



# LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2022 Volume XXVII Issue 4

**SPECIAL EVENT: Water use reduction forum (Part of the "911 in the 805" community event)**

**Saturday, July 9, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Location: Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza  
2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks**

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

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A special water conservation forum will take place on Saturday, July 9 at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. Organized by the Ventura County Master Gardeners, this forum will be in question-and-answer format so people can finally ask all of those questions they have about the newly implemented water use rules. Although the event will be held in Thousand Oaks (Ventura County), representatives from LADWP and the MWD will be there to answer questions about requirements in other California counties as well.

In addition to being an in-person event (and part of a larger community event on safety and conservation), there will be Zoom participation as well, for those who cannot or will not be able to attend in person.

Please see the first article on page 2 for details how to join remotely as well as in person.

## Garden Tour: Conejo Valley Botanic Gardens

**Saturday, July 23, 10:00 am**

**Location: Thousand Oaks**

"Between the mall and the mountains and the freeway and the green way, lies one of the hidden gems of the Conejo Valley. The Conejo Valley Botanic Garden is 33-acres of natural terrain encircled by the city of Thousand Oaks. From the sweeping vistas at the peak of the Garden through fifteen unique, hillside specialty gardens, and onto the hiking trail along the riparian stream, the Conejo Valley Botanic Garden is a destination not to be missed."

<https://www.conejovalleybotanicgarden.com>

**AUGUST – TBA**

*Save the date!*

## CALENDAR FOR LA CHAPTER 2022

September 24 To be announced

October 22 To be announced

November 19 To be announced

December 10 Holiday Party

"The Festival of Fruit has been postponed until 2023. Our chapter is looking to schedule an August meeting or event."

## Mind the Water!

**SPECIAL EVENT: Water use reduction forum  
Part of the "911 in the 805" community event**

**Date: Saturday, July 9, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Forum schedule: 11:45 – 1:00 pm**

**Location: Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza  
2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks**

As you know, The Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District recently announced mandatory water cutbacks. We need to find ways to use water wisely in our special gardens. The Ventura County Master Gardeners have arranged a public workshop as part of a community event in Thousand Oaks highlighting local emergencies and challenges. Other workshops and booths at the event will provide information about fire safety, fire insurance, evacuation planning, CPR, and emergency lifesaving. The event is completely free, and there will even be emergency vehicles for children to explore!

The water conservation forum will have a panel of experts providing advice, and open discussions to inspire reduced water usage at home and in your gardens. The panel will run from 11:45 am until 1 pm. It will have a hybrid set-up with both a live/in-person audience and as a Zoom webinar. Virtual participants can ask questions through the Q&A option, to be read by assistants to the panel. No need to sign up. Just click this URL to join on Saturday:

<https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/95923386458?pwd=WFpTYUtCRFQ2YkZUWVRiU0RFb1NlU09>

Passcode: 595713

Or One tap mobile:

+16694449171,,95923386458#,,,,\*595713# US

+16699006833,,95923386458#,,,,\*595713# US (San Jose)

Or join by phone: US: +1 669 444 9171

The event will be recorded as a webinar and from a single static camera (focused on the panel, not the audience). We plan to publish links to the presentation in a future newsletter. Attendees who ask questions will not be on camera, but their voices will be recorded. Video of remote participants will also not be recorded.

If you are a technical person, can we count on your help? We need assistance wrangling both Zoom and live questions, to make certain that all those who want to ask questions have an opportunity. Please contact either Member At Large Kathleen Doran ([doran\\_atlarge@crfg-la.org](mailto:doran_atlarge@crfg-la.org)), or newsletter editor Deborah Oisboid ([editor@crfg-la.org](mailto:editor@crfg-la.org)) to volunteer. Your expertise would be much appreciated.

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## LOOKING BACK

*By Deborah Oisboid, Editor*

## May 21 – La Verne Nursery tour in Piru

It was a gorgeous day to be outside! About 40 CRFG-LA members toured the La Verne Nursery in Piru in May.

