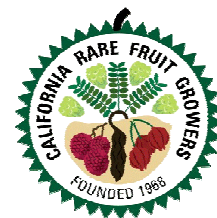


# LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

November 2007 Volume X Issue 6



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

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## November Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, November 24, 2007

**Time:** 10:00 A.M.

**Place:** Sepulveda Garden Center  
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

**Program:** Dr. Greg Partida will talk on the Homoptera insects that cause farmers and fruit growers in general all kinds of headaches. He will discuss the active role of aphids, whiteflies, mealy bugs, leafhoppers and psyllids on our crops. Their biologies and, how best to control them will be discussed.

**ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!!** If your last name begins with A-N please bring something for our November tasting table. Lately, we have had many delicious desserts but very little in the way of fruit. Although, many fruits are out of season now, please bring whatever you have ripening in your gardens, to share and show off.



## December Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, December 15, 2007 \*\* (Please note the date) \*\*

**Time:** 10:00 A.M.

**Place:** Sepulveda Garden  
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

**Guest of Honor:** Patricia Jones

**Program:** Annual Holiday Party! Let's get in the holiday spirit and celebrate! Bring your questions, suggestions, tips. We will open up the floor. We will also take this opportunity to honor Patricia Jones, the director of Sepulveda Gardens, as she celebrates 30 years with the LA Dept of Parks and Recreation. We are so grateful to Patricia for her support of our Chapter over these last 10 years.

Following our meeting we will have a pot luck luncheon, just as we did last year. So if everyone would please bring a main dish, salad, dessert or appetizer. We will provide the paper goods and drinks.

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## Message from Bob Goldsmith

I have been chairman now for three years. I have greatly enjoyed working with the other board members and serving in this position. At this time, however, my wife, Sherry, and I are making preparations to move to Oregon. The move will require us to build a new home on the 8-acre pear orchard property. We have already begun this process, but after the first of next year it will require increasing amounts of my time and energy and, if the project goes as planned, we will be relocated up there by next year's end. So, I feel that this is a good time to bring in "new blood" for the chair position. I hope to continue as an assistant to the new chairperson, to effect a smooth transition to new leadership. Many thanks to everyone who helped run our organization during the last 3 years; they did all the heavy lifting, while I helped with the coordination. **Bob G.**

Jorge Pelaez has been nominated to assume the position of Chapter Chairman. At our December meeting Bob will make a call from the floor to ask for any other nominations for the position.



## **PACAY** - *Inga feuillei* – Fabaceae

By **Alfredo Chiri**

Donated by: CRFG/Barkman and planted in 1998 (r.f.-06)  
Common names: Ice-cream beans, Pacae, Guarma, Guamo, Rabo de Mico

The Andean "Pacay" is widely grown in highland alleys as well as in coastal lowlands of Perú and Ecuador. The tree pods have been favorite snacks for their sweet, mealy pulp and are eaten as fruit. The species has also been introduced across most of tropical South America, Panama and Costa Rica. The tree is most widespread in areas without a dry season (Andean South America, western Brazil) or with a dry season of 3 to 4 months and minimum rainfall around 1200 mm.

In South America this tree is often employed as a shade tree in the coffee and cacao plantations.

The Pacay pods have been called in English the "ice-cream beans" because they are reminiscent of cotton candy.

The Pacay tree grows up to 51 feet tall, with broad spreading crown. The bark is pale gray, and the trunk is cylindrical to 12 inches in diameter. Branching starts at 3 to 6 feet from base, forming a broad, flat, moderately dense canopy. Leaves are once pinnate, up 4 to 12 inches long, with 4-6 pairs of opposite oval leaflets. Between each pair of leaflets they are separated by a winged rhachis.

Flowers are fragrant, solitary, arranged at the tips of stems or solitary in upper axils. Corolla is silky. The tree may flower throughout the year, but in regions with a short dry season it is most likely to flower at the beginning of the wet season.

The fruits are ribbed, cylindrical pods, straight or spirally twisted, up to a yard long, occasionally even longer, and 1 to 2 inches in diameter. The fruits contain fleshy green seeds (1 inch long) in a sweet, white, cottony pulp. Seeds sometimes begin

to germinate in the pod. The pods do not ship well. The seed storage is very poor.

The Pacay tree can tolerate short droughts. The tree is tolerant of acid soils, outgrowing many other leguminous trees under such conditions. It is a forest gap generator, and although seedlings often establish themselves in the shade of other trees, it needs light to grow and flower. In the forest it becomes a canopy tree, but it is also common in secondary forest.

