

# The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter  
Volume 8 • Issue 11 • December 2005



## 2005 – The Year of the Apple

### Love Apple



To say good-bye to the Year of the Apple, I thought it only fitting to discuss the Love Apple. It isn't rare and it has even been to court over whether or not it is a fruit. It once was thought poisonous, yet it is now one of the most widely homegrown crops under the most widely varying conditions in the world. If you think you've never tasted one, think again. The Love Apple is that commonly known fruit/vegetable we've all eaten—the tomato!

The tomato, *Solanum lycopersicum*, has a long and checkered history in the annals of food. Using molecular markers, Charles Rick, professor emeritus of vegetable crops at UC Davis, has traced the tomato's lineage back to the wild cherry tomatoes that still grow in the coastal valleys of western South America. Although the leaves **are** poisonous (it is a member of the Solanaceae family which includes many lethal plants, like henbane and deadly nightshade), the fruit is not toxic in any way and, in fact, is very good for you! (Tomatoes are rich in vitamins A and C and low in calories. They are an excellent source of lycopene, which has been linked to the prevention of many forms of cancer.)

In the far distant past, the scrawny, sprawling wild tomato was transplanted from South America to Mexico where it was being cultivated by Mayan and Aztec farmers perhaps as early as 700 A.D. The Spanish conquistadors discovered it in Mexico. They took the tomato back with them to Seville in the 1520s and cooks there soon learned how wonderful tomatoes tasted with garlic, onions, and olive oil. By the early 1700s, they were a staple part of the diet in many Mediterranean countries, including Spain, Italy, and France. Tomatoes were originally known as 'Love Apples', possibly based on a mistranslation of the Italian name *pomo d'oro* (golden apple) as *pomo d'amoro*. However, the English, and by extension of their mostly English origins, the Americans, wouldn't eat them, with a few exceptions, until the early 1800s. (Thomas Jefferson, who had tasted tomatoes during his visits to France, cultivated tomatoes on his farm in the 1790s.) Creole cooks, with their French influence, used tomatoes extensively in their dishes and by 1826, there was even an American cookbook published with recipes using tomatoes.

Nation-wide acceptance of the tomato as food, though, was really a result of the Civil War. The canning process was new at the time and soldiers were exposed to tomatoes because they received them canned. What a wonderful addition they must have been to the diets of many of the soldiers, who often got little more than hardtack.

Botanically speaking a tomato is the ovary, together with its seeds, of a flowering plant, i.e. a fruit. However, the tomato is typically served as a meal, or part of a main course of a meal, meaning that it would be considered a vegetable (a culinary term which has no botanical meaning). In 1887, U.S. tariff laws which imposed a duty on vegetables, but not on fruits, caused the tomato's status to become a matter of legal importance. The U.S. Supreme Court, in 1893, declared that the tomato is a vegetable, along with cucumbers, squashes, beans, and peas, using the popular definition which classifies vegetables by use in that they are generally served with dinner and not as dessert. The case is known as *Nix v. Hedden*.

From that past, the tomato rapidly developed in the 20th Century into the number one home grown crop in America. Americans now consume an average of 90 pounds of tomatoes and tomato products a year!

How does one grow a good tomato? The answers to that are almost as varied as the number of pounds of tomatoes we eat every year! Most everyone agrees on one thing, though—tomatoes grow best when they receive full sunshine for at least six hours a day. (There are exceptions to this “rule”. Tomatoes planted in the desert may need a shade cloth to protect them from the extremely hot sun in mid-day.) They also need plenty of water, but not soggy roots, and they need organically rich soil, amended with well-rotted manure and compost. Tomatoes grow best in nearly neutral soil with pH of 6.5 to 7.0. They are heavy feeders and need to be fertilized several times during the growing season. Among the best analyses for tomatoes are 8-32-16 and 6-24-24. Avoid using ammonia fertilizers such as urea or ammonium nitrate for tomato fertilization. And don't plant your tomatoes in the same space every year! That leads to disease, such as verticillium or fusarium wilt.

There are so many varieties of tomatoes that you can easily be overwhelmed by choices! Some kinds grow better than others in different climates. For example, the Murray Smith tomato is especially suited to most of our Central Coast climates. (New chapter member, William Bennett, generously shared packets of Murray Smith seed at the November meeting. Just about anything you want to know about growing this variety, William can tell you!) You don't even have to grow red tomatoes—you might prefer pink, yellow, purple, gold, or even green with black stripes! They can be tiny, grape-sized all the way up to huge tomatoes weighing several pounds. You may choose an heirloom tomato (one whose seeds will produce the same kind of fruit as the parent plant) or one bred for certain characteristics, such as resistance to verticillium wilt. Their shape can be round, oval, pear, bumpy, or square! (Growing square tomatoes is another subject entirely!) You can grow them in pots or plots. (Heirloom tomato photo is from the Tomato Bob website.)



