Coast CRFG chapter, and a retired science teacher. He has an acre and a half in Nipomo, where he has lived and grown fruit trees for 45 years. His many trees include 50 avocados and 40 macadamias, along with citrus, flowering proteas, and a lot of tropical and subtropical trees he has grown from seeds collected in his travels.



Alisha and Tucker welcome the crowd. Alisha asks folks how their seeds from March's propagation meeting are doing. Many seeds are doing well! Some, well... we're still waiting. Photo by Joe Sabol.



We listen as guests share with us where they are from and what they grow. Photo by Joe Sabol.

Jack gave a talk on growing macadamia trees. Macadamias are in the Protea family. They are native to Australia, where they grow in the subtropical forests of Queensland. They're warm-weather plants and sensitive to cold, especially when young, but they can be grown in the coastal areas of San Luis Obispo County.

Macadamias can be grown from fresh seeds, and Jack had a bag of them available for people to take home. They're best planted directly into the ground, rather than started in pots. However, a macadamia grown from a seed can take ten to fifteen years to start producing nuts. If you want faster fruiting, you need to graft scion wood from mature trees onto your seedlings.

To successfully graft a macadamia requires an extra step beyond what we're used to with apples, pears, plums, etc. The scion needs to be girdled three or four months before grafting.



Jack Swords Speaks. Photo by Linda Robertson.



Enormous macadamia trees

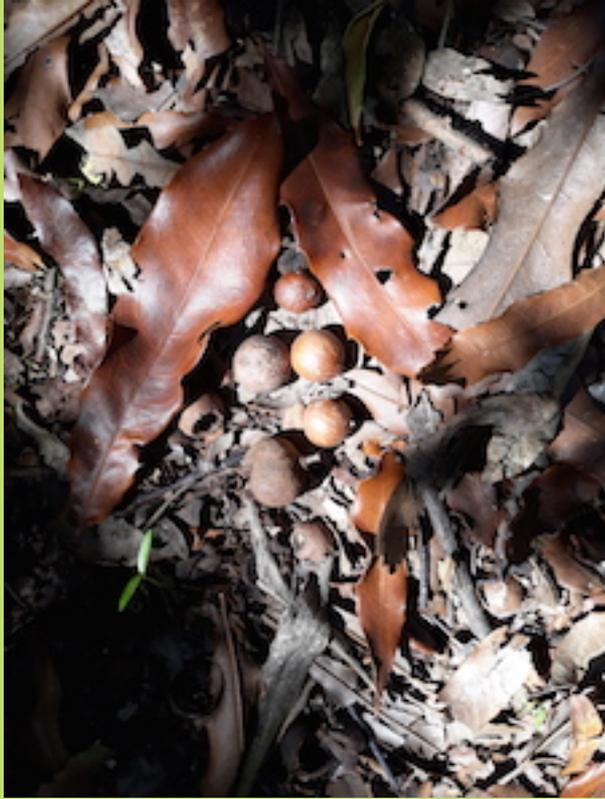
Enormous macadamia trees, planted in the early years of Jack's ownership of the property, towered above us. Photo by Dara Manker.



Jack has beehives on his property. For our benefit he has cordoned them off with yellow caution tape. Photo by Joe Sabol.



Jack's free-ranging chickens are the primary reason why his property is weed-free. This day their range has been restricted for our meeting. Photo by Dara Manker.



Jack says the spiny macadamia nut leaves are unpleasant to ground squirrels' feet, deterring them from using his property as their living quarters. Photo by Dara Manker.

After the talk, we explored Jack's orchard, an acre or so of shady macadamia forest, with what seemed like hundreds of small trees and shrubs, all carefully labeled with metal tags, planted along meandering paths. For every tree I knew – a kishu mandarin, an avocado, a rose apple – there were dozens I had never even heard of, including many gorgeous proteas in bloom. Jack had also set up a macadamia nut cracker (those shells are hard and need something tougher than the little pinchers we keep in our kitchen drawers) and a basket of nuts we could sample.



Macadamia nut cracker provided by Jack. Photo by



*Macadamia nuts, also provided by Jack.
Photo by Joe Sabol.*





Tree Rats are a big problem.

From left: Macadamia nuts eaten by tree rats. Jack Swords holds a tree rat trap. Trap baited with a macadamia nut. Traps hanging from trees.

I finished the tour with a serious case of orchard envy and a dozen fresh macadamias, which I'll try planting at the back of my yard, and see what happens. Part of the fun of being a CRFG member is learning about growing new trees and then getting to try it yourself.



Protea in full flower. Photo by Linda Robertson.



Macadamia nuts and flowers Photo by Dara Manker.

Orchard Work Day April 20, 2019

We showed up for our work day to find 80% of our work already done! Two days before, Mark Woefle spent several hours mowing the weeds between the tree rows. Thank you, Mark!!!



Cal Poly has replaced the old, leaky water supply with this brand new one.



Joe hoed weeds around the risers, and Marv weed whacked around the tree trunks, Dara pulled weeds around the dragon fruit plants. Dick thinned fruit. Manny protected a small cherimoya with new chicken wire. Pet provided inspiration!





Joe showed Manny and Dara how to hang pheromone strips from the apple trees (high up, on the windward side) to help deter moth reproduction.

For the first time, the cherry trees have a significant crop of cherries coming!



Thank you volunteers Mark, Joe, Marv, Pet, and Dick!
Sincerely, Manny and Dara

We have Joe Sabol to thank for this [Update from the San Luis Obispo Agricultural Commissioner - April 2019](#)