Like most legumes, the Pacay trees fix nitrogen and improve the soil around them. The litter is high in organic nitrogen, lignins and polyphenols. It is slow to decompose but provides a long-term build-up of organic nitrogen.



**Alfredo Chiri** offers many tips on growing tropicals

Rain poured as over 50 LA Chapter members gathered to hear **Alfredo Chiri** speak at our September meeting. **Alfredo** touched on a variety of topics from mangos, to lucuma. With his many years of experience at the Fullerton Arboretum, **Alfredo** shared with us many tips he has picked up over the years. Of course the highlight of his talk was eating the delicious lucuma ice cream he brought for everyone. We are also very grateful to his donation of 25 lucuma plants for our raffle. With this donation, it is hoped the lucuma will become a popular fruit in California. We look forward to spring when we plan to visit the Fullerton Arboretum and have **Alfredo**, guide us through the tropical and semi tropical areas. Thank you **Alfredo**.

## Persimmon trees are fiery standouts

Ablaze with color, the popular varieties 'Hachiya' and 'Fuyu' thrive in SoCal conditions.

By **Lili Singer**

Special to *The Times* September 27, 2007

AUTUMN hasn't truly arrived until the persimmon tree's foliage turns to sherbet shades, rivaling the best New England has to offer. By December, after the leaves have

dropped, the tree bears its final spectacle: a canopy of limbs ornamented with nothing more than the season's last fruit.

For those who discover these joys of Japanese persimmons, the question isn't whether to plant the tree, but rather, which one? 'Hachiya' or 'Fuyu'? Fans of the 'Hachiya' praise the acorn-shaped fruit that eventually turns soft and sweet, while the cult of 'Fuyu' swears by the tomato-shaped type that's best eaten crisp, like an apple.

An informal survey at a recent gathering of the Southern California Horticultural Society yielded an even split.

Half favored 'Hachiya' ("very sweet," "better flavor"); half preferred 'Fuyu' ("sweet and crunchy").

And one of the rare points of agreement? Both trees merit planting in the home landscape.

"Nothing else in California has that bark," says nursery owner **John Schoustra**, a 'Fuyu' man simply because that variety is less messy to eat. "It's cool -- checkerboard with fissures."

Native-plant expert **Bart O'Brien** and bookseller **Virginia Gardner** admire the persimmon tree's shape, manageable size, strong structure and leaf colors -- gold, salmon pink, orange and cerise -- that are just right for the season.

"They go with nature," landscape architect **Shirley Kerins** says. "Those colors would look garish in spring." **THOUGH** *Diospyros kaki* is actually a native of China, it's commonly called Japanese or Oriental persimmon. Many varieties are sold in nurseries here, and Southern California provides ideal growing conditions.

The trees can be put in the ground year-round from containers, but the best time to buy them is during bare-root season, from late December into February. Bare-root trees are inexpensive and easy to plant. Persimmon trees take to most soils, are resistant to oak root fungus and need less water and fertilizer than citrus and stone fruit.

There are many species of *Diospyros*, including the American persimmon, *D. virginiana*, which has small, tasty conical fruit. But *D. kaki*, cultivated in Asia for centuries, is most esteemed among foodies.

Shapes, flavors, colors and textures vary. 'Hachiya' is the most popular of the soft, so-called "astringent" cultivars. Plants and nonastringent fruit sold as 'Fuyu' are most likely a cultivar called 'Jiro,' and so-called 'Giant Fuyu' could be a cultivar called 'O'Gosho.'

Some nurseries sell as many as a dozen cultivars with different ripening times. Gardeners can extend their harvest by planting more than one variety.

All the trees grow best in full sun, rising to 20 feet or higher, with equal spread. **Eph Koenigsberg**, a Sierra Madre resident and member of the Foothill Chapter of **California Rare Fruit Growers**, prunes his trees to remain under 10 feet for easy picking.

Prune young trees for good structure. In the dormant season, you should thin inner branches and judiciously remove old wood. Because fruit are borne on new growth off last year's wood, be careful with that snipping.

Careful watering also is crucial. **Jim Bathgate**, the Rare Fruit Growers' persimmon specialist, has raised the trees in cool, coastal San Juan Capistrano, where mature specimens need only monthly watering in summer, as well as farther inland in Valley Center, where he waters up to twice weekly during warm months.

To avoid life-threatening root rot, err on the side of dryness. Deep but infrequent watering is the ticket.

