



# LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2021 Volume XXVI Issue 1

CRFG-LA meetings at Sepulveda Garden Center are currently suspended. We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy.

<http://www.crfg-la.org>

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## ZOOM MEETING:

**Saturday, January 23**

**Speaker: Bill Brandt & others**

**Topic: Grafting**

We might not be meeting in person but that doesn't mean we can't have our annual grafting demo! Featuring Bill Brandt and others who will showcase ways to graft onto your trees, and other helpful gardening advice!

## ZOOM MEETING:

**Saturday, Feb-Brew-ary 27**

**Speaker: Roger Taylor**

**Topic: Mead making**

Roger Taylor, one of the foremost experts on mead-making in the nation, introduces himself: "I'm 66 years old, from Tucson Arizona. I majored in horticulture at the University of Arizona. I've been a beekeeper for 57 years, I caught my first swarm when I was 9. I'm a general contractor by trade, I do a lot of kitchen and bathroom remodels. I've been a home brewer for many years, making different fruit wines. Grapes, of course, pear, peach, chokecherry, elderberry, apple, whatever I could find that was cheap - free was even better! Around 10 years ago my best friend saw the movie *Beowulf* and said to me, Roger you're a beekeeper, and have lots of honey, make me some mead, make me the King's Mead! So I bought some books on mead, and started trying to make the King's Mead. It took me about three years before I was making anything decent. Now I'm making award winning meads!"

*Thinking positively, I have booked the Sepulveda Garden dates for 2021. I am hoping, like you and the rest of the planet, that 2021 will see us back to living a normal life again!!. Please save these dates. Thank you and wishing all of you good health.*

--Pat

## (HOPEFUL) CALENDAR FOR LA CHAPTER 2021

March 27	Field Trip	tba
April 24	<b>Charles Malki - Virtual garden tour</b>	
May 22	Field Trip	
June 26	Sepulveda Gardens	Speaker
July 24	Field Trip	<b>George Campos</b>
August 28	No Meeting	Festival of Fruit
Sept 25	Sepulveda Gardens	Speaker
October 23	Field trip	<b>Bill Brandt</b>
Nov 20	Sepulveda Gardens	Speaker
Dec 18	Sepulveda Gardens	Holiday Party

# Words From Our Chairman

By Jerry Schwartz



The best thing about year 2020 is ITS OVER. I want to thank all the board members who kept the chapter active via Zoom meetings. I'm looking forward to 2021. The COVID-19 vaccines will allow in-person meetings later in the year. We will celebrate with a great plant sale and more food than you can eat. Best of all, we will be seeing and conversing with long lost members IN PERSON. Also looking forward to great field trips. It's great to get out of the house

January is bare root tree season. They are available at big box stores but the best selection of bare root fruit trees, in my opinion, is at Green Thumb Nursery in Ventura. Almost all independent nurseries pot their bare root fruit trees before selling them. Let's plant trees!

Finished trimming all my trees in December. I'm beginning to spray deciduous fruit trees with copper and horticultural spray. By the time my stone fruit is ripe, COVID will be under control.

Jerry

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## LOOKING BACK

By Deborah Oisboid, Editor

### November

We had an amazing tour of the Sylmar High Agriculture Fields with our host Steve List. About 25 people attended the Zoom session.

Chairman Jerry Schwartz introduced our host. He has known Steve for about 30 years. They met at a plant auction in Van Nuys many years ago - those auctions used to raise money for students and scholarships. Steve continues to raise money and teach kids, but it's mostly done at school now.

Steve explained how students are taught, boasted that many go on to college, and described how they become proficient in agriculture. He is great at inspiring his students, he gets the kids really thinking about education. He was happy to guide us on tour, but admitted he misses a live audience. Thanks to his daughter, who filmed while he walked.

His class area is called the "Sylmar Agriculture Learning Center." He likes that name because it represents not just coursework, but a place where everyone can learn. He uses it as a platform for the students, but also for the local community.

The growing grounds cover about 2 acres. Due to the pandemic, there have been no students for 8 months. So all of the plantings have been managed by Steve, his son Stefan, and a lot of volunteers such as CRFG's own Jim Schopper.

Just outside the gate is a medicinal and pollinator garden. It is full lavender, salvia, milkweed, buddleia, and African Blue basil (one of Steve's favorites). These were chosen to help students relax and feel at home.

A gorgeous mural is painted on the building at the main garden entrance. He calls it "The History of Latin Agriculture." There are many images: the Seed of Life, the Goddess of Plants (Mayan mythology), Hummingbird (Incan mythology), constellations related to agriculture, and much more. There is also a dedication which says, "Without a doubt, a mural seems like the right way to improve a community."



This quote is from former student John Mendoza, who, unfortunately, passed away a year before the mural was completed. The other dedications include Hakim Brooks (student), Bob Ludekens (owner of LA Cooke), Tony Stewart (CRFG), and Steve Gota (one of Steve's biggest gardening influencers).

