



The Red Baron Peach tree in full bloom is a stunner. I mean, just look at it! And as if that weren't enough of an accomplishment, its fruit is actually delicious too. Yellow skin with a pink blush covers juicy, golden yellow fruit.

This low-chill (250-300 hours) peach tree is self-fertile and produces fruit that ripens starting around mid-July in our area. It likes full sun, which makes its location at the farthest corner from the CRFG orchard entrance ideal.

It might never have come into existence had not the nursery's founder, John Armstrong, developed tuberculosis in his youth. His doctor recommended he move to a warmer climate, so he pulled up his roots from Canada and set them down in Upland, California in 1889. He found his passion working in the nursery business, and soon he started his own: Armstrong Nurseries Inc. In 1902 he published the first mail order catalog of roses and fruit trees. Increasing both his land and the variety of plants he offered, he eventually started a research and development lab, grew his company, and became quite well known.

Here is what the current [nursery's website](#) has to say:

"John Armstrong's strong leadership and attention to excellence led to hundreds of new rose varieties [including the Charlotte Armstrong named for his wife], and a wide range of other plants. These introductions included the Boysenberry, the Babcock Peach, the Seedless Valencia Orange, Robertson Navel Orange and the Snow Queen Nectarine, the Red Baron Peach and the first genetic dwarf peach, Bonanza, followed by Bonanza II."

John was nearly a centenarian when he passed away in 1965. His family ran the business until they sold it in the 1980s. It was during this time that the patent for the Red Baron Peach was filed (1977) and granted (1978). I believe the patent was filed by David Armstrong, who was his grandson.

The patent has since expired, which means you can graft this variety to your own peach tree and be delighted by its beautiful flowers every February.

Incidentally, the nursery continues as employee-owned Armstrong Garden Centers, "one of the largest independent retail nurseries in the western United State" according to this OAC (Online Archive of California) [webpage](#).

* * *

Who was responsible for getting this tree into the CRFG orchard? I would very much like to know. If anyone knows the history, please send its backstory to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com.

This tree is so beautiful I could look at it all day... but then, you wouldn't get much of a newsletter. So, let's get started!

How To Germinate Seeds Using An Insta Pot

Thank you Elaine Rathbun for sharing this article!

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/how-germinate-seeds-your-garden-using-instant-pot-180977488/>

July 10th Meeting Will Be "In Person!"

Great news! July will be our first "in person" meeting since the pandemic hit. We'll be meeting in the CRFG Orchard. So many reasons you'll want to attend:

- Alisha will be providing lunch! **Be sure to RSVP with Alisha so she can get an accurate head count: 72ali.tee@gmail.com**
- We're trading plants! Have you propagated or otherwise accumulated a bunch of plants during the pandemic? Here's your chance to exchange them with others or just give them away. Bring your bug-free, snail-free, weed-free plants to this meeting.
- Get a workout working in the orchard! We'll need help hoeing weeds, digging out invasive grasses, removing suckers, raking, painting trunks and limbs to prevent them from burning, or replacing the shingles on the kiosk roof. Or just come to try out the swing Jesse made!
- **Again, be sure to RSVP with Alisha so she can get an accurate head count: 72ali.tee@gmail.com**

April Meeting

Our April Zoom meeting featured presentations on grafting and propagating by Larry, Robert, and Bob. Dara and Manny also presented the latest on constructing the CRFG Orchard bioreactor. See the article at the end of this newsletter for more information.

May Chapter Meeting

Saturday, May 8th we'll hold a Zoom meeting at the usual time: 1pm open for logging in and chatting, 1:30 business meeting begins.

Articles Needed For The May Newsletter

Please send your stories and pictures to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com. The deadline is Sunday, May 16th, 2021.

Lots Of Pots Available In The CRFG Orchard

If you're in need of plastic pots there are all shapes and sizes available in the CRFG Orchard. Come help yourself! They're on the back side of the Sycamore tree, by the swing that Jesse made.



In-Depth Info On Common & Obscure Grafting Techniques

Forwarded by Irene Davies, Santa Clara Chapter, and shared with us by Larry. Those two chapters are from Hartmann & Kester's *Plant Propagation: Principles and Practices*:

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/faculty/davies/pdf%20stuff/ph%20final%20galley/M12_DAVI4493_00_SE_C12.pdf

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/faculty/davies/pdf%20stuff/ph%20final%20galley/M11_DAVI4493_08_SE_C11.pdf

Larry adds, "There are many editions, but the last two, the eighth and ninth, have color illustrations. The price is a bit high at \$180, but there are cheaper older second hand copies available."

CRFG Orchard Swing By Jesse Englert

Over an email correspondence with CRFG Member Jenny Weaver, she mentioned how much she's looking forward to taking her two small grandkids to the demonstration orchard next time they come to visit. This comment gave me an idea to make our orchard more fun to visit for our members with young family members. As I was looking around the orchard I noticed a perfectly horizontal branch on the sycamore about 7 feet off the ground. Perfect branch for a swing I thought!