Though some fruit drop is natural, over watering and over fertilizing will worsen your losses. Squirrels and birds are serious spoilers too. Many a tree has been removed from gardens because too few fruit made it to the table.

**Bathgate** covers his ripening fruit with old socks -- "washed or unwashed," he says, joking -- a trick that deters the birds more so than the squirrels.

Smaller critters rarely bother persimmons. If mealybugs happen to gather near the stem of the fruit, they can be sprayed with a strong stream of water, insecticidal soap or horticultural oil.

**MAKE** it this far, and your only concern may be an overly abundant harvest. Persimmons typically alternate between light-crop years and heavy years. The boughs of **Deborah Urquhart's** 'Fuyu' tree in Shadow Hills are loaded down with more than 200 fruit this fall. The squirrels are welcome to some. Her dog Nicholas will snack on others, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Persimmons can bear huge crops that weigh down branches, make the bark susceptible to sunburn and otherwise overtax the trees. **Bathgate** recommends thinning fruit in May or June, leaving no more than two fruit per branch tip. The process protects the tree, prevents burnout and makes annual harvests more consistent in size.

Come fall, you want to harvest 'Hachiyas' and 'Fuyus' as soon as they're orange. Cut the fruit -- don't pull -- with a bit of the stem attached.

Part of the charm of the 'Fuyu,' its fans say, is instant gratification. Pick, eat.

'Hachiya'? Well, that's another story. The longer that astringent varieties of persimmon hang on the tree, the better their flavor. A 'Hachiya' fully ripens after one to two weeks on a windowsill. The flesh turns to sugary, slippery pulp.

If you can't wait that long, pop one in the freezer for 12 hours or so. Once defrosted, the flesh will be soft, sweet and ready to eat.

The best time to plant persimmon trees is fast approaching. Some advice for a healthy tree and a bountiful harvest:

**Planning:** Whether you choose 'Fuyu,' 'Hachiya' or some other type of persimmon is a matter of taste. Just remember that you can extend your harvest by planting more than one variety. Most cultivars do not need pollination for good fruit, but certain "astringent" varieties will not soften or sweeten unless they are pollinated. For these cultivars, a second tree of a different variety will be needed for pollination.

**Buying:** Two wholesale growers supply most of the persimmon trees in Southern California. **Dave Wilson Nursery** has an online search function to find retailers selling its trees; [davewilson.com/homegrown/get\\_trees.html](http://davewilson.com/homegrown/get_trees.html). The second grower, **Orange County Nursery**, supplies Orchard Supply Hardware and Home Depot garden centers. It advises consumers to ask their local **OSH** or **Home Depot** to special-order persimmons if the trees are not in stock.

**Watering:** Deep but infrequent watering is key. Don't plant persimmon trees in a lawn. Keep drip irrigation away from trunks.

**Feeding:** Whereas most fruit trees need three feedings a year, young persimmon trees need only two -- in early spring and July. Established trees need only one feeding (in early spring) or none at all. A balanced formula (such as 10-10-10) or one with slightly higher phosphorus content (the middle number) will do the trick.

## MORE THAN JUST LEMONS



**Gus Gunderson**, director at Limoneira shares some pointers

Though an overcast sky threatened rain, 30 of us eagerly boarded the trolley Limoneira provided for us. Leading us on this informative tour was **Gus Gunderson**, Field Manager for Limoneira. The first stop gave us a chance to step down from the bus to examine an experimental higher density avocado grove. We could easily compare it to an old grove nearby. We also had an opportunity to go across the street into an impressive lemon grove, even more impressive by the quantity of mulch laid across the entire field.

That's when we learned that Limoneira has any number of cooperative irons in the fire: mulch from Agromin that has a large facility on site; plus the leasing of large segments of land to produce and strawberry growers. The challenges facing the strawberry growers among other things results in laser leveling the soil, a benefit that will accrue to Limoneira in the future.

All along the way we gleaned information on the changing agricultural picture in terms of crops in Ventura County. **Gus** exposed us to the many economic and environmental decisions on land use and crops within a larger national and international competitive reality. You do not lightly rip up one grove to replace it with something quite different.

Thus the information we received as we passed the many different land uses, the decision making which had to take place, the challenges faced by those renters literally betting farm, and the unique solutions which others applied to meet those challenges, made this tour not only visually attractive but equally educational. We all walked away not only impressed but very happy for this opportunity to visit Limoneira. (By **Lynn Maxson**)