

The Leaflet

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter

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2004...Year of the Berry

Cranberry

Vaccinium macrocarpon



While this native American plant isn't generally considered rare—in this area it is! We just don't have what it takes to grow this berry that has long been a part of Thanksgiving—namely enough water to form bogs! So, instead of learning how you might cultivate this plant, if you keep reading, you'll gain so much knowledge about this sour little berry you'll be able to bore everyone at the dinner table with your trivia! (Okay, if you **really** think you must grow your own cranberries visit this website:

www.cranberrycreations.com and you will learn everything you every wanted to know about growing cranberries in your own backyard!)

The bogs and red maple swamps dotting the landscape of Southeastern Massachusetts provide

ideal cranberry habitat and produced a bountiful harvest for Native Americans for centuries before the Pilgrims landed in New England. Cranberries were an important staple for the Native Americans, who gathered the wild berries for food, medicine, and ceremonial purposes. The Narragansetts and Wampanoags called the cranberry "sasemin." As a food they ate cranberries fresh, dried, boiled with honey or maple syrup as a sauce, mashed with cornmeal and baked into bread, or even cooked in a succotash with corn and beans. Pemmican, a mixture of dried, mashed cranberries mixed with deer fat, dried meat, and cornmeal that was boiled, pounded into pulp, shaped into cakes, then dried in the sun was the most common way the Natives ate them because it did not spoil and could be carried on long journeys. As part of winter food supply, fresh or dried berries were covered with cold water and preserved in crocks.

They were also used for medicinal purposes. The roasted, unripe berries were mashed into a poultice for wounds. Mixed with cornmeal, they were used to draw out venom from poisoned-arrow wounds. The berry was also thought to have power to calm nerves and they were always served at "state" feasts when different tribes gathered as a symbol of peace. The Natives also made red dye from the berries.

Shortly after the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, the Native Americans introduced them to the valuable native berry. The Pilgrim name for the fruit, "craneberry", so called because the small, pink blossoms that appear in the spring resemble the head and bill of a Sandhill crane, soon developed into "cranberry." Within a couple of decades, the cranberry became an important part of the colonists' diet and culture. The Pilgrim's Cook Book of 1663 described cranberry sauce; the "Compleat Cook's Guide" of 1683 mentioned cranberry juice; and cranberries were served at the Commencement Dinner at Harvard University in 1703.

Although wild cranberries were plentiful, Native Americans and colonists recognized the risks of over harvesting the popular fruit. As early as 1670, the Pilgrims set aside the Province Lands at the tip of Cape Cod for conservation, and enacted strict laws regarding the rights of individuals to pick cranberries on these

public lands. By 1773, towns in Plymouth County and on Cape Cod passed laws forbidding townspeople to pick unripe berries, an offence punishable by fines. As demand for cranberries rose in the early 1800's, several towns passed local ordinances restricting cranberry harvesting on town-owned lands to local residents or tribes only.

So, people gathered wild cranberries from natural peat-lands on a catch-as-catch-can basis well into the 19th century. However, these natural harvests varied considerably in abundance from bog to bog and from year to year, depending on weather and other environmental factors. The American cranberry didn't come under cultivation until 1816 when a man named Henry Hall made an accidental--yet fortuitous--discovery that was to change all that.

Hall, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, was a farmer in North Dennis, on Cape Cod. While clearing brush from a knoll on his land, Hall inadvertently exposed a patch of wild cranberries to windblown sands, which covered the vines. Instead of dying, the vines grew more vigorously the following spring; they also produced more and larger berries that fall. Hall noticed the difference and transplanted wild cranberry vines to a small bog on his property where he applied his new sanding technique. His plants thrived and his yield increased. Noting Hall's success, Elkanah Sears transplanted some cranberry vines to Scargo Lake in East Dennis in 1819; other Cape Cod farmers and retired sea captains followed suit and transplanted wild cranberries to sand-blown locations near salt meadows and Cape Cod Bay. The cranberry industry blossomed on Cape Cod. However, cranberry cultivation remained simply a local supplement to other agricultural and maritime incomes for approximately 30 years.

After the Civil War, cranberry farming became a more important part of the Massachusetts economy. Today the cranberry is the largest agricultural crop in Massachusetts. In 1996, the state produced almost 1.8 million barrels of cranberries, representing 35% of the world's cranberries and 38% of the U.S. crop. Of the approximately 1,000 cranberry growers in North America, 560 are in Massachusetts. Cranberries are farmed on approximately 40,000 acres across the northern United States and Canada.

