

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter
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2008 The Year of the Avocado

March Meeting

The Cal Poly Plant Conservatory is a large glasshouse located in the middle of the Cal Poly campus. As about 60 of our members learned during their tour with Dr. Matt Ritter, director of the Conservatory, during our March meeting, the primary goal there is to maintain a diverse, well-documented, and accurately labeled living plant collection supporting and enhancing teaching and research for the faculty and students of Cal Poly. The secondary objective is to foster education about plant biology and conservation of rare species through support of community outreach programs.



The tours of the Conservatory and the grounds of Cal Poly, led by Dr. Matt Ritter, were most interesting. Dr. Ritter kept everyone entertained as they were educated. We enjoyed seeing and learning about the hundreds of species of plants growing in the Conservatory, many of them which were on the rare and endangered

species list. We also garnered many facts about the trees on campus—not only about the world record Karri eucalyptus mentioned in the last issue of the Leaflett—including many very rare and very large trees. (As you can see in the photo taken by Paul Moyer, most of the tour members spent lots of time looking **UP!**) Through the Conservatory program, students and faculty members have begun identifying, cataloging, mapping, and creating signage for all the trees and large shrubs on campus. They are also planting a number of rare tree species throughout the campus.

If you missed this fascinating meeting, be sure to visit the Conservatory website at:
<http://www.plantconservatory.calpoly.edu/index.html>

April Meeting

What a wonderful and very warm afternoon 85 or so of our members enjoyed with the hosts of our April meeting, Carolyn and Jim Park. The Parks grow fruits and vegetables that they sell at local farmer's markets. Some of their products are corn, beets, green beans, lima beans, squash, edamame, carrots, chard, peas, tomatoes, lemons, apples, plums and peaches. The list might not sound real



impressive for a farm, until one realizes that the Parks do it on only **one acre**, which includes space for their house! They have packed 17 citrus trees as well as numerous deciduous fruit trees onto their grounds. They have even found room for some redwoods and other evergreen trees—just as food for the eye!

When the Parks moved to SLO from Oklahoma in 1975, they figured they could either mow or weed their land, or they could garden. Choosing to garden, they soon had more produce than they could either eat fresh, freeze, or can. That led them to selling at the Farmer's Market. They use extensive crop rotation and don't plant large quantities of any one thing. Jim bases his crop choices on what he and Carolyn like to eat, because, as he says, if it doesn't sell, they have to eat it! They are registered organic growers, but the limited quantities they grow have slowed the process for becoming "Certified". They have chickens, too, and teach local school children about raising them. Worms are an important part of any organic soil program and Carolyn gave an interesting and informative presentation on growing worms. The attendees came away with a new appreciation for what a backyard garden could be!

Pheromone Strips—Confusing Moths—and People

Coddling moths certainly are a problem for many home gardeners; that much was clear when the subject was discussed at the April meeting. There the clarity ended! Local commercial apple grower, Dr. DiVencenzo, related the success rate he has found using pheromone strips that confuse adult male moths and break the mating cycle. He offered to give our members some of the strips that were stored in a large refrigerator at his apple orchard.

Joe Sabol went to the orchard, picked up the donated strips and held a "sale" at his home that very afternoon. The strips sold out in record time and members were crying for more! THEN, conflicting reports began. Some said the strips only worked for commercial ventures

where large quantities of the strips could be used. Other sources seemed to indicate that they were effective in treating the home orchard.

Our group doesn't let grass grow under their feet—or moths develop in their orchard! Joe Sabol arranged for the Isomate Pheromone Strip representatives to meet with any interested home fruit growers at his place on Thursday, April 24. There was a great turn-out (as seen in the photo by Ron Blakey) and the representative discussed how the strips work, why they work, when they don't work and he answered questions. The conclusion was—well, the strips **may** or **may not** work for the home orchardist!



Joe Sabol has promised to write an article on all he has learned over the past month on control of codling moths. Stand by for that information in the next edition!

High School Apple Grafting Program

Another very successful high school apple grafting season closed on April 1 at Righetti High School in Santa Maria. This was a special year in many ways, but most importantly, we celebrated 10 years of grafting with SLO High School and the milestone of 1000 trees grafted at their facility! **WOW!** We buy the rootstock used for grafting from Lawyer's Nursery, a wholesale nursery in Plains, Montana and we are so faithful that we are now on their "preferred customer" list!



This year was special, too, as Righetti High students got to graft historic pears from Mission La Purisima. With State budget cuts, the historic Mission La Purisima is making every effort to preserve trees and plants there. We're glad we could be part of that effort!

Thank you volunteers for making this program such a winner!

Your Apple Tree--The First Year or Two!

By Joe Sabol

Congratulations!! Your new apple tree is happy to have a home. Take care of it and it will live to be 50 or 100 years old!!

