

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter
Volume 9 • Issue 8 • August 2006



2006 – The Year of the Healthful Grape



Festival of Fruit 2006

Plans for the Festival of Fruit are moving along rapidly and the Steering Committee has done an outstanding job of organizing an incredible program. If you haven't signed up to **HELP** yet, now is the time! There is a job (or jobs) for everyone! Festival co-chair, Pet Daniels, says:

“We need folks to help the tour committee keep the guests focused, to maintain damage control, give directions, and (most importantly) to advise them on the locations of the closest public toilets. (We don't want our guests entering homes along the tour with the excuse of needing to use the toilet. Too many sticky fingers where you least expect them.) The list of public toilets is available on our web site and we will need copies made of it. We also need helpers to direct the parking of cars at various sites, to keep folks on the trails, to answer questions they might have about the location, to be watchful for the guest's safety, etc.

Each tour location needs to be covered. We will be signing up volunteers at the Fruit Tasting on August 12.

Steering Committee meetings are set for **August 15, 22, & 29**. Each meeting is held from 5-8 PM with the real business starting promptly at 6 PM. From 5-6 PM we cover all sorts of questions and do sign ups for the Festival and recruit helpers. Many of our Chapter members wear many different hats! What a great team we have! A real fun loving, hard working group!

At the Steering Committee meetings we will be asking dependable Chapter Members to take on the responsibilities and set up times and locations for various jobs. There will be lots of things to do on site at Cal Poly, too.

We also would like all our helpers and members to buy and wear the lovely Grape Green T-shirts that we have in every size to readily identify them as Jolly Green Giants of the Rare Fruit World, Central Coast Chapter! These will be available at the Fruit Tasting on August 12 or any time from David Maislen at 474-4010.”

July Meeting



The July meeting, held at the Nurses' Pistachio Orchard (NPO) in Paso Robles/Creston was hot, but, according to those 60 attendees who braved the heat, it was worth the discomfort! Members dressed appropriately and brought plenty of water—everyone that is, except for Owen Baynham, who thought there would be water available there. He was sure surprised when he tried to get a drink from a conveniently located hose! (Just kidding, but

check out that thermometer in the photo of Owen taken by Joe Sabol!) As Joe, is fond of saying, “there are no wimps in CRFG” and the stalwarts who showed up for the tour certainly proved him right! Our chapter co-chair, Bob Tullock reported:

“On Saturday, July 8th, the Central Coast Chapter of CRFG held their monthly meeting at the NPO Orchards. The NPO Orchard is situated on about 20 acres approximately 8 miles east of Paso Robles at around 1500 feet elevation. The Orchard is owned and operated by three retired nurses that have done an outstanding job of establishing and operating one of the best maintained orchards we have visited. The farm is a California Certified Organic Farm (CCOF) and extreme care is used to maintain the quality of organic nuts produced.

Prior to 1978 most of the world's supply of pistachios came from Iran. After the change in leadership in Iran, many areas attempted to grow pistachios. Pistachios are usually considered equal to almonds in cold resistance but require slightly more winter chill. Pistachios are also more tolerant to summer heat than almonds; hence inland in Central California seems to be a natural setting for the production of pistachios.

Pistachios are dioecious plants, that is, the female flowers that produce the fruit and the male flowers that produce the pollen are borne on separate trees. The trees are started from seeds and are grafted with the female (Kermin) or male (Peters) variety. The Kermin and

Peters appear to be the most commonly available varieties in our area. Most plantings utilize one male tree for every 6 to 8 females, depending on the orchard spacing. Pollen is air borne and bees are not required for pollination. The nut yield per tree is smaller than any other commercially grown nut trees.

Harvesting and pruning are very labor intensive but the fruit is in demand and they are a very rewarding crop to grow in the beautiful setting developed by the hard working ladies of NPO Orchards.”

The nurses, Jackie Cooper, Donna Olson, and Cecilia “Ce” Garcia were all friends who worked in Southern California. They knew they wanted to “retire” to an outdoor lifestyle. After a search of some years, they found their land and decided to plant pistachios. They weren’t retired yet, so they commuted between Southern California and their orchard until about 1997, when they were finally able to move into the home they had built on the land.

As anyone who grows anything knows, you never “retire” from the work involved outdoors. They all share in the jobs necessary to the orchard with Jackie (until her illness prevented it) doing most of the planning and organizing, Donna tending to most mechanical duties, such as tractor driving, and Ce handling the marketing. Of course, each of them also works in the field. With help from Bob

Thimm, 82, a former manager of a huge ranch that was once in the area where the NPO now exists, the nurses brought their orchard into full production of organic nuts. Their nuts are not only organic, they are simply dried (not roasted) and they have no salt. They have become a big hit at local farmer’s markets and with customers to local natural health food stores. Take time to search out their product. You will love their nuts! (The photo on the right was taken by Paul Moyer.)