Inside the gate is a water feature (turned on just for us!) and the lath house, where they grow their famous cyclamen. Further in is the new greenhouse that is (FINALLY!) nearly completed. (There were some delays, apparently.) Then there are two Cool Greenhouses, currently housing vegetable plugs donated from a San Diego nursery. Outside are the multiple vermiculture bins, with very happy worms and a covering of straw to keep them warm as the weather cools off.

The covered patio outside these buildings is used for finishing off the plant starts. And past the patio is



the main yard. Steve is currently training grapevines into tree shapes, which he learned at the L.A. Arboretum. Then he joked about teaching his students how to make wine, and beer! (No, not really. Although they are also growing hops right now.)

On the other side of the walkway are the chicken coops. The roosters protect the chickens from predators, such as skunks. Behind the coops are succulents and cactus plants.

Just before the back wall is the Fruit Tree Nursery. The trees in the first row were donated by Papaya Tree Nursery: Surinam cherry, pitanga, guava, gherimoya. andstone fruit were donated by Bob Ludekens of L.E. Cooke, Tom Spellman of Dave Wilson Nurseries, John Ridgeway at C Grows Nursery, and from La Verne and Burchell Nurseries

Steve let Jim Schopper take over for a bit. Jim spoke about dormant spray. He found some black spots on his aprium tree leaves - it turns out the spots are caused by bacterium from overnight dew. The solution: rinse it off! No stagnant water, no bacterial!

He also discussed Peach Leaf Curl and dormancy sprays.

Back to the tour! Steve led us to the rear of the yard where dragonfruit and the Infamous Blueberry Grapes twine up the arbor. Bob Ludekens, of L.E. Cooke Co Nursery, originally got Steve interested in Blueberry grapes, and they are now his favorites.

Moving on to Antioxidant Alley: mulberries, apples, persimmons, jujubes, and pomegranate trees. There is also an apple orchard in the center of campus, which he'll be happy to show you on a private tour.

Now on the other side of the greenhouses, we reach the vegetable beds. Someone's been digging in his gardens! Skunks are after the liquid manure they use. He mixes Kellogg's Organic Liquid with dry fertilizer when planting, then uses it as a foliar feed as the plants grow. There are also starts of has primrose, celery, leeks, spinach, kohlrabi, and cilantro on tables nearby.



Backtrack to Citrus Alley, past some splendid old camellias. Camellias are fairly drought tolerant when mature, and these only get rainwater. The Oro Blanco grapefruit trees were courtesy of LaVerne Nursey. He only deep-soaks the citrus once per month.

Then we reach the yucky stuff. Steve is not fond of composting, because of the smelly run-off as the fruits and veggies decay. But he thanked our CRFG chapter for donating \$500 for a truckload of potting soil. He received a scoop of "virgin" potting soil from Artesia Sawdust, and they add a 50/50 mix of Lopez Canyon soil amendment, along with their own home-grown finished compost for a fabulous planting mix.

It was an incredibly detailed and fascinating tour and we thank Steve very much for his time and energy sharing with us!

Check out the video of the Sylmar tour at: [www.crfg-la.org/piwigo/picture.php?/856/category/54](http://www.crfg-la.org/piwigo/picture.php?/856/category/54)

## December

We rounded out the year with an online "holiday party" on Zoom. About 20 folks joined the "festivities." It was very casual, with some people wearing Santa Hats, others wearing silly sweaters, and still others showcasing their beautiful homes and holiday decorations. My personal favorite was Kevin Lieu's dragonfruit ornament, which looked like a ripe fruit cut in half, in perfect proportion!

Kevin showed off an interesting and apparently quite successful method of rooting fig cuttings, which he learned from Dave Serricchio of What The Fig (a Facebook group). It involves supporting a scion just slightly in contact with a mix of chamomile tea and willowbark rooting powder, and sealing it to keep the stem in highly humid atmosphere. He uses 4c water, 1 teabag, and a sprinkle of willowbark. A pool noodle holds the scion in place and prevents evaporation, keeping the stem in a humid environment. Instructions can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/HumidFigRooting>.



Deborah Oisboid showed how to propagate using the "burrito" method. (Apply rooting hormone, wrap scions in damp newspaper, place in plastic bag, wait.)

Karen made a gracious presentation of an Outstanding Achievement Award to Deborah Oisboid to say "thank you for your extraordinary enterprise and creativity in keeping our chapter dynamic and evolving during the 2020 Pandemic."

Pat Pelaez, Jorge's widow, accidentally went to Sepulveda Gardens (as she has done every year before this one) instead of logging into the Zoom meeting. She brought a box of fresh fruit! Friends negotiated to drive there for pickup and trading.