I obtained some oak wine barrel staves from a friend who was done using one of his barrels for aging hard cider. Cleaning up the staves



Designed for two kids



Old oak wine barrel staves



Using spokeshave to round edges

using a card scraper, spokeshave, and orbital sander was the most time consuming part. I finished with a thin layer of shellac to seal the wood, followed by an oil based stain, another thin layer of shellac to act as a barrier between the oil based stain and water based polyurethane, and finally 3 coats of water based polyurethane designed for exterior furniture to protect from water and UV damage.



Transported swing with our cargo e-bike

After some discussion with orchard co-manager Dara about how to attach the swing to the sycamore tree, we decided to play it safe and use a strap rather than screwing eye bolts into the branch. Installation was easy using a girth hitch and butterfly knot to create two attachment points with some webbing. Once installed my two kids were entertained for the next hour while I thinned several peaches and nectarine trees.

I hope that our members will bring their kids and grandkids to enjoy this new addition to the orchard. It's not just for kids either! The swing is wide and the hardware is rated for 800+ pounds so members young and old can use. The swing faces the Japanese Maple garden which is just starting to come back to life after Winter. Next time you're in the orchard and need a break, you'll have a nice peaceful place to sit for a bit.

A Few Thoughts of Grafting And This Spring

Tom Ogren
San Luis Obispo

This last winter I asked Joe Sabol if he thought it was better to graft early in the winter, or later. He voted for late winter, figuring that things were starting to happen then with the advent of spring soon to come.

With this in mind I didn't start my grafting until the end of February this year... and then I couldn't find my roll of Parafilm. I decided to substitute the Parafilm with Saran Wrap, instead.

The Saran Wrap, seemed to work fairly well, although it was harder to control when wrapping up a graft. All told I made about 50 grafts, mostly apricot, damson plum, and peach on existing plum trees. Last fall I found a very good peach tree, an obvious seedling, growing on some wild land. The peaches were very good, and the tree showed no signs of peach leaf curl. This was the peach I grafted on the plum trees.



A newly emerging bit of damson plum, grafted onto a wild plum root, and wrapped in Saran Wrap.

A friend of mine has an old apricot tree with excellent fruit, and his fruit gets ripe long after all of my own apricots have been picked and eaten. I got some scion wood from this late apricot and grafted it on plum trees, and also into some of my own apricot trees.

The cling wrap, Saran Wrap, was messy looking but seemed to work fairly well. Most of my grafts look to have taken. I've had a bad problem the past couple of years though, with Yellow-crowned Sparrows eating the new apricot leaves. I have one tree that they stripped... it now has lots of small apricots, and not a single leaf. Today I noticed that those darn sparrows were also eating the newly sprouted leaves from my apricot grafts.

This was too much to take! So today I covered the grafts with some cheesecloth. Will report on how that works later. One last note, the sparrows only eat the apricot leaves and they don't touch the leaves of peach, plum, apple, etc.



Here's an apricot grafted on plum, done with Saran Wrap and cloth tape, starting to sprout!



This is the same apricot graft, but the sparrows were eating all the little new leaves, so I covered it with a bit of cheesecloth. Couple of days in, and so far, so good!

Orchard News

The orchard was weed whacked and mowed by Jesse, Manny, and Dara on Saturday, April 10th. It looked terrific!



And finished just in time for Jesse's and Chris' families to have an Easter egg hunt the following day!

Orchard News, Continued...

Bioreactor Built and Filled!



The bioreactor was built on Saturday, April 3rd and filled on Saturday, April 24th. We shared pictures of the building process during our March Zoom meeting. We'll talk about how we filled it and show you pictures during our May Zoom meeting. The whole process will be documented in May's newsletter.

We'll be building another bioreactor 6 months from now. If you want to take part in it, just let us know at crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com.

Orchard News, Continued...

Two New Sprite Cherry-Plum Trees!

Richard Schmidt donated these beautiful trees back in November 2020, and we planted them in February of this year. You'll find them near the front of the orchard, in row 2.

I'm not familiar with these trees, so let's rely on those who are. From the website onegreenworld.com:

"Sprite Cherry Plum is an interspecific hybrid of Japanese plum and sweet cherry that has wonderful qualities of both parents. Fruits are large for a cherry or small for a plum and the skin is a deep purplish-black with a sweet cherry-like amber flesh. Incredibly delicious! Aside from fresh eating they are a great choice for canning, cooking, or freezing. Pollinate with Shiro or Emerald Beaut, or possibly other Japanese Plums.



They bloomed in February- if you look closely at the picture below, you can see their white flowers. They need each other for pollination- that's why Richard donated two.

From website of the [Dave Wilson Nursery](#) in Hickman, California:

- Estimated Chilling Requirement: 400 hours below 45°F
- USDA Plant Hardiness Zones: 4 - 9
- Pollination: Pollenized by Delight.
- Bloom Season within fruit type: midseason in Hickman, CA
- Harvest Season within fruit type: midseason in Hickman, CA
- Harvest Dates: July 15 to August 10 in Hickman, CA

"Sweet, freestone, not tart. Flavorful, refreshing wonderful fresh eating. Ripe fruit holds on tree 3-4 weeks. Adapted to most climates.

