



# LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2019 Volume XXIV Issue 4

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

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## MEETING:

**Date:** July 27, 2019 at 10:00 am  
**Place:** Sepulveda Garden Center  
16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, CA 91316

**Program:** David Karp - Interspecific Fruits

David Karp is a freelance writer and photographer specializing in fruit. Over the past twenty years, his work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, Smithsonian, Gourmet and Saveur magazines, and many other publications. He is also an associate in the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of California at Riverside. David will speak on interspecific fruits, their advantages and challenges - Pluots, Apriums, Cherums, East-West grapes, wild x cultivated strawberries, true apple x pear crosses.

*Board meeting to follow.*

**All Members:** if your last name begins with N-Z please bring something for our refreshment table.

## NO MEETING IN AUGUST

Meeting has been cancelled in favor of the Festival of Fruit!

**Dates:** August 16 - August 18, 2018  
<https://festivaloffruit.org/speakers/schedule/>  
<https://festivaloffruit.org/registration/>

**Places:** Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden  
Huntington Gardens  
Pasadena/Sierra Madre/Los Angeles garden

**Program:** Festival of Fruit 2019 - Year of the Annonaceae  
The CRFG Festival of Fruit 2019 is a 3-day celebration of fruit with fruit-growing talks, workshops, garden and nursery tours, fruit and plant vendor booths, tastings, and more.

## **SAVE THE DATES -** **CALENDAR FOR 2019 LA CHAPTER**

- September 28 Sepulveda Gardens - Steve Murray
- October 26 Field Trip - Lewis Perkins
- November 23 Field Trip - Clean Up Date
- December 14 Sepulveda Gardens - Annual Holiday Party

# Words From Our Chairman



I hope everyone is enjoying the mild temperatures we've had so far this summer. It's fun to see all of the stone fruit trees producing bumper crops, especially after two years of not-so-great harvests. It's also the time of the year when dragonfruit are starting to blossom and set fruit. I'm sure those of you that attended the last few meetings have enjoyed our speakers as well as a field trip.

Oleg did a wonderful job discussing and teaching us about blackberries and other varieties of berries that are available. As always, when we have a great speaker I come away thinking I must get more of whatever they're discussing because they do such a good job describing how wonderful the potential is to grow the items discussed.

I also really enjoyed seeing Jesus Alvarez's garden and what he has done in his backyard as well as the entire property. He may bend the rules as far as spacing between trees but he has proven that it does work well in his garden. I think everybody enjoyed his discussion as well as the passion he has for what he has planted in his garden.

Looking forward, we have two months with exciting opportunities. Having "Fruit Detective" David Karp come to talk to us is a great opportunity to hear from somebody who is an expert at complex hybrid fruits such as apriums, pluots and other mixed breeds.

I also hope you take the opportunity to sign up for

the Festival of Fruit, which is being hosted in August by the Foothill Chapter. They have made arrangements for a large variety of tours as well as speakers. Go to [www.festivaloffruit.org](http://www.festivaloffruit.org) to sign up.

When things start to warm up be sure you give all your trees a little bit of extra water and keep them hydrated just as you would yourself.

*Tony*

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## LOOKING BACK

*By Deborah Oisboid, Editor*

### May Meeting

The May meeting was simply packed with information! It started with our president, Tony Stewart, encouraging everyone to see a movie about sustainable farming. "The Biggest Little Farm," by Apricot Lane Farms, is winning awards all over the place. Then we had a round of "How does your garden grow?" where several people described incredibly productive gardens, with Best Ever yields in stone fruit and other edibles. Jim Schopper cautioned that with all this amazing growth, weeding could become quite the gardening problem this year. As he put it, "Someone once said, 'A job well done never has to be done again,' but obviously this person never weeded anything!" Cue much laughter.

Edgar Valdivia commented on the upcoming Festival of Fruit, to be hosted by the Foothill Chapter. Penny Kole from the CRFG Foothill Chapter summarized how the planning is going. Yes, they will probably need volunteers but they are haven't identified all the different tasks that will need help. Some predicted areas are signing people up for lectures, checking badges, preparing food, and working tables for the different for events.