La Verne Nursery Inc. operates on 95 acres. They have a total of 2 acres of greenhouses, 2.5 acres of shade houses, 5 acres of screen house, and about 100 employees. Their specialty is grafted fruit trees. Their delivery area spans California, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Hawaii. La Verne is a supplier of fruit trees and garden plants to major big-box and private nurseries such as Home Depot and Lowe's, and Armstrong Nurseries.

We met outside the main greenhouse and our chapter Chair Anwar introduced Dan Nelson, the director of the Nursery, who led us through their growing facilities.



Because our chapter had been given permission to pre-purchase trees at special prices, the first thing Dan discussed was why he would not sell citrus trees to us that day. It was because of Citrus Greening Disease, a horribly contagious disease which decimated Florida's citrus agriculture soon after it was identified in 1998. Many cities and counties are currently under quarantine by the California Department of Agriculture to prevent its spread. All nurseries are required to test their stock and know exactly where each citrus tree is going. Plants are given individual serial numbers, and if one tag ends up outside of a quarantine area, then the nursery must explain who purchased it, and how it got there. The nursery could be shut down and fined if found guilty of intentionally breaking quarantine.

Dan noted that growing citrus from a seed, even if the seed came from an infected tree, will not spread the disease. A tree usually becomes infected by the Asian Citrus Psyllid, a tiny insect which is hard to see until the insects have significantly damaged the tree several years later. This delay between contagion and diagnosis is what makes this disease extremely difficult to contain.

The nursery babies (plants) are kept under strict control inside the greenhouses. However, as they mature and become hardier, they are moved into other buildings or to the field, and controls become looser. The very first thing we had to do as guests was to walk through a pan of blue crystals: copper sulfide, a fungicide which prevented us from bringing disease inside on our shoes.



Dan was joined by Enrique, who gave us an amazing grafting demo, creating grafts almost faster than we could watch. Enrique has been with La Verne for over 20 years. New hires start as "wrappers," the people who bind the graft with flat strips of rubber band. (This prevents the graft from opening as it knits together.) New hires watch the person next to them to learn additional grafting techniques.

The critical part of grafting, Dan notes, is to match the very thin cambium layer between the rootstock and the graft. The cambium layer is the thin (green) line between the bark and heartwood, and is the living part of a plant, the source of all growth.



Due to the potential for spreading Citrus Greening Disease, Dan strongly advises against grafting citrus trees, even between trees in your own yard. You may be spreading the disease without knowing it!

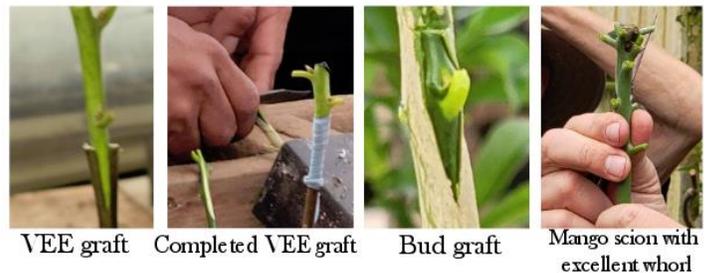
The commonest grafts ("Vee," also known as "cleft graft") get wrapped in parafilm and then a fat rubber band is wrapped around to hold it together. Finally, a dab of Henry's Roofing tar on the top (cut) face of the scion prevents evaporation. The band will disintegrate on its own, there is no need to remove it manually.

We also saw bud grafting. Budding can only be done when the bark is slipping. If you can't get the tip of your knife

in, **don't force it**. It's not time. To make a bud graft, you make a T-shaped slice across and down, slide the bud inside of the bark, and wrap it. Some people do an inverted T slice.