You have a grafted apple tree, grafted to a root that is a "semi-dwarf" rootstock. Your tree will never grow to be 30 or 40 feet tall. This is good news!! You can easily keep this tree at 8 or 10 or 12 feet tall!! No worries!!

Remove the green or white tape by June 1 this year. Remove all new growth and shoots from below the graft location after you are sure your scion is growing and well connected. Then, do not let any shoots grow from the rootstock. Remove all but the strongest bud growing from the top (scion) and then tie this shoot to a stake. It will become your tree trunk!!!

Plant the tree in a sunny location, the more morning sun, the better. A well drained location is best. You may even wish to plant it on a mound. Water it often when the weather is warm this first summer. If you cannot plant it in your yard by June 1 this year, you must move it to a 5 gallon container on June 1 or it will quickly become "pot bound" in that gallon can!!! Fertilize this young tree with care. Some of our CRFG members water their tree with "Miracle Grow" at half strength, every time they water during the spring and early summer!!! It will go dormant as winter approaches and all of the leaves will fall.

This first winter, you may prune the top of the tree off. Yes, cut that single shoot so it is only 18 to 24 inches tall. This will force the side buds to shoot out in the next spring and begin to build the main scaffold/framework for a nice tree. Most back yard apple trees are destined to be in the shape of a vase... with 3 to 5 main branches coming from the single trunk. Do not let your tree have more than 5 main branches at this point.

If you planted your apple against a wall, you may wish to train the tree to be flat, more of a fan shape or even "espalier" the tree!! The good news is that apples respond to training. They will quickly adapt to any shape you wish or need.

We want the tree to work hard on building a strong foundation for the future in these early years so, we only let the tree have one or two apples the second year. Remember, it takes 55 leaves to make enough sugar to have that big apple taste just right!!! So, thin the apples to leave only the biggest one the second year.

Finally, if your main scaffold branches try to grow straight to the sky, you may want to pull them down gently, and over time, have these branches grow at more of an angle, even horizontal for the first few feet!!!

Join the CRFG!! The Central Coast Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers is a great organization for people who enjoy growing any kind of fruit trees, including apples!! At least, you should come to the January meeting held at the Crops Unit at Cal Poly. It is always the second Saturday in January, starting at 1:30 p.m. We have a "guest pruner" who will give a talk on pruning and then we go outside and practice on our 75 fruit trees in the

Community Orchard. The February meeting is even more fun. It is the annual scion exchange and "Grafting Party" with at least five guest grafters showing off their skills. We sell rootstock and all sorts of grafting supplies at this meeting!!!

San Luis Obispo Arbor Day Event



On Saturday, April 26, the city of San Luis Obispo celebrated its 25th Anniversary as a Tree City USA with a morning event that drew hundreds of people on a very warm day to the Laguna Lake Park Commemorative Tree Grove. We had great grafters on hand (Joe, Dave, Jim, Larry, Patti [who took the photo], Robert, Morris, Helen, D.P. and Kevin) showing off their exemplary grafting skills and selling apple trees!

Co-chair, Larry Hollis said: "Please extend my thanks to all who showed up and helped in this first Arbor Day event for CRFG. And thanks to Art for helping graft those trees, it's hard to beat a 100% success rate. We sold some trees, demonstrated apple grafting, signed up a new member, talked to a number of people who like apples and generally had a nice warm morning. If we had been nearer the middle of the action I think we would have sold out. Thanks for the clever (Rube-like) sign board; I wish I had that kind of time on my hands. Oh well, I guess it gives me something to look forward to."

According to Joe Sabol, we sold a few of the standard apple trees that had been grafted and a "whole bunch" of the 50 semi-dwarf trees that had been grafted and stored in Art DeKlein's backyard. Total dollars made (in spite of giving a few away) was \$201 to add to the rootstock column in Dick's treasury record! It was a very good start for our first ever apple tree promotion to the public. We sold them for \$5 each, until 11 a.m. and then had a "sale" for 2 trees for \$9 and



sold a bunch more! Everyone was happy with the results of that endeavor!

We made many new friends, including the Mayor of SLO, Dave Romero, who loved his complimentary tree. "I betcha that we get invited back next year!" said Joe. Only next time, Joe thinks we should be more in the "middle" of things. Thank you volunteers!

Edible Flowers

I love flowers! My favorite fruit is—the one that's in bloom! So, when I saw the front cover of *California Country*, the California Farm Bureau magazine, for May/June, I was very intrigued. The lead story was about an entrepreneur/farmer named John Clemons who has found a niche in a market for making candied flowers. Candied or crystallized flowers were popular during the Victorian era—usually made with egg white and superfine sugar. While not difficult, the process is quite time-consuming. Clemons has perfected a process that allows only four employees to make up to 1200 candied blossoms an hour. He also grows his own flowers so he can be sure they are 100% organic and uses mainly pansies, roses, and snapdragons as they are completely edible and rarely cause any allergic reaction. He markets the flowers under the **Sweetfields** label.) Other flowers that are popular for eating are calendulas, borage, nasturtiums, and sweet peas. Clemons suggests that you never pick flowers from a roadside as they nearly always have chemical spray of some sort on them.