So get prepared to grow some Love Apples this spring once all danger of frost is past! One thing is for sure—whatever variety you choose to grow, **no** tomato you purchase will ever taste as good as the one eaten fresh picked from your own plant! And, if you just have too many tomatoes to eat fresh, you can beat the Supreme Court (with no jail-time!) and make a dessert with them!

### Tomato Upside-Down Cake

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Generously butter a 9-inch round cake pan and then cover the bottom of the pan with thin slices of ripe red tomatoes that have been peeled and seeded. In small pan melt 4 tbs. butter, ¼ c. packed brown sugar and 1 tsp. ginger over medium-low heat. Pour over the tomato slices.

**Cake:**

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 Large pinch of salt  
 1 teaspoon ground ginger  
 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves  
 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 1/4 teaspoon ground mace  
 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
 3/4 cup sugar  
 1/2 cup molasses  
 2 large eggs, separated  
 1 teaspoon vanilla  
 1/2 cup milk  
  
 1 cup heavy cream  
 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar  
 A few drops of vanilla

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and mace together. Cream the butter and sugar together in a large bowl. Add the molasses, and then add the egg yolks one yolk at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the vanilla and mix well. Add the milk alternately with the dry ingredients, beating well after each addition.

Beat the egg whites until stiff. Fold the whites into the cake batter. Spread the batter over the tomatoes and bake until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes.

Let the cake cool for at least 15 minutes, and then run a knife around the edges of the pan to loosen it. Turn the cake over onto a serving platter and let it sit, still in the pan, for another 5 minutes. Remove the pan.

To serve, whip the cream and flavor with the confectioners' sugar and vanilla. Cut the cake into wedges and serve the cream on the side.

## November Meeting

Over one hundred people were at the November Meeting, held at the Fish and Flax Farm in Nipomo, with some of them driving from as far away as Los Angeles to attend. We were there to hear the mulch maven, Gene Carl, discourse on his number one passion—organic mulch!

First, though, we held a brief meeting which was called to order by co-chair, Art DeKleine. Art told us that he had weeded through the name tags, tossing some and making new ones for members who didn't have them. There are now 230 name tags!

He announced that we would be saying good-bye to long-time member, Mary Walcher, who is leaving the area, as well as to John and Sandra Pirghaibi, who will soon become part-time residents to the area. Art then called Sandra to come forward and show us the work she and Marie Moyer had been doing on the historical scrapbooks for our chapter.

Like every project Sandra undertakes, the scrapbooks are done with precision and meticulous attention to detail. There will be one completed for every year from our chapter's inception for display



at the Festival of Fruit next September. Those she has finished will be available to look at during most chapter meetings. If you haven't already seen these works of art, be sure to do it soon. (Photo of Art DeKleine and Sandra Pirghaibi was taken by Ron Blakey.)

Joe Sabol updated us on the progress being made by the hard workers of the Festival of Fruit committee for the event we're hosting here September 5-7, 2006. More help is still needed to make it a rousing success! Planning meetings are being held every **third Tuesday** of the month from 5 to 8 pm at the Prime Outlets in Pismo. Everyone is invited. Call Joe Sabol at **544-1056** if you want to help or if you need more information.

Pet Daniels introduced our host for the day, Gene Carl, and presented him with a CRFG hat. Gene jumped right into a discussion of his passion--organic mulch. Gene stressed that he believes in simplicity when it comes to mulch. He begins his process with materials he gets free from a tree service and then grinds it all to make a homogenous product. He adds organic urea and mixes it well, then piles it up. He maintains proper moisture and turns the pile about every three days. Depending on the temperature, he can make a huge quantity of mulch in as little as a month. He is careful not to add any meat/protein products to his mulch. With internal temperatures reaching 140-150 F, weeds are not a problem. The large mound of mulch behind him was nearly ready to be used and had a wonderful, earthy smell. He doesn't sell his mulch, but uses it in pots to plant the Phormiums (New Zealand Flax) that he grows commercially. (Photo on right is by Paul Moyer.)



After an extended period of questions and answers, the group moved on to see another part of Gene's operations, his trout farm. Gene explained the whole process of growing trout, but I'm sorry, I couldn't hear enough to explain it here!

Gene then moved up the hill further to talk about the 23 varieties of New Zealand Flax that he raises. I had to leave at this point, but I'm sure it was another interesting segment of the meeting. If you weren't at this meeting, you may have another chance for a tour during the Festival of Fruit. Joe Sabol hopes we can get Gene to agree to open his operations to the public during that time.

