

YEAR OF THE PITAHAYA LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

May 2010 Volume XIV Issue 3

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

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May Meeting

Date: Saturday, May 22, 2010

Time: 10:00 A.M.

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

Program: Mulberries: varieties, planting, care, and grafting

Dan Bayer will speak to us on his favorite topic, mulberries. Although he is knowledgeable about many different fruit trees, the mulberry is his specialty, a fruit that he has "adored all (his) life." A recognized expert on the mulberry, **Dan** has spoken widely on the topic, including at our CRFG Festival of Fruit. He grows mulberry cultivars from all over the world. He notes that the mulberry is a fruit that is easy to grow and has unusually high nutritional value.

Dan speaks with experience and humor. You won't want to miss this exceptional talk!

****Board Meeting will follow****

June Meeting

Date: Saturday, June 26, 2010

Time: 10 am

Place: We were rained out in February, but this time we plan on making it to **Jesus Alvarez' garden: 1217 Mott St., San Fernando, CA 91340**

Program: **Jesus'** garden of more than one hundred trees, consists of avocado trees, citrus and many different stone fruits. Jesus, is doing all of this in a 40 by 40 ft size backyard. Sounds like a true and enthusiastic fruit lover, doesn't he?

****It would be best if you could car pool, as parking is limited (unless you are willing to walk about a block)**

Directions: Take the 405 Fwy north and exit at San Fernando Mission Blvd toward San Fernando. Turn right on San Fernando Mission Blvd. Turn left on Mott St. Arrive at **1217 Mott St.** House will be on the right.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!! If your last name begins with A-L please bring something for our May tasting table. Please bring whatever you have ripening in your gardens, to share and show off.

CALLING ALL WORKERS

We will be meeting at the **Valdivia's** home on **Saturday, June 12th at 10 am** to assign specific tasks and responsibilities at the Festival of Fruit. Please come *if* you are willing to roll up your sleeves and pitch in to make this a fabulous FOF. Members of other Chapters who would like to help are invited to attend this meeting.

FESTIVAL OF FRUIT WEBSITE:

[HTTP://WWW.FESTIVALOFFRUIT.ORG](http://www.festivaloffruit.org)

The 36th Annual Spring Plant Sale

HUNTINGTON LIBRARY & Botanical Gardens

1151 Oxford Road, San Marino - (626)
405-2100

Sunday, May 16 • 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Everyone wants their garden to be beautiful. Why not make it useful, too? Growing your own vegetables, fruits, and herbs can not only stretch the food budget but make gardening more gratifying—bringing the idea of “locally grown” produce right into your own backyard.

At the 36th Annual Spring Plant Sale, shoppers not only will find all the great offerings this sale is famous for, but dozens of new plants to inspire a bountiful “victory garden:” heirloom tomato seedlings, colorful chionodoxa beets, ‘Snow White’ and ‘Red Emperor’ carrots, white alpine strawberries, blueberry plants, purple string beans, herbs for delicious teas, even hops for the home brewer. Knitters and weavers can grow their own silky “Egyptian” cotton along with dyeing herbs for tinting the spun yarn.

There will be plenty of ornamental plants, too, including many uncommon varieties of roses, camellias, orchids, cacti, succulents, bromeliads, palms, and more. A special highlight of this year’s sale is a selection of flowering shrubs that will attract butterflies and hummingbirds to your garden. Look for two beautiful varieties of **Asclepias**, the “Butterfly Bush:” **A. tuