



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2025 Volume XXX Issue 2

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

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Field Trip

Topic: Tour / Propagation Demo / Fourth Annual Tony Stewart Memorial Tree Raffle

Date: Saturday, March 22 time: 12:30pm

PLEASE NOTE THE SPECIAL START TIME

Location: Sylmar High School
13050 Borden Ave.

This event is FOR CRFG-LA MEMBERS ONLY—NO GUESTS, NO FRIENDS, NO RELATIVES, NO CHILDREN, NO PETS. Stephan Strong, who is taking the reins after Steve List's "retirement" as head of the Sylmar High School Agriculture Department, has invited us to participate in a potluck lunch and a tour of the remarkable "farm" the Sylmar students have developed through the years. Stephen and Steve are both dedicated benefactors, supporting the well-being of people in the community and elsewhere. Their gardens and growing areas are a dynamic, multi-zoned field of dreams, with areas for fruit trees, hot houses, chickens, desert plants, and much more! We will have a special demonstration of propagation, enjoy a tour of the facility, and feast on the potluck meal we all create! At the end will be the raffle of some of the school's incredible fruit trees. Funds raised by the raffle will go to support Sylmar's agriculture education. Please bring a dish to share that will feed at least 6 people.

Field Trip

Topic: Private garden of Lewis Perkins

Date: Saturday, April 26, 10 am

Location: Santa Monica (address to be provided before event)

Have you ever wondered whether coffee plants could thrive in our area? Lewis Perkins of the Los Angeles and the West LA CRFG chapters has been successfully growing Kona coffee as well as two other varieties for years. (He's even made cups of Joe from them!) Lewis is also growing wonderful macadamias along with 7 varieties of avocado, Surinam cherries, lucuma, cherimoya, sapote, pecan, feijoa, Pakistan and white mulberries, longan, Hawaiian and Malaysian guava, strawberry guava, jaboticaba, loquat, Mexican lime, navel & Valencia oranges, kumquat, peppers, artichoke, society garlic, Gabriel trumpet, monstera, many epiphyllum, canna lilies, roses, tree dahlias, honeysuckle, and staghorn fern. (Whew!) He also has quite a collection of herbs: oregano, salvia, purple sage, horseradish, and curry. Are you hungry yet? (Sorry, no potluck lunch at the event.)

Save the date!

CALENDAR FOR L.A. CHAPTER 2025

May 17	All You Need To Know about Growing Dragon fruit (Panel of Experts)
June 28	HUMONGOUS Annual Plant Sale
July 26	Organic Fruit Tree Growing & Soil Enrichment by Richard Richie
August 23	TBD
September 27	Biocontrol & Beneficial Insects by Ron Whitehurst
October 25	Patio Tree & Small Space Gardening for the Kitchen (heirloompotager.com)
November 22	TBD
December 20	Holiday Party at Sepulveda Gardens

LOOKING BACK

By Deborah Oisboid

January 25 - Annual Scion Exchange

This year's annual scion exchange was a little different. For one thing, we had sign-in tables and wristbands. For another thing, we did not have a potluck lunch. We also opened the event up to the general public as well as to other CRFG chapters. In spite of this, there were plenty of scions to go around for everyone!

It was a day of cooperation and sharing. Attendees first went to the Scion Drop-Off table, where their wonderful and generous donations of home grown cuttings were reviewed to ensure no patented plants or citrus cuttings were being offered. (Citrus has the potential to carry HuangLongBing or Citrus Greening Disease and is not permitted to be shared without certification by the California Department of Agriculture.)

Our scion donors were given a green wristband, which moved them to the front of the line for entry.

The next table checked everyone in as either a member or as a non-member.



Non-members paid a \$10 fee to enter, which they could apply to a new membership to our chapter. And yes, we did gain new members that day!

Our Program Chair and organizer extraordinaire, Lydia Shabestari, had prepared all sorts of lists and schedules, and broke down the necessary work into bite-sized chunks. CRFG-LA Board members took care of the rest behind the scenes and everything went extremely smoothly, just as it had been planned! Although some people had to wait their turn to enter, they still managed to collect almost everything being offered. This was because we initiated a limit of one or two scions from each variety. And that (plus all the organization) made all the difference.



And what an amazing selection! We had plenty of apples, dragon fruit, figs, grapes, jujubes, mulberries, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, and all types of stone fruit. And there were the exotics: che, elderberry, feijoa, quince, ume, and more. There were moringa cuttings and seeds, Barbados Gooseberry and jelly vine cuttings, as well as epiphyllum cactus which could be rooted and planted.

After all groups had entered on their respective turns and made their selections, the room filled with general conversations about which fruits were the best tasting, easiest to graft, most disease-free, would do well in certain weather, and so on.

At the end of the event, some of the remaining scions were put aside for our February hands-on grafting demonstration, and the rest were donated to the West-LA CRFG chapters for their own scion exchange.

We hope everyone found what they were looking for that day!

February 22 - Hands-On Grafting Demo & Workshop

Normally we would have a brief grafting demo before our scion exchange and that's it for the year. This year we had a very intensive and hands-on event in which people got to graft their own trees to take home. Bill Brandt was our primary presenter. With over three decades of experience, he has made over 1000 grafts just in his own yard, as well as having taught at schools and community events across the county. He presented three different methods of grafting: Vee (or Cleft) graft, Whip graft, and Whip-and-Tongue graft.