We got to tour Bill Brandt's, Chris Warren's, and Karen and David Payton's lovely gardens, admiring their fruit trees and (in some cases) new landscaping.

Someone asked when is the ideal time to prune a loquat? The answer: not now, they're flowering now. Trim after fruit are off. (Bill emphatically encouraged "butchering" the loquats when you trim them!) When should you graft loquat? After it fruits.

Edith asked if you can you freeze guacamole? She has 73 avocados all at once. She was advised to make smoothies - or make popsicles! Mash & puree and freeze. Candace Rumenapp later recommended adding lemon juice to the mashed fruit before freezing, and ensuring any containers have been evacuated of air.

Karen asked the newest members to introduce themselves. We met Jessica Puppé, who runs a marketplace in Downey on the second Saturday of the month. She calls it a craft fair mixed with a farmers market, where 40 - 60 businesses sell handmade and baked goods. (<https://www.vendoramacalifornia.com>)

Jessica loves to grow dragonfruit. She feeds them worm castings and I.V. Organics All-Purpose fertilizer, giving them small amounts of micronutrients every month. Her initial cuttings grew from 5" long to 6 feet tall (and branching) since this past February!



Art Fitzsimmons loves to brew mead, and told us quite a lot about it. Mead is an alcoholic brew made from yeast and honey, but other flavors can be incorporated. The third one he made was tamarind-pluot flavored. Mead is quite alcoholic, up to 21% sometimes! Art belongs to the Maltose Falcons, America's oldest homebrewing club. (We will have another expert from the Maltose Falcons speak with us in February on mead-making.) He heard about the CRFG from an LA Times article, about a grower in

Malibu, and is looking forward to experimenting with rare fruit.

Art recommends <https://soilandsod.com> in Pacoima for garden soils. He just received 3000 lbs of 70/30 blend of manure for a winter garden. (3000 lbs = 1 ton truck = \$25; delivery is about \$25-\$35.) He tells the company what he thinks he wants, and then what he's trying to do and they will recommend one blend over another, depending on the purpose

Time for show and tell! A lot of people showed their interesting and useful garden tools: locking pliers (Chris), a slicing pruner where both blades are sharp - they go directly against each other (Kevin), a new jackhammer (David), a collection of wood-handled tools (Jerry), pole pruners (David & Jerry), a Korean digging tool (Deborah), metal FlexHose (Jerry), hose couplers (Emory), wheeled cart/dolly (Jerry), and bark stripper for air layering propagation (Emory).



Art wanted to know when do you feed trees? Jerry recommends in January before rain, then a couple of months later before rain. Citrus get fertilized later when they start leafing out. Some trees he didn't water at all this year, because they are very deep rooted. He uses the cheapest fertilizer available (6-4-6 with micronutrients), and runs through four or five 40-lb bags at a time.

David noted the roots of his mulberry growing in a cement circle are pushing all the cement up. How can he inhibit root growth? Four pieces of advice were offered: (1) Trimming roots make roots grow more; don't do it. (2) If you do trim roots, paint them with sealant so they don't become diseased. (3) Girdling will kill a tree, not inhibit growth. (4) Keep the tree trimmed small and the roots will stay small; trees want to stay proportional between upper and lower growth.

Towards the end of the meeting we met a Good Girl doggy at Kenny's house. Patches started looking for squirrels after Kenny said "go get the squirrel!" She is a lovely beagle who used to climb trees (at least 4

feet off the ground!) when she was younger. Poor thing tired herself out and flopped down for some very deserved rest when she was done.



Wishing everyone a very Happy 2021 and much health and happiness to all! May we meet again soon!

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## CRFG - This Works for Me!

This year, let's help everyone grow their best crops! Describe your experience(s) growing fruit in your area. What worked best for you? What varieties? What special treatment do the plants need? Hopefully your advice will steer others in wonderfully productive directions! Thanks!  
-Deborah Oisboid, [editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org)

## Chasing Squirrels

by Kathleen Doran-Sapelli

*Editor's Note: Squirrels are a nuisance, stealing fruit before we can taste them! Kathleen has been paying close attention and offers the following observations:*

With respect to figs, squirrels seem to prefer those that change color. Green and yellow fruit seem to survive longer. I have also had no issues with container trees, as squirrels would have to dash across flat ground - and through "dog country." Fruit bags can work but become tedious to set up. The birds learn quickly to peck through. I have had great success with using a row cover sheet (not a frost blanket) for protection. However, it also slowed and spaced out my crop ripening. I appreciated that aspect with my apricots.

I have decided that, for me, I will set up my orchards for a system of easy pop up and take down seasonal caging, and use tree bags with spreaders or the row covers for those trees outside of the orchard. I am jealous of friends who have created large attractive cages, but at the same time, in my small yard, I like to have it gone once the fruiting is done. I may change my mind, as gardeners are wont to do, as I get older.