(Jackie Cooper, one of the owners of the NPO, passed away in July, about a week after our meeting. Our sincere condolences are with Donna and Ce in the loss of their dear friend.)

A Bushel Basket of Opportunities

Besides helping with our BIG event in September, you have several great choices in assisting our Chapter in the next few months. How **would** you like to help?

A work/play session is in the planning stages for **August 5** at our Community Orchard, starting at 8:30 am and ending at 10:00 am. Joe Sabol will be e-mailing more information later, but if you don't get e-mail and you would like to be part of this event, give Joe a call at (805) 544-1056.

Cut and serve fruit at the Dave Wilson Nursery Fruit Tasting Event on **August 12!** You can learn more about this later in this issue under the "Meetings" column. Again, contact Joe. (You know, he's retired and he really misses talking to hundreds of students every day!)

We need a few representatives to display our banner on **August 19-20** at the Earl Warren Showground in Santa Barbara for PS. Productions 17th Annual Home and Garden Show. People from Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties attend this show and it will be a great opportunity to let lots of people hear about our Festival of Fruit! The show hours are 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. The parking is free and Norman Beard will get free passes for helpers. Contact: Norman Beard beardtropics@earthlink.net

ORCHARD LADDER SAFETY AND SELECTION

As a rare fruit grower, without caution, you might become a victim of your own success! Yes, there may come a day when the twigs you picked up at a scion exchange actually grow into a producing fruit tree. The best fruit, of course, will be at the top of the tree. You will have to haul out your trusty Christmas light hanging ladder—the one you salvaged from the neighbor's dump pile and repaired with baling wire-- to reach the fruit. Never mind that the tree is 10 feet tall and the ladder is only 6 feet tall. After all, you are nearly 6 feet tall and if you stand on the top rung and reach out a bit to get to the fruit at the center of the tree, there shouldn't be a problem. You maneuver the ladder into place and are in the process of leveling it with a few stray rocks when a picture of your fellow rare fruit grower, Dave Christie, pops into your head. "Whoa!" you think. "Didn't Dave just fall off his old, rickety ladder and break his wrist? Hum. Maybe I'd better give this procedure a little more consideration!"



While Dave probably never imagined he'd find himself as a "poster boy" for what **not** to do on a ladder, his accident can teach us all a lesson in safety and prevent us from suffering as he did. Once he got back from the ER, Dave seriously thought about what had led to his accident and how he could prevent a repeat performance. Here, in his own words, is his solution: "I went and bought a 10 foot Strathmore (ladder) at Farm Supply--should have done it 20 years ago." So now, you can see smiling Dave (even though his wrist is still

hurting) on his safe, new ladder. Since it is 10 feet tall, he won't have to climb to the top rung to reach his fruit or prune that pesky bougainvillea. (In the photo, he is standing sideways, but he would never actually climb up the ladder that way in his orchard!)

Dave isn't alone in making the mistake of using an inadequate ladder for the job. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year over 500,000 people are treated for cuts, bruises and fractured bones from the improper use of ladders. More than 300 people a year die from ladder related injuries! In a study made of Central Washington agricultural worker's injuries from 1996-2001 by the University of Washington's School of Public Health and Community Medicine, the astonishing fact was that ladder injuries tended to be the most severe and costly reported injuries, with \$21.5 million in compensation paid for the six-year period! They also discovered that 44% of the accidents took place on the upper third of ladder; 47% of the cases resulted from ladder movement, and 27% happened when the worker slipped from a rung. The most common injuries were back injuries and ankle sprains.

So, what can you do to keep from becoming a ladder accident statistic? The following safety tips (paraphrased from the **Zenith Insurance Company**) should be a good place to begin your campaign.

- Select an orchard (tripod) ladder of proper length to reach working heights—a height that will allow you to stand no higher than the third rung from the top to reach your crop.
- Never use an orchard ladder on hard or slippery surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt. They are made to sink into dirt or turf areas.
- Inspect your ladder before each use. Check that all working parts are in good order. Never climb a bent or broken ladder. Make sure all rivets, joints, nuts, and bolts are tightened, and that feet, steps, and rungs are secure. Never make temporary repairs to damaged or missing parts.
- Keep ladder clean and free from grease or mud. Clean your shoes before using ladder. Wear shoes with non-skid soles.
- Confirm ladder steps are level and that the third leg is stable and positioned straight away from the center line of the ladder.
- Maintain a firm grip. Use both hands while climbing up or down the ladder. Keep your body centered on the ladder.
- Do not overreach; instead, move the ladder as needed. Never walk (or jog) the ladder when standing on it.
- Do not stand on the top two steps. Do not sit on the top rung.
- Avoid pushing or pulling off the side of the ladder. Do not jump from the ladder.
- Limit one person to a ladder at a time.
- Never place a metal ladder near electrical wires. Stay at least 10 feet from a voltage line. Don't use a metal ladder in an electrical storm, either. Aluminum is a great conductor of electricity!
- Never leave a ladder set up and unattended if children are nearby.
- Avoid ladders if you:
 - tire easily