"Sprite Cherry-Plum, an interspecific plum, includes Japanese plum (*Prunus salicina*) and cherry plum (*P. cerasifera*) in its parentage."



These two little trees are flourishing in the orchard. These pictures were taken about a week ago.

Orchard News, Continued...

Gummosis on Minnie Cherry-Plum

As many of you have read in past newsletters and heard about in past Zoom meetings, we had to remove the Dapple Dandy Pluot, the first ever fruit tree planted in the orchard, due to Gummosis.



Bark infected with Gummosis removed from Minnie Royal Cherry in November

Manny and I carefully checked all of the other trees for this disease. We found that the Minnie Royal Cherry tree was also infected, but not as badly. Fortunately with the amber goo was leaking out in only one location.

Dara read that sometimes trees can be saved by removing the bark around the infected areas. In an attempt to save this tree, we cut off the bark in the infected area back in November.

So far the Minnie Royal Cherry tree is doing well. The picture shows the area where the infected bark was removed. We still monitor this tree and have not seen any additional signs of gummosis.

In February we noticed gummosis in a few areas of the Royal Lee Cherry tree. We removed the infected bark in those areas as well.

April Zoom Meeting

Manny and Dara shared pictures of the bioreactor's construction.

Three terrific presentations on grafting and propagating followed. If you didn't attend the meeting, you missed out on some great explanations along with illustrations and pictures. My meager notes do not do these presentations justice. Getting the facts first-hand is a very good reason to attend the meetings!

Grafting Subtropicals

Presented by Robert Scott

Robert discussed grafting avocados. He cut a nonproductive avocado down to two feet tall, let it resprout, then selected which sprouts to let grow. It's best to graft as many branches as you can at one time rather than doing one or two a year. This not only saves time but helps prevent the branches from drying out.

Cherry of the Rio Grande is actually from Brazil. They can be shrubs or can be shaped into trees. You want the buds on your scion wood to be close to the stem, not too long.

Cherimoya is semi-deciduous this time of year. Get the wood before the tree starts pushing new growth: the buds should be close to the stem, not elongated.

Macadamia scions need to be girdled 1-3 months in advance. Find the branch that you want to use as your scion wood: don't use the end of the branch, use wood a little further back where it is more mature. Remove the leaves. To girdle it, scrape off the bark and cambium around the circumference of the branch, about an 1" to 1-1/2" in length.

Eugenia: get the wood in the Spring when the buds are tight, then graft in the Summer. Robert says once he grafted in the Fall and scion didn't sprout until much later, but it still grew!

Surinam Cherries: make sure the buds are small and tight to the stem.

White Sapote: one of the founders of CRFG, Paul Thompson, grafted sapote in every month of the year and they took. He lived in Southern California and had a warmer climate than we do. Robert says he's grafted in the Fall and it took.

Robert showed us examples of bridge grafts and explained how they can be used to give a branch support if, for example, an area of the cambium has been damaged.

Walnuts have primary and secondary buds: be sure your scion has both types.

Propagating Figs

Presented by Bob Simola

Bob has a hundred figs of many varieties. Which one is his favorite? He says it's the one that's ripe right now!

Bob propagates his figs by filling a small bag with sphagnum moss and planter mix. His cutting has at least four nodes: two go into the moss, and two stay above it. The former grow roots, the latter grow leaves. Keep the moss damp: too wet and your cutting will rot, too dry and it won't grow. Close the top of the bag over the cutting and put it in a dark place for two weeks. When you see roots starting, wait a bit. Make sure the cutting develops a good size root mass before you put it in a pot. It may take the fig several months to leaf out- it just depends on the variety.

With this method, depending on the variety of fig, Bob has had 50%-100% success.

Air Layering or Marcotting

Presented by Larry Hollis

Air Layering is a form of vegetative propagation that can be used to propagate plants that are difficult to propagate using other methods. For us fruit growers, likely candidates for air layering would be fruiting plants that can be grown on their own roots as opposed to those best grafted to specialized rootstock.

Air Layering can be done anytime, but springtime is best.

Air Layering can be done on branches of any age or size but newer growth roots faster.

The first step is to wound the branch to be propagated by either removing a band of bark or by making a sloping cut into the branch toward the tip of the branch. Dust the wound with rooting powder and wrap a handful of damp sphagnum moss around the wound. If using the angled cut method of wounding, pry the cut open and insert a small quantity of moss into the cut.

Wrap a piece of polyethylene plastic around the branch and ball of moss and seal with tape so that the moss remains damp.

Cover the plastic with aluminum foil or black polyethylene to block out any light. Depending upon several factors including plant variety, age of material being layered, time of year, etc., it can take from a few months to over a year to form enough roots for the branch to grow on its own.

Open the foil and check for roots periodically, and that the moss is moist. When the plastic cover is full of roots cut the branch off below the root ball, tease the roots apart and plant.

Remove most of the new growth and protect the new plant until it has time to develop an adequate root system. A good rule of thumb might be to limit the length of your new rooted shoot to about 12 inches.