Bud grafts are used for roses. Walnuts and pecans use a patch bud. A patch bud is where you use two knives in parallel to cut twice horizontally, and then slice vertically at the middle so it opens like two doors. The bud goes inside. It takes a lot of labor, and success rates are much lower than other graft styles.

Manila rootstock is used for mango grafting. Mangoes get extra treatment, including bags over them so they stay in a humid environment. The best scions have a "whorl" of leaves clustered at the top.



LaVerne's greenhouse plants are not potted in soil, just peat moss and perlite to start. These are sterile and fast draining. Lack of soil allows better control of microbes. Nutrition is controlled at the feeding stage - their water has fertilizer pumped into it. Fertilizer is selected particular to the plants being watered, depending on their age-appropriate needs. All the drip lines in their watering systems have terracotta filters to prevent calcium buildup from blocking the tubes.

Supply chain issues have been a problem since California shut down in March 2020. The struggle to get chemicals and fertilizers forced the nursery to become more aware of costs, and to find ways to reduce and save. One change was switching from lumber to bamboo for plant supports.

The price of plants at nurseries may have gone up, but it hasn't tricked down to the wholesalers yet, darn it! On the other hand, the last couple of years have been very good to them because everybody has been staying home and buying plants. La Verne is actually in hiring mode, trying to get enough people to do all the work.

We left the greenhouse, walked along a row of trees used for scion stock (avocados, cherimoya, dragonfruit), and entered one of the screenhouses where we saw more mature plants, including a huge section containing our own

Edgar Valdivia's dragonfruit. They were growing both Edgar's Red and Edgar's White dragonfruit.



The nursery recycles their "free" water. In 2003-2004, they installed a system of reservoir ponds and pumps to collect and reuse the water running out of the plant pots. Water drips onto the ground, which becomes saturated. After saturation, any water hitting the ground will run down drainage channels and into the first of three ponds. Over 90% of the property now recaptures draining water and pushes it through their recycle system. Dan says they gather about 30% of the water runoff. Yes, wild birds, such as herons, do visit their ponds. But they have no fish. Water runs through the system quickly and they don't have a mosquito problem.



They originally considered UV filtration to purify the water, but opted for chlorine dioxide mixed onsite. Chlorine dioxide is a disinfectant that kills bacteria, viruses, and fungi. It is a powerful chemical and provides the best return for the money, pound for pound. They tested chemical concentrations on bananas (very delicate plants) to find the best levels to use. The first set of bananas got full concentration Cl<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> sprayed directly onto the leaves. Other bananas were tested at half-strength, one-third strength, and one-quarter. A week later there was no leaf burn at all on any of the banana leaves. Right now, they use it at one-third strength.

We saw the staging area where selected plants were perfectly lined to be loaded onto trucks for delivery. And we heard all sorts of great growing tips:

- Outdoor plants can "sunburn". They use watered down paint on exposed trunks and branches, particularly on younger trees. Older trees are more hardened and don't need it as much.
- At certain temperatures, trees will intentionally drop their own fruit - self thinning.
- Small pots don't get fertilized, otherwise the tender growth gets burnt.
- Mulch mulch mulch mulch! As Dan said, "I don't care how you water the tree - if you don't have any way to keep the moisture in, forget it!" Any fruit tree should have mulch around it the more the better. Even "recycled" mulch is better than no mulch. (Although you need to be careful, because it sometimes has bad stuff in it: paint, pallet wood, nails, glass, whatever was thrown in at that location.)
- Flood irrigation can spread disease because the water goes from tree to tree. Mulch is better.
- The best way to get fruit from a dragon fruit is to abuse it. Definitely let it dry out, do not coddle it.
- Use a cheap 99 Cents makeup brush for hand-pollination transfer between flowers.
- Pinch-prune the tips of deciduous tree branches to help encourage branching growth.
- When transplanting, water trees thoroughly once to wet the root ball. Then water it thoroughly a second time to wash out salt. Saltburn will kill a tree.
- Saltburn symptoms include leaf tip burn and brown edges, while the rest of the leaf is okay.
- 80% of avocado tree roots are at the top few inches of soil. Leave all their fallen leaves on the ground because it will do the job for mulching. Do not break the leaves. If you can't use leaves, use any (other) kind of mulch to protect and moisturize the roots.
- Pale leaves on an avocado means you're not watering enough. Tip burn means you're watering too much.
- Pomegranates root REALLY easily. They put cuttings in pure perlite, nothing else. Even large cuttings can grow - we saw cuttings as large as 1 inch diameter.
- Dan's "ultimate" fruit is the mangosteen.