The key to a successful graft is to ensure the cambium layers line up between the rootstock and the scion. Cambium is the green layer between the bark and heartwood, and is the only collection of cells which actually grow. So if the cambium from the two parts come into contact they can merge and cause the scion to permanently become part of the rootstock.

Bill emphasized paying close attention to everything. Make sure you are aware which way is "up" on the scion. Make sure you are aware which side of the knife is sharp - and hold the other side, please!!

He also showed what the different grafts look like using oversized models. He showed how you prepare



the rootstock, and THEN prepare the scion, attach the two together, wrap with parafilm (wax sheet) to prevent the scion from drying out, and hold the two together with stretchy tape such as electrical tape. Bill told us not to cover the buds because they might not be able to grow

through the electrical tape, although they can push through the waxy parafilm very easily.

Finally: LABEL LABEL LABEL LABEL!!! It is guaranteed you will NOT remember what variety you grafted one year later. Also, by labeling your graft, you'll be less likely to prune off the new growth.

At long last, the attendees got their hands-on time. There were dozens of stations set up, each with a grafting knife, parafilm, stretchy tape, a protective disk (to protect your hand from getting cut by the knife), a hammering rod, and a carpet pad.

Everyone got to choose from three different rootstocks: apple, nectarine (stone fruit), and fig. Then they could choose as many scions as they liked. There were



almost a dozen each of stone fruit and apple varieties, and several fig varieties as well.

Gene DiNovo introduced one more method: a profile cutting tool which creates a U-shaped notch (or wedge), which allows the grafter to easily mate two sticks of equal diameter. All you have to do is line the two up and they connect like magic!



Bill and several other CRFG volunteers walked around to help people, advising how to match the diameters of scion and rootstock, commenting on or correcting the angle and flatness of the grafting cuts, and how to stretch parafilm without tearing it. (Oops, oh well, try again with another piece! Yeah, I've done that too many times myself.)

Everyone was having such a great time that the potluck table was open for about 20 minutes before everyone left their trees and grafting kits to feed themselves. The food was delicious: cauliflower-rice chicken salad, an exotic and high oxide leafy green and tropical fruit salad, a refreshing pasta salad, fresh fruit, and all kinds of desserts, including another delicious bundt cake special.

And the best part? Everyone got to take home a brand new tree! Thanks to everyone who made this a special and very successful event!



Tips on Gardening after a Wildfire

The Lincoln Avenue Nursery in Pasadena (a REALLY neat place, if you've never been there before) included some extremely helpful information about gardening after a wildfire. The following has been excerpted from their newsletter link:

<https://mailchi.mp/lincolnavenuenursery/were-back-10350394?e=73b4f91757>

Understanding Fire's Impact on Soil

When wildfires burn through residential and urban areas, they can leave behind more than just ash from natural materials. The smoke, ash, and debris may contain various contaminants [which can] settle into your soil and potentially affect plant growth and food safety.

Is It Safe to Use Existing Soil?

The safety of your soil depends on several factors:

- Proximity to burned structures
- Direction of smoke and ash drift
- Intensity and duration of the fire
- Previous soil conditions

Before planting edibles, consider having your soil tested by a certified laboratory. The University of California Cooperative Extension offices can provide guidance on soil testing services. This is particularly important if:

- Your property was directly affected by fire
- You received heavy ash deposits
- You're within half a mile of burned structures
- You notice unusual soil discoloration or debris

Safe Handling Practices

To minimize any potential risks:

- Wear gloves when working in the soil
- Thoroughly wash all produce before eating
- Peel root vegetables if concerned about contamination
- Remove outer leaves of leafy vegetables
- Keep children from playing in potentially contaminated soil
- Maintain dust control through mulching

What About Existing Fruit Trees?

Established fruit trees are generally safe to maintain and harvest from after fires. However, take these precautions:

- Wash fruit thoroughly before eating
- Remove any visible ash deposits from fruit
- Consider having fruit tested if concerned about contamination
- Prune any fire-damaged branches properly

Long-term Soil Management

To improve soil health over time:

- Add organic matter regularly

- Maintain proper soil pH
- Use cover crops to help remediate soil
- Consider bioremediation plants if soil shows contamination
- Monitor soil quality through regular testing

When to Wait

In some cases, it's better to delay planting edibles:

- If soil tests show significant contamination
- When visible debris remains in the soil
- If the area received fire retardant application
- When ash deposits are still substantial

Resources for Gardeners

For additional support and information:

- Contact your local Master Gardener program
- Consult the UC Cooperative Extension office
- Work with certified soil testing laboratories
- Join community gardening groups for shared experiences

Remember that each situation is unique, and what works for one garden may not be appropriate for another. When in doubt, consult with local agricultural extension services or professional soil scientists for site-specific recommendations.

CRFG-LA'S CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED: Plant Pots

We are beginning to plan for our HUMONGOUS June plant sale and we can REALLY use your empty pots and containers. If anyone has some to spare, please contact Deborah Oisboid at editor@crfg-la.org so we can arrange pickup.

WANTED: Plant Propagators!

Want to show off your skill at growing plants? Join the CRFG-LA Plant Propagation Committee! We will have a few meetings in the upcoming month to start things off, to discuss propagation techniques, collect cuttings and seeds, and start them at our own homes. With Charles Portney's outstanding contributions, which we appreciate so much every year, and your own exciting additions, this year's annual plant sale is going to be something REALLY spectacular! Please contact Lydia Shabestari at program@crfg-la.org to sign up.