Gene was a great host—interesting, informative, and thoughtful--he even paid for a porta-john to accommodate our needs!

### **Are You Here?**

If your name is listed below, it is because your annual chapter fees are **due in January**. For a mere pittance of **\$6** per year, you are kept informed of chapter activities and you receive this fabulous newsletter! Where else can you get that kind of return for just over **1 ½ cents** a day? To make it an even better value, you could pay **\$25**, get the newsletter for **five** years, and not have to search for your name for a long time! So check it out! Please send in your choice of payment to: **Richard Pottratz, Treasurer, 2430 Leona Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.**

Andy Allen, Robert Asbell, Gary Aubuchon, Owen & Patricia Baynham, Don & Judy Beach, Norman Beard, James Best, David Biddle, Sheree Brekke, Nathan Carmack, Dr. Lark Carter,

Benjamin Chow, Gary Cooke, Monica Cooper, Forest Crowe, Christie Cutter, Pet & Marv Daniels, Bernard Diggins, Maurice Elmore, Candace Evenson, Roberta Foster, Gary Fourer, Norma Frey, Bill & Anne Furtick, David Gurney, Alice Hamrick, Linda Hauss, Art & Doris Henzgen, Delbert Herschback, Mei Hoh & Richard Phillips, Carol Hopper, Paul & Michelle Janetski, Steve Johnson, Karen Kolba, Michelle Kong, Dorothy Laine, Chuck & Jennifer Lenet, Amber Madlem, Joe Maletesta, Ruth Martin, Mike & Joan Metz, Ben & Carolyn Middleton, Paul Nash, Francoise Nigro, Dale Norrington, Vincent Nutile, Dattatraya Paranjpe, Ben & Jackie Parker, Alessia Passalacqua, D. K. Philbin, Don Pritchard, Daniel Ray, Liesa Rego, John Ricci, Jim & Bridget Ritterbush, Stanley Rose, Eric Rose, Rachel Rosenthal, Eunice Scarbouough, Otto Schmidt, Frank Servedio, Norm & Loren Shirakata, Harry Toy, Jim & Kathy Trask, Ted & Barbara Tucker, Nancy Tweedie, Fidel Villanueva, Richard Wagner, Kristie Wells, and Norm & Noel Wheeler.

### Fresh Fruit Christmas Decoration Ideas

Push cloves into oranges to make aromatic pomanders to place in bowls or hang from the tree. Make the holes with a nail or small skewer first to make it easier and much quicker. You don't have to cover the whole orange. You could start by tying on a narrow ribbon and then arranging the cloves in lines two or three deep around the orange in whatever design takes your fancy.

Make a welcoming display in your hallway with bowls of fresh fruit, candles, and evergreen boughs. Add huge, clear glass containers of cranberries--making a feast for the eyes when visitors arrive.

Create an elegant mantelpiece decoration using fresh foliage, cream flowers, cream pillar candles and fresh green grapes.

For a beautiful centerpiece, layer fruits in an attractive, clear glass container. Usually it works best to use an assortment of related kinds. For example, combine oranges, lemons, and limes. When picking your own citrus for this, keep some leaves and stems on the fruits. This adds an extra touch of color to the arrangement. Candles placed on either side add that extra WOW!

Fill a large wicker basket with an assortment of different Christmas greens. Add some curly willow or a few stems of 'Harry Lauder's Walking Stick' for sculptural interest. Finally, place fruits on top of the greens. Pomegranates and red apples are perfect for this and the arrangement is good outdoors, too!

Start with a basic grapevine wreath. Add appropriate seasonal greenery and festive ribbon. Put wire through fresh fruit of your choice (well, maybe not bananas!) and attach it to your wreath. The fruit can be changed easily if it begins to wither before you are ready to remove the wreath.

### Grape Cuttings to Share

By Bob Tullock

As part of our Festival of Fruit next September we will be propagating many different grape varieties to have as gifts for those attending. Many of us have special grapes growing in our gardens and are willing to share with other CRFG people in other parts of CRFG land. If you have one or more special grape varieties to share I will start collecting as soon as you do your pruning. Some of you may bring your cuttings to either the November or December meeting. I assume most will bring your cuttings to the "grafting" meeting in January. All cuttings must be properly identified if this project is to be successful. Please follow the steps listed below to help us produce a viable group of starts from one

or more of your favorite grapes.