Sour they may be, but the bright red berries are full of vitamin C and other anti-oxidants that are important for good health. The juice has long been known as a remedy for urinary tract infections. In 1996 laboratory studies conducted by University of Illinois scientists and published in *Planta Medica* demonstrated the potential anti-carcinogenic properties of cranberries. So eat that cranberry sauce with your turkey—you're doing something good!

Cranberry Sweet Potato Bake from Ocean Spray

2 pounds sweet potatoes, washed, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
 4 tablespoons orange juice, divided
 2 tablespoons butter, melted
 2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/2 cup Ocean Spray® Craisins® Orange Flavor Sweetened Dried Cranberries

Preheat oven to 425°F. Combine potatoes, 2 tablespoons orange juice, butter, oil, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt in a large mixing bowl; toss until evenly coated. Place mixture evenly in a 12x9-inch baking or roasting pan. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from oven; add sweetened dried cranberries. Bake for an additional 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove mixture to a serving platter; keep warm. Add remaining 2 tablespoons orange juice and scrape all brown bits from bottom of pan. Pour over mixture. This makes 4 servings.

October Meeting Paul Rhys' Giant Pumpkin Farm



More than 50 members and guests attended the "Pumpkin Party" at the home of Mr. Paul Rys on Saturday afternoon, October 23. Paul is more than a gifted pumpkin grower; he is a dedicated pumpkin breeder. He explained to the group that his goal is to produce very large 300 to 500 pound pumpkins that are absolutely beautiful. Even though the strong winds had nearly demolished his protective plant covers, he walked us through his super-sized pumpkin patch with over 60 producing plants, explaining and demonstrating his work hand pollinating, pruning, feeding, shading, and watering the giants. Paul is an organic

grower of pumpkins and really enjoys sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm! We asked Paul more questions than we ever have asked any host in recent memory! Paul promised to give our CRFG Chapter ample pumpkin seeds from his special pumpkins shortly after Halloween. Everyone left the meeting with a genuine appreciation of the time and loving care needed to make a beautiful giant pumpkin!



From a tiny seed...the mighty pumpkin grows!

(Thanks Paul Moyer for all the wonderful photos of the "Great Pumpkin" field day! It was difficult to choose which ones to use for this article. I wish I could have used them all and the same resolution, too!)



An Apple a Day

Apples in red or yellow or green, crisp and juicy and fresh—Fall eating just doesn't get any better! Right now, apples are the starring local fruit crop and many of our members grow this amazing and versatile fruit—some commercially and some just for their own pleasure. Apples are the number one favorite fruit in America, too!

Genealogy is one of my interests and digging into the past I learned some interesting things about my 4th great-grandfather, John Field and his apples. It is a story I want to share with you.

John Field was a little guy, only weighing 135 pounds, but he had a huge drive! He was born in Connecticut in 1764 and at an early age he moved with his parents to upper New York state. John learned about apples, planting his first trees there as a young man. After marriage, he moved several times in New York, then went to Pennsylvania, and finally to Ohio, living first in Athens County and then moving, at the age of 70, to Franklin County. Everywhere John went, he planted an apple orchard. In those days of poor nutrition, his apples surely did contribute to his health and he lived to be 100! I am including part of his obituary for fun, but also as a reminder that what doctors tell us today is true—if you eat right and get exercise, you'll be much healthier—and you may even reach your 100th birthday in good shape!

John's obituary, taken from the **Columbus Gazette**, March 18, 1864 reads as follows:

"An Old Citizen Gone--died, in Clinton Township, Franklin County, Ohio, March 7th, 1864, JOHN FIELD, age 100 years, 1 month and 18 days. Thus another of the Pioneer men of our country has fallen asleep, for he literally went to sleep. Without any disease the wheels of life ceased to move, nature being worn out. He had long passed the age allotted to man, even reaching to five score years.