Margaret Frane informed us she has started some Pawpaw seedlings. They like a bit of winter chill, are self-pollinating, and taste like a cross between sapote and cherimoya. They can grow to 10 feet

high and 3-4 feet wide. She hopes to bring some in soon.

Edgar Valdivia told us of a 6-acre ranch full of fruit trees and garden beds coming up for sale in Santa Clarita. Anyone interested in the property, please contact either the editor ([editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org)) or Edgar ([photo@crfg-la.org](mailto:photo@crfg-la.org)). In the future, any notices of items for sale may be put at the end of this newsletter.

Pat Valdivia discussed the upcoming June field trip.

Our guest speaker, Oleg Daugovich, Ph.D, spoke about high-yield production from blackberries and raspberries. He has most recently been studying "primocane" berries. Most gardeners are familiar with "floricane" berries, which produce fruit on the second year growth (canes left unpruned from the previous year). Primocane varieties produce fruit from first-year flowers.

Oleg's team goal was driven by market economics. They wanted the largest fruit production to occur around September, when fruit imports from other countries drop off. The trials included varieties such as Imara®, Kwanza®, Kweli®, Vintage, and Kokanee raspberries, and PrimeArk® 45, PrimeArk® Traveler, Orus4545-1, and APF 268T blackberries. Evaluations were made of fruit production, berry size, pests and problems, and rate of decay (to "unmarketable" condition of the fruit).

Pruning the canes to 3-4 feet tall at the end of the season caused earlier flowering but inferior fruit.

Mowing canes to the ground caused delayed fruit production but healthier canes and fruit.

His advice to anyone growing primocane berries is to "Mow" in January, "Grow" until May, and then "Tip" the plants. This encourages new flowering on strong, healthy plants, and produces relatively high yield in the desired season.

After the presentation, the floor was opened to questions. His advice included not washing fruit before storage - leave them dry and wash before

eating, or they will decompose earlier. Berries need enough water to replace transpiration, so keep the soil moist. ("Water as if in Oregon.") Ideally direct sunlight is desired. Destroy or otherwise remove any cuttings; don't mulch them because mites and other diseases can get back into the garden.

Sources for primocane fruit include Nourse ([www.noursefarms.com](http://www.noursefarms.com)), and Stark Brothers Nurseries (<https://www.starkbros.com>). Please note that most of these berries are currently patented and growers need to sign a non-propagation agreement when purchasing.

Small-space gardeners may be interested in PrimeArk® Freedom as a more compact variety. Stark® Black Gem is also excellent. Arapahoe and Navajo are smaller, compact, and thornless but are not primocane varieties.

For those interested in the test results, there is an online PPT presentation which may be downloaded directly from this URL:

[cesantacruz.ucanr.edu/files/299308.pptx](http://cesantacruz.ucanr.edu/files/299308.pptx)

### June Meeting

Our June meeting was a tour of the tiny garden of Jesus Alvarez in Sylmar.



His house, which has been in his family for several



generations, sits on a lot approximately 50 ft x 50 ft. And it is completely packed with over 100 fruit trees! Apples, pears, stone fruit, citrus, avocado, ice cream bean, pomegranates, cherimoya, jujube, olives, and figs share space with grapes, tomatoes, strawberries, a tall stand of variegated bamboo, and many types of herbs.

His garden paths, nicely-laid brick, were narrow but easy to navigate, and led you in a winding way through the plantings, making his garden seem much larger than it measures.

He enjoys collecting things just because he thinks they're interesting. For example, a fire hydrant is hidden under a cherimoya tree, a lovely statue of a woman and child stand under his citrus tree, and a tiny brass Incan with a small brass llama are tied to a pole. There are about a million smaller plants in between the fruit trees, such as roses, tomatoes, arugula, geraniums, herbs, and so on. So much to be seen, you don't even need to turn around and you've discovered something else!

At the potluck which followed, we learned Jesus is Board President of the Tataviam Land Conservancy. The Tataviam are a historic native tribe of northern LA County. They were an officially recognized tribe in 1892 and are trying to re-establish federal recognition. They are hoping to purchase some of their historical tribal land. (Their website is [www.tataviamlandconservancy.org](http://www.tataviamlandconservancy.org).)