Please just cut the cuttings about 10-12 inches long with the top flat and the bottom pointed. Put them in plastic bag labeled with your name and the grape variety wrapped in a moist paper towel and in the refrigerator. Each bundle should contain at least 10 and a maximum of 50 cuttings. If you have 100 cuttings of one variety, please pack them in two bundles of 50 each. I plan to "root" these cuttings in sand in one gallon pots and will schedule a "potting party" in the late spring to transplant each rooted cutting into a labeled one gallon pot for the attendee's to carry home from the meeting. Thanks. For more information you can contact me at: [tullock@tcsn.net](mailto:tulloch@tcsn.net) or **238-2868**

## **Announcements**

**Welcome to Our Chapter:** Larry & Laurie Vierheilig, Mike & Bonnie Eisner, Richard Beltran, Wayne & William Bennett, George & Jane Roach, Billy & Ruth Mounts, and Mark Woelfle.

**Web Site:** Check our site at: [www.crfg-central.org](http://www.crfg-central.org) to see what our web-master, Art DeKleine and his very able assistants, John and Choung Crowe, are doing to keep us all informed.

**Join the Parent Organization:** Many of our chapter members are also members of the Parent association and, for those of you who aren't, perhaps you **should** consider joining. With parent organization membership you receive a wonderful color magazine, *The Fruit Gardener*, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, many chapter activities and contacts. Dues are **\$30 annually** or **3 years for \$87**. Membership applications are available from **Joe Sabol**. Call him at **544-1056** if you can't find him at a meeting.

**University of California Lindcove Research & Extension Center Citrus Tasting:** You are invited to attend a Citrus Fruit Tasting and Display Day for Growers and Homeowners. December 14<sup>th</sup> will be the Grower's Fruit Display Day and December 17<sup>th</sup> will be the Homeowner's Fruit Display Day. Both events will begin at 9:00 am and go until noon and there will be no formal presentations, so you may arrive anytime between those hours to taste over 100 varieties of citrus fruit. The facility is located at 22963 Carson Avenue (which is the corner of Road 228 and Ave 315), Exeter, CA Phone (559) 592-2408 for further information or directions to the event. (Joe Sabol says if you are going, take a little wagon to haul the fruit you will taste, some handy wipes, paper towels, and a bottle of extra-strength anti-acid tablets! This event doesn't interfere with our regular meeting and Joe says it is well worth the drive of about 2 ½ hours.)

**Return of the Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting Event:** Mark your calendars now for **Saturday, August 12, 2006** when Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting will return to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. This has been a **wildly** popular event that we weren't able to host this year. (Yes, I **do** mean "wildly". Have you ever seen fruit enthusiasts high on fructose?) Note that this is less than one month before we host the Festival of Fruit. **Your** assistance is not only requested, it is **NEEDED!**

## **Calendar of Meetings – 2005**

Meetings are held the **second Saturday** of the month and **begin at 1:30 PM** unless otherwise indicated. Bring a friend, car pool, and, for most meetings, **bring a chair** for all in your party. Pet Daniels suggests we bring our own bottled water to drink, too. What fun it is to be a member of CRFG!

**December 10—Potluck and Sharing—PG&E Community Center—San Luis Obispo:** Full meal sharing. **This meeting begins at 12 Noon.** Norm Beard will be bringing a big cooked turkey to carve. All others should bring their favorite festive dish (enough for 15-20 others). Wear your holiday outfit—anything red is good! Bring your best fruit/vegetable plants for the plant swap and big raffle! Thanks to Marv Daniels for again arranging for us to use the space. Directions: From Highway 101, take the San Luis Bay Drive exit and go west. Turn left onto the frontage road, which is Ontario Road. The Community Center is located about half a block from there at **6588 Ontario Road.**

**January 14—Annual Business and Pruning Meeting—Cal Poly Crops Unit:** Dan Lassanske, a professor at Cal Poly, will return by popular demand. He was great last year in giving us the “theory” behind pruning, but we are hoping this year that it will not rain so we can get “hands-on” experience in our orchard. **Refreshments group H-R please—we have many visitors at this meeting!**

**February 18—Annual Scion Exchange—Cal Poly Crops Unit: (Note that this is the third Saturday of the month!)** This is another very popular meeting, and one you won’t want to miss! We will have a scion exchange, grafting knives for sale, rootstock for sale, and bird net for sale. The Cal Poly students usually have some great plants for sale, too! Come with your U-Haul! **Refreshments group S-Z please—we have many visitors at this meeting, too!**

**Central Coast Chapter CRFG Contact Information:** Art DeKleine, co-chair, [adeklein@calpoly.edu](mailto:adeklein@calpoly.edu) or 543-9455; Bob Tullock, co-chair, [tullock@tcsn.net](mailto:tullock@tcsn.net) or 238-2868; Joe Sabol, program chair, [jsabol@calpoly.edu](mailto:jsabol@calpoly.edu) or 544-1056; Dick Pottratz, treasurer, [pottratz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pottratz@sbcglobal.net); or Lennette Horton, newsletter editor, [handynana@gmail.com](mailto:handynana@gmail.com) or 474-6501.