It is well perhaps to recollect the condition of our country at the time of this aged patriarch's birth...Mr. Field was a native of Connecticut, of small wiry frame, untiring in his endurance, of very temperate habits as to both food and drink. As to intoxicating liquors, he "touched not, tasted not, the accursed thing." (Note by L.H.: John did smoke until he was 60, at which time the doctor told him the ulcerated sores in his mouth would not heal unless he quit smoking--so he did!) After several removals, at the age of 70 years he came to reside in Franklin County, Ohio, and settled in Clinton Township upon a new farm entirely covered by primitive forests--and now commenced to the aged Agriculturist the most interesting part of his life. With his own hands and labor he cleared up his farm of 150 acres, planted an orchard which he has lived to see in bearing, and to eat of the fruits thereof for these twenty years. Let not men say this it is too late in life for them to plant fruit trees! Mr. Field also scored, hewed and framed--all of his own labor--timber and built himself a large barn after he was 80 years old. On the 19th day of January last, he celebrated his 100th birthday by inviting in all his neighbors without distinction, and treated them to apples by the bushel and cider by the barrel, the product of his own orchard. Those present had the pleasure, yea and profit also, of listening to an elegant discourse by the Rev. Mr. Weaver of Westerville, after which all were invited to tarry and partake of the feast of good things from the tables of his son, Walter Field, Esq., loaded with all the delicacies of the season, which was done justice to till about sun down. Mr. Field, or "Grandpap," as he was familiarly called, was strictly moral and upright in all his dealings.

He was for many long years a devoted member of the Methodist Church and died in hopes of a blessed immortality. On the 9th of March his funeral was attended by a vast concourse of friends and acquaintances, who listened to an eloquent discourse by the Rev. Mr. Mitchell, of the Ohio Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church. After which his remains were deposited in the earth by the side of the wife of his youth, who had preceded him to the grave some twenty years."

Eat apples and you may live to give your own 100th birthday party!

Community Orchard Update



The Gerda Martinez Memorial Tree Planting took place in light sprinkles at 2 p.m. on Sunday, October 17, in the Cal Poly/CRFG Demonstration Orchard. No one got wet though, as our handy co-chair, Dr. Art DeKleine, had a nice rain cover set up for guests to stand beneath. Art Henzgen read a beautiful poem written by Doris Henzgen just for the occasion. Several of Gerda's family members were there, including her son, Mark, and they were very appreciative of the ceremony. Thanks to Norman Beard for the Jujube Li tree planted in Gerda's honor and for all of you who "braved" the weather to remember our lovely friend. (Photo by Paul Moyer)

According to Marv Daniels, the orchard looked great for the event and was **completely safe** since PG&E crews had replaced a weak power pole that was leaning precariously near the fence.

If you feel like getting out in the beautiful weather, load up your hard-tired wheelbarrow and bring it to the orchard. There is a big pile of mulch that needs to be spread around the trees!

Watering Fruit Trees

Member David Blakely asked our Professor Emeritus, Dr. Joe Sabol, for some advice on watering fruit trees. Joe's answer to David is a good reminder, refresher, or education for all of us, so I am sharing it here.

"David...I do not have a nice document on watering fruit trees. I will keep my eye open for a good reference for you. It is an important topic, especially in the drought years we are having!!! Perhaps we need a speaker or workshop on this topic in the near future!!!

Listed below are a few of the general principles that you (may) already know:

1. Deep watering weekly is better than more frequent shallow watering.
2. Most of the feeder roots are out near the drip line of the tree.
3. Water directly at the trunk is wasteful and can be harmful to the tree.
4. Very few tree roots like to be wet all the time. Good drainage is important.
5. Water is critical to heavy fruit production, strong growth, and overall health.
6. Water during times of fruit growth is most critical (spring and early summer).
7. Water during flower initiation (August) is critical for next year's fruit production. Remember, the tree "decides" to have flower buds in the summer...so they are being constructed during the summer, then go dormant until spring) Do not stress a fruit tree even after you pick the fruit or you will have fewer flowers/fruit next spring)
8. Trees planted in sandy soil will need more frequent watering than those in clay.
9. Water consumption by trees in hot windy weather ... is INCREDIBLE.
10. Mature trees can take more water stress than young trees.
11. Check soil moisture with a probe before and after watering to see how water moves in your soil.
12. Watch your trees... they are talking to you daily. Trees under stress are screaming for our attention.

Meet Your Board Members Doug Allen and Rhonda Underwood

At meetings when you see Doug Allen with his fluffy beard, you may think we've scored "Santa" as a member of our chapter--one that even comes with his own little "helper", Rhonda Underwood! Actually, Doug isn't "Santa", although he plays the part well during our annual Christmas party—he's really our raffle chairman. And Rhonda is so much more than "his helper." She is our **extremely competent** chapter secretary, a position she has held for three years.