At the end of the tour, we returned to the front of the greenhouse, where members eagerly found their pre-ordered trees waiting for them. There was so much to learn, and Dan made everything so interesting. We thank him and his hard-working staff for a wonderful morning and look forward to seeing their plants at local stores.

**June 25 - our chapter's MEGA plant sale!**

If you didn't go, you really missed something amazing! I

guess everyone's been so busy growing things these past two years when we couldn't get together, that their gardens must have been bursting!

Our annual plant sale was a humongous success! So many incredible donations! In particular, we had the fabulously rich variety of rare plants and seeds from Charles Portney's private collection, and Steve List/Sylmar High School's generous donation of fruit trees, drought tolerant and bedding plants. Other amazing donations included Mark Steele's multitude of rare fruit trees, and Richard Renshaw's absolutely gargantuan dragonfruits, which required two people to carry them indoors.

Special thanks also go out to Art Fitzsimmons for volunteering his truck to transport all of Steve's plants, and to both Jerry Schwartz and to Eve Guth and Ed Livingston for holding the plant donations until the Garden Center opened - AND THEN transporting them early that Saturday morning!



I wish I could mention and thank each and every person who donated to the event because the final plant tally was mind-boggling in quantity and diversity. Please know your generosity was extremely well appreciated and your offerings were most welcome!

At the event itself, each plant was described in great detail and purely from memory by Charles Portney. Without going into the individual varieties (there were SOOO many!) we had:

Agaves, aloes, avocados, bananas, basils, a black pine tree, blackberries, bromeliads, calla lilies, Cape gooseberries, cardoons, centaurea (false Dusty



Millers), grafted cherimoyas, cherry trees, Cherry of the Rio Grande, cycads, dragon fruit, elderberries, epazote, fig trees, a floss silk tree, various geraniums (scented and unscented), Gerbera daisies, grapes, heart leaf hoyo, heuchera, hoa mai yellow flower vine, ice cream bean trees, indoor palms, (dried out) lemon verbena for tea, loquats, miniature succulents, monstera deliciosa, mother-in-law's tongue, naranjilla, nectarine trees, papaya seedlings, paprika, paprika seeds, peach trees, pepinos, philodendron, pitanga, plum trees, two ENORMOUS rose apple trees, Roselle hibiscus seedlings, roses, sages (various), sansevieria, split leaf philodendron, staghorn ferns, sugar cane, Surinam cherry, tamarillo, and a ti tree. (No partridges in pear trees, though.)



The biggest items were literally the biggest ones: two ginormous rose apple trees which nearly touched the ceiling, and two boxed Hass avocados (still at Sylmar High, to be picked up later). These were auctioned off to the highest bidders.

And then there was the potluck table - a wonderful assortment of delicious foods, including rice and noodle dishes, sandwich roll-ups, vegan chile, various snacks, and scrumptiously delicious fresh fruit, including a bowl of jaboticaba fruit. The pièce de résistance were pints of homemade sorbets made by Charles Portney. The flavors included Surinam cherry, plum, blackberry, blueberry, sapote, roasted banana and yogurt, tangerine, and elderberry. They were scrumptious!

The nice part was that we got to invite friends and family members this time. Many, many thanks to everyone who brought and bought and ate and drank and had a terrific time.