I was getting too frustrated to just let nature be and the raptors are too satiated to make a dent.

We are also looking forward to the next new puppy effect

on fruit recovery up on our hill. Every new dog has brought with it a 5 year boost of fruit. Chasing squirrels is good exercise for them and a guilty pleasure for us to watch.

I guess I could develop a liking for hot spicy figs (by applying peppers to the fruit to discourage wildlife theft) but I prefer not to do that to my fruit. On the other hand, my home brew is effective in deterring plant-annihilating rabbits.

Oh well, gardening is a matter of entropy, sustainability and insanity. With every delicious piece there is victory!

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## The Northridge Anecdotal Gardner

By Kevin Kratzer

All gardeners are anecdotal gardeners are they not? Of course, there are those who have spent their time wisely and become Master Gardeners. This posting is not for those who are certified but instead for gardeners who have had success and failures in their outdoor sanctuaries but may not always be sure of the exact reason why.

This is my list of fruit trees that have worked in the San Fernando Valley/SFV near CSUN and those that have not worked so well. If I had a time machine and could start over (with no Morlocks nearby), I might (not) try these trees again.

**Would Try again** – any citrus trees except variegated lemon as they are **not productive** for me. I have approximately (10) tangerines trees, (10) orange trees, (8) lemon/limes, and (6) grapefruit trees. All of the citrus will grow in the SFV but beware as many orange and tangerine trees can be anecdotally alternate bearing once mature in the SFV. My favorites are the Cara Cara pink navel and Pixie, Kishu, Satsuma, and Page mandarins. I would also replant a Moro Blood Orange. The Oro Blanco Grapefruit also seems to have good promise here in the SFV and cannot be beat for a grapefruit that can be enjoyed without sweetening enhancement.

**Would Try again**—Asian pears. If you like apples or pears you'll like these. Just don't be on a ladder when you're Asian Pear fruit picking as moths the size of a VW can take flight just as you're reaching for your juicy reward.

**Would Try again**—Gala, Dorsett Golden, Fuji, Gordon, and Anna apples. I have great hopes for a recently planted Red Fuji and Honeycrisp. Especially the Honeycrisp. Is there anything better tasting than a Honeycrisp apple? Its in the name!

**Would Try again**—Keitt Mango. Productive year to year and tasty with only a small amount of fiber.

**Would Try again**—Multiple stone fruit trees including various warmer weather plum, nectarine, and nectaplums.

**Would Try again**—Avocados including Gwen, Sharwill, Reed, Hass, Lamb, Carmen, Jan Boyce, Ettinger, Zutano, Fuerte and Don Gillogly. Avocados are my greatest gardening passion and frustration. They are very fragile

when young and can meet an untimely demise when encountering summer temps in the SFV approaching 115-120F. These temps will kill young avocados indiscriminately in the SFV even when using shade cloth, umbrellas, trunk painting, mulching, and additional soil irrigation in preparation of a heat event. However, micro-climates that feature adjacent mature trees that a young avocado can find shelter from during a heat wave will survive to grow another year. BTW, Ettinger anecdotally seems to be one of the best avocado trees for heat tolerance.

**Would Try again**- Yellow Guava. Is there a better and fresher smelling fruit than the guava? A recent planting that I have hopes for.

**Pass**—Apricot trees—the Motel 6 of vermin and varmints. Squirrels are a plague for the two to three weeks that we have Apricots on our two trees. Pass.

**Pass**—Minnie Royal and Royal Lee cherry trees. Just too hot in the SFV for cherries. Pass.

**Pass**—Sir Prize avocado trees. Not productive in the SFV. Two of them. Pass.

**Pass** -Passion fruit unless you have a sunny area that the vine can grow unencumbered. See my photo for a passion fruit take-over of two unsuspecting orange trees that were choked to death by one passion fruit vine.

**Pass**--Babaco Papaya. Too cold in the SFV.

**Pass**--Mallika Mango. In the ground for 6 years. Not one mango. Pass.

**Pass**--the before mentioned Variegated Pink Lemon. In the ground for 7 years with one lemon per year. Pass.

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## Editor's Column (With Classifieds!)

### **OFFER: Mature Cherry of the Rio Grande tree**

Don and Judy Weber of Northridge have a healthy Cherry tree for you! The trunk is about 2 - 3" diameter, full height is over 10 feet tall. Heavy fruit bearer. Must dig it out and transport it away. Please contact Karen Payton to arrange pickup.

### **OFFER: Mature Kei Apple tree**

Dennis Getchius is looking for someone to dig up a kei apple - 10ft tall, several feet wide. It fruits wonderfully and has a 2 - 3" trunk. This is a good time to transplant if you want it. Please email [editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org) if you are interested.

Have a suggestion? A question? A story to share? Send it to [editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org) and see it published here!