About four years ago, Marv Daniels got Doug and Rhonda interested in joining CRFG and they quickly became involved in our local chapter. Doug, who works at Cal Poly in the architecture department, and Rhonda, who works for a biochemical company that does research and development, love growing things, especially things that aren't **supposed** to grow here.



Doug and Rhonda grew up in Ridgecrest, California and, although Rhonda knew part of Doug's family, she didn't know him until they met at work in 1978. Doug moved to San Luis Obispo in 1979 to attend Cal Poly

and Rhonda joined him in 1980 when they married. They have three children—their oldest son attends college in San Francisco and their two daughters are enrolled at Cuesta. An adorable two-year-old granddaughter rounds out their family. In 1998 they moved to a home on Printz Road that had only a few shrubs and trees growing around it—nothing was edible! They have transformed it into a wonderful garden where you will find several varieties of citrus trees growing next to peaches, apples, apricots, and other fruit trees. They are also growing cherimoyas, feijoas, bananas (the plant finally has a big, beautiful blossom!) and passion fruit so prolific that Rhonda is going to juice the fruit this year! They also have a menagerie of three dogs, a cat, and 20 chickens.

In developing their “paradise” they have fought gophers, trying every trick in the book to eliminate them, to no avail. Doug had been a proponent of wire cages or baskets for protecting his plants, but grew frustrated when the baskets deteriorated after only a short time in the ground. After some experimentation, he came up with a very interesting solution to that problem—he has made concrete grids that don’t disintegrate, are cost effective, and that gophers can’t eat through! (Contact him for more on his innovative design.)

Besides her interest in gardening, Rhonda has an unusual hobby—she collects latex monster masks! She has been doing this for twenty plus years and has over 200 of them, including a full-sized female mummy and a bust of Elvira! To learn more about this fascinating hobby, go to www.latexmaskcentral.com and click on “Collections” then scroll down to Rhonda Underwood, where you can see a “very small part” of her collection. Now she is learning to sculpt her own masks.

Rhonda trains for and runs in marathon races, too, usually racing in those events supporting a cause such as leukemia or lymphoma. She says she’ll do that until her body tells her, “No!”

State of the State

According to our representative, Joe Sabol, the following are the CRFG Long Range Goals adopted by the Board of Directors at their last meeting. The meeting was held at the Wolfskill Orchard (part of the UC Davis properties in Winters, CA) on September 25, 2004. Note: The language in these two long range goals will be “cleaned up” so that they read more smoothly.

1. Consider our target membership base to be people interested in propagating, growing, maintaining, studying, sharing information on and consuming fruit trees and berry plants (and other edible plants) consistent with the purposes of CRFG and with emphasis on material not commonly available.
2. Increase membership to a level which will insure adequate support of CRFG programs, including publication of the *Fruit Gardener*, volunteers, structures, the website, and other initiatives.

Announcements

Welcome New Members in October: Lisa Grady, Paul and Michele Janetski, Ruth Martin, Francoise Nigro, Stanley Rose, Nancy Tweedie, and Vincent Nutile.

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** as of January 2004. Applications are available from **Joe Sabol**. **New members from our chapter who joined in October are:** John and Sandra Pirghaibi and Ruth E Martin.

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

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. **DIRECTIONS:** From north of Nipomo, take 101 south to **Los Berros/Thompson** exit. At the end of the exit, go **left**, back under the freeway, which is **Thompson Avenue**. Go past Windmill Farm and shortly you will see a sign on your **left** for **Sheehy Road**. Take **Sheehy** for a block (you will be heading toward the Nipomo Hills) and make a **left** turn on to **Rim Rock Road**. We are about the sixth house up the road on the **left** at 265 Rim Rock Road with the vineyard in front. (There are no houses on the right.) Drive in through the gate to park. From south of Nipomo, take the **Los Berros/Thompson** exit. At the end of the exit, turn **right** onto **Thompson Avenue**. All other directions are the same.

December 11: Annual Potluck at the PG&E Visitor's Center in San Luis Obispo: There will be a Plant Raffle and Plant Exchange at this meeting. Please bring a few extra plants (some you have propagated!) to donate to these special events. **We will start this meeting at 12:30 p.m. with our potluck.** This is a FULL MEAL contributed to by everyone!

Program Ideas for 2005: If you have program ideas, please call **Joe Sabol** at **544-1056** or talk to any chapter officer.

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