- have fainting spells
- use medication or alcohol
- are physically handicapped in a way that makes ladder use difficult

Now that you know the rules, how should you go about choosing a good orchard ladder? Like Dave, you need to do some research on where to find the best ladder for your requirements at a price you are comfortable with. There are several good orchard ladder manufacturers, but Dave settled on the Strathmore Ladder Company line because of local availability at a price he liked. According to the information on its website, the Strathmore Ladder Company began manufacturing wood tripod and citrus ladders in the 1920's. The town of Strathmore is located in the heart of the California citrus belt, which gave them the perfect opportunity to see first hand how ladders performed in the field and what improvements could be made on them. They began building the more lightweight aluminum ladders in the 1970's. In the early 1990's, after nearly 70 years of production, the wooden ladders were phased out due to the lack of demand and the quality of wood needed to produce them. They are proud of their dedication to building the best ladder for the job of picking fruit. A quote from their website states: "Like we tell our many customers, if there were a better orchard ladder on the market, we would be building it!"

Our Central Coast Chapter co-chair, Art DeKleine, must believe they build great ladders, because Strathmore is the brand he uses when picking cherries in his grove in Michigan—quite a distance from Strathmore, California! Art, shown in the photo with some of his Strathmore ladders, is a stickler for safety. As he says, "Our insurance carrier **requires** good orchard ladders. Many insurance carriers will not insure farm operations using ladders." So, he wants quality ladders, but not at the risk of breaking the bank. "Relatively inexpensive as good ladders go," says Art.



But even if you read the rules and give up your baling-wire repaired 6-foot ladder for a great new aluminum tripod, if you really want to be sure you don't become an accident victim while picking your fruit, remember this great advice from the Strathmore Ladder Company: **"Common sense should prevail! If you are in doubt about the safety of your ladder or a proposed activity, don't do it!"**

Wishing You a Speedy Recovery, Patti!



Our friend and ever faithful associate, Patti Schober, had surgery on Friday, July 28, to remove a blockage in her aorta. The surgery went well. Her recovery time is supposed to be about six weeks, so hopefully she will be on her feet in time to at least enjoy the Festival of Fruit! Patti is an avid supporter of the apple grafting program and rarely misses any opportunity to share her love of growing with students. She is also a member of the Master Gardener's program. Once she is feeling better, be sure to ask her for advice on your plant growing problems. If she doesn't know the answer, she'll know where to go to find it! Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Patti! If you want to contact her directly, please do so at pwolfy@tcsn.net or send her a card via snail mail to Patti Schober, P.O. Box 443, San Miguel, CA 93451.

Announcements

Welcome to Our New Chapter Colleagues: Patricia Sutton (Art Henzgen's sister).

Join the Parent Organization: Many of our chapter colleagues are 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.

American Community Garden Association Conference—this conference is to be held at UCLA in Los Angeles August 8-11. If you are interested, please visit their website for more information at <http://www.communitygarden.org/conferences.php>

Calendar of Meetings – 2006

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!

August 12—Dave Wilson Fruit Tasting—Cal Poly: This has been a **wildly** popular event that we weren't able to host in 2005. (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 **NEEDED!** If you can help, please reply to Joe Sabol now by calling him at (805) 544-1056. We have three shifts, each for 90 minutes of slicing, serving, and smiling! We start with shift one at 12:30 p.m. on **Saturday, August 12**. Second shift starts at 2 p.m., third shift at 3:30 p.m. (this one includes clean-up).

No experience is needed to work here. We provide the knives, aprons and gloves. Dave Wilson brings one ton of fruit! There will be no business meeting and no refreshments are necessary—

we'll be slicing and serving lots of delicious fruit. **This event is open to the public. Encourage your friends and family to attend. Hey, you could even invite the neighbors you don't like—the fruit might sweeten them up!**

September 5-9—Festival of Fruit—All CRFG Chapters in the state are coming! Save the dates. Official meeting starts at 1 PM on Friday, September 8 in the Chumash Auditorium on the Cal Poly Campus. We host a BBQ that evening, then workshops and speakers all day Saturday, September 9. Be there and join the fun! We will not have a "local meeting" this month—we'll be too busy with Festival planning, conducting, and cleaning up! **We need your help Thursday, Friday and Saturday, please!**

October 14--The Tiber Canyon Ranch - 280 W. Ormonde Rd., San Luis Obispo--This is an olive ranch with olive tasting and an opportunity to learn of exciting ways to use olive oil in entrees, desserts, salads, and more! Our hosts: Will Carlton and Chris Anderson. Refreshments: The H through R team please!

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