Posted below is the recipe for crystallized petals that was included in the article. It comes from a cookbook by Kitty Morse entitled *Edible Flowers: A Kitchen Companion*. Instead of using egg whites, which some people have a concern about eating raw, it uses gum Arabic. Make your mom—or somebody's mom—a special treat for Mother's Day and impress her with a really beautiful dessert that is as sweet as she is! (Photo is of a **Sweetfield's** rose petal that you can purchase.)



Crystallized Petals

- 1 tsp. gum Arabic
- 1 tbsp. warm water
- 20 rose petals (or violet, borage or dianthus petals)
- ¼ cup superfine sugar

In a small bowl, with a wooden spoon, thoroughly mix gum Arabic with water until smooth. If small lumps persist, strain the mixture through a fine-meshed sieve. With a clean, small, soft bristle brush, paint both sides of a petal with a thin coat of the mixture. Sprinkle each side lightly with superfine sugar. Set petal on a metal rack to air dry. Continue in this manner until all ingredients are used. When the petals are completely dry, conserve them in an airtight container. Use within 3 months.

Congratulations Norman Beard!

Longtime member of the CRFG, Norman Beard, who is extremely active in both the Santa Barbara and Central Coast Chapters, has recently been nominated for Goleta Valley Beautiful's Lifetime Achievement Award to be given at the Annual Banquet on May 3rd, 2008. Whether he wins or not, just the nomination is wonderful! We're glad others know what a valuable friend to horticulture you are, Norman!

Announcements

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Jan Moon, Judith Richmond, Pamela Broch, Tracey Clopper, Mark Hedges, and Bruce Hardcastle.

CAL POLY ORGANIC FARM OFFERING CSA SUBSCRIPTIONS: The Organic Farm is now hosting its eighth annual Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Shares are available for pick up on-campus or at convenient county-wide drop sites. Along with the harvest share, members receive a newsletter each week detailing recipes and announcements. A small CSA share is available for \$19/week and a large share is available of \$26.50/week (plus \$1/week delivery fee for off campus pick up). For more information, please visit: www.calpolyorgfarm.com, call: 805-756-6139 or e-mail: orgfarm@calpoly.edu
ALSO: The Cal Poly Organic Farm welcomes VOLUNTEERS year round. Currently there is a need for docents to assist with the hosting of school field trips to the Farm. For more information or to be added to the Farm's volunteer contact list, please contact Anastasia Killham at: akillham@calpoly.edu or call: 805-756-6139.

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.

Calendar of Meetings – 2008

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!**

May 10—Ikeda Brother's Farm—Arroyo Grande: Tom Ikeda will give us a tour of their vegetable farm. The Ikeda Brothers farm lettuce, spinach, and a variety of Oriental vegetables. Tom will discuss growing practices and talk about early spring vegetables.

Refreshments to be supplied by the **H-R** team, please.

Directions to the Ikeda Farm: Take Highway 1 to South Halcyon Road. Proceed northwest about 1 mile to Mountain View Road. Turn southwest on Mountain View Road and then proceed to the end of the road past the railroad tracks. Parking is available.

June 14— Blue Sky Gardens U-pick Berry Farm—Santa Margarita: The Childers' Blue Sky Gardens Farm is nestled in a little valley 1 mile north of Santa Margarita. Their berry season starts sometime in June, depending on the weather. They grow olallieberries, boysenberries, loganberries and raspberries. After the meeting, you will have a chance to pick some berries for yourself!

Refreshments to be supplied by the **S-Z** team, please.

Directions to Blue Sky Gardens: From Highway 101 take the Santa Margarita exit CA-58 and merge onto El Camino Real (after 0.1 miles). Turn left on Linden Ave (after 2.8 miles). Keep to left at the fork. Linden Ave. becomes Poplar Ave. Continue until you reach Walnut Avenue (after 0.2 miles). Turn left onto Walnut Ave. Walnut Avenue is a dead end at Blue Sky Gardens. **19505 Walnut Ave.**

July 12—Lotusland Gardens in Montecito: Bus tour limited to 60 people! The cost is \$55 per person and that includes a box lunch. Details and signup will be available at our May and June meetings.

August 9—Open

September 19-20—No Local Meeting in September—Attend the Festival of Fruit which is hosted by the Orange County CRFG at CSU-Fullerton and the Fullerton Arboretum.

October 11—Talley Farms—Arroyo Grande: Details to follow.

November 8—Open

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