We thank Jesus for an enchanting day of discovery!

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## Healthy Gardens

Excerpted from several online sources

Gardening has many benefits. The most obvious is being able to eat the freshest food which you've grown yourself. Add some exercise, fresh air, and sunshine and you've created a recipe to live to 100 years old. Or close to it.

It seems gardeners live longer and are less stressed. A

variety of studies confirm this, pointing to both the physical and mental health benefits of gardening.

Dan Buettner is an explorer, National Geographic Fellow, award-winning journalist and producer, and a New York Times bestselling author. He identified the five places in the world—dubbed Blue Zones—where people live the longest, healthiest lives. One thing these places all had in common was a penchant for gardening.

An outdoor lifestyle with moderate physical activity is linked to longer life, and gardening is an easy way to accomplish both. "If you garden, you're getting some low-intensity physical activity most days, and you tend to work routinely," says Buettner.

Dr. Bradley Willcox of the University of Hawaii studies centenarians. He says that gardening helps with other essential, if somewhat more ephemeral, factors in increasing longevity. "In Okinawa, they say that anybody who grows old healthfully needs an *ikigai*, or reason for living. Gardening gives you that something to get up for every day."

Australian researchers followed men and women in their 60s and found that those who regularly gardened had a 36% lower risk of dementia than their non-gardening counterparts.

In a recent Dutch study, researchers asked participants to complete a stressful task, then split them into two groups. One group read indoors and the other gardened outdoors for 30 minutes. The group that read reported that their mood "further deteriorated," while the gardeners not only had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol afterwards, but they also felt "fully restored" to a good mood.

Research by the University of Exeter, published in Scientific Reports this year, found that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good health and higher psychological well-being than those who don't visit nature at all during an average week. However, no such benefits were found for people who visited natural settings such as town parks, woodlands, country parks and beaches for less than 120 minutes a week.

Doctors in Scotland can now prescribe a walk in nature to treat a variety of ailments, including reducing blood pressure and anxiety, and to improve overall happiness. Gardening – even on a small plot in an urban area – is a simple way to incorporate more nature into daily life.

Then there is the diet aspect of gardening. Willcox says eating an abundance of fresh vegetables, ideally from local gardens and markets, is important to longevity.

Gardening means sticking your hands in the dirt. In fact, lack of dirt (and the soil-borne organisms that come with it) has been linked to higher autoimmune disease. Soil is an incredibly rich source of natural bacteria, minerals, and microorganisms. Touching the soil regularly exposes the body to beneficial (and small amounts of harmful) microorganisms that can boost the immune system. Since beneficial bacteria and gut health are vital to overall health, it is logical that the immune-boosting properties of dirt could increase longevity as well.

While probiotics and fermented foods increase the “good” gut bacteria, you still won’t be exposed to the same variety of micro-organisms unless you get your hands dirty!

Since most gardening isn’t done at night, tending a garden provides exposure to the sun. The human body produces Vitamin D from sun exposure, and since Vitamin D is protective against types of cancer and heart disease, it is logical that those with higher Vitamin D levels could live longer.

Neither farming nor gardening will ultimately guarantee a longer lifespan. But some of the lifestyle factors associated with both – namely going outside, engaging in light physical activity and eating a healthy plant-based diet – just might.

In the end, it’s all about balance. “I use the analogy of a chair,” says Willcox. “Diet, physical activity, mental engagement and social connection are the four legs. If you don’t have one of them, you fall out of balance, and it can shorten life expectancy. Longevity isn’t about one single factor – it’s about not working too hard to share a constellation of them all.”

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/bbc-gardening-longevity>  
<https://tinyurl.com/independent-gardening-health>  
<https://tinyurl.com/telegraph-gardening-health>  
<https://tinyurl.com/exeter120hours>

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## In Memorium: Richard Watts

June 12, 1927-June 6, 2019

By Ed Valdivia



CRFG-LA has lost a dear and long-time member: Richard Watts.

When Richard retired after many years of working as an agricultural biologist for the county of Ventura, he began focusing on the growing of fruit. This hobby led him to join the California Rare Fruit Growers. Richard became very active in CRFG, going to Ventura County Fairs and Sepulveda Garden Fairs each year. It was at these events that he would encourage visitors to join CRFG and introduce the public to the various rare fruit trees that he was growing.

Always happy to share his knowledge, Richard taught his fellow CRFG members the art of grafting. He joined the Los Angeles Chapter grafting team, which visited various high schools to teach the students how to graft. His wife, Edith, also shared Richard’s hobby and was also very active in the CRFG Los Angeles Chapter.

It is through California Rare Fruit Growers that his passion for fruit grew and led him to specialize in one in particular-the fig. (Quite a coincidence, that with Richard’s interest in figs, the street in which he lived is named “Higuera,” which means “Fig” in Spanish.) His collection of figs and the more than 100 different varieties became well known throughout the U.S.

Richard Watts lived 92 wonderful years. Throughout his life, he touched many people. I myself, can say that I learned so much from him. Even the last time, I visited him I was learning, as he explained to me about the atemoya and the sapodillas that he was growing at his home. His mind was so sharp that even at the age of 91 he knew all the botanical names of plants. Pat and I will always remember him, not only as one of the pillars of CRFG, but as a wonderful friend. I am sure the Gardens in heaven never looked better, with all the wonderful members of CRFG that have passed away to tend them.

A memorial service was held for Richard on Saturday, June 22nd at at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1201 Paseo Camarillo in Camarillo, CA.

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## Secret Source, Part 3

By Deborah Oisboid

*Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not constitute any endorsement or approval by the CRFG.*

Where is your favorite place to get new plants? Let me tell you about some of my local nurseries and why I like them.

### West Valley Nursery

19035 Ventura Blvd, Tarzana, CA 91356

<http://westvalleynursery.com/>

Slightly east of the Tampa exit of the 101 freeway and partially hidden below street level, West Valley Nursery is a gem. Owner Jon Tsuchiyama can tell you anything you need to know about any of his plants, and then some. When I described a hibiscus I'd grown from seed he was able to tell me what variety it was! (It helped that he knew the location where I had picked the seeds, because he realized he had sold them the parent plant!) The nursery carries a splendid variety of herbs, succulents, shade and sun-loving plants, as well as a fine selection of fruit trees. His bare-root selections are always healthy and eager to grow! I can always find something new (to me), at really good prices.

### Nelson's Nursery

23130 Sherman Way, West Hills, CA, 91307

Tony Nelson, Owner. (No website.)

In February of this year I discovered a nursery I'd kind of known about from word of mouth but never actually visited. Nelson's Nursery is tiny but they have plants I've

never seen at other garden centers, including several unusual varieties of hoyo. They usually carry a few fruit trees all the way in back of the lot, but nothing too exotic. On the other hand, all their plants are supremely healthy, and their prices are the best I've seen anywhere. The owners know a lot about their plants and can give you all kinds of advice as well. They share a tiny parking lot with Malibu Wine & Beer Garden but have their own parking spaces so ignore anyone who tries to tell you there's no parking left.

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## Editor's Column (With Classifieds!)

By Deborah Oisboid

I hope you don't mind a few "ads" in this issue of the newsletter.

**FOR SALE:** 6-acre ranch for sale in Santa Clarita. Many fruit trees and garden beds. Anyone interested in the property, please contact either the editor ([editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org)) or Edgar ([photo@crfg-la.org](mailto:photo@crfg-la.org)).

**WANTED:** Serge Shammass, who has moved to Greece but still keeps in touch with CRFG-LA, is looking for designs/suggestions for his new garden in the next month or two. The climate is that of Athens, Greece. He would love for the CRFG to get involved. Members who submit the winning design / suggestion would get \$100 donated to the chapter in their name(s). If you are interested, please contact the newsletter Editor or Karen Payton, or write to [editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org) or [treasurer@crfg-la.org](mailto:treasurer@crfg-la.org). We can provide you Serge's contact information and a copy of his property sketch.

**REQUEST:** If you're willing to share your secret, what is your favorite place (nursery, hardware store, grocery, discount shop, etc.) to buy new plants, and why? I would love to include it in a series of articles with great tips on the best plant sources. Please send your ideas to [editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org). Thanks in advance and I hope to hear from you!

-Deborah Oisboid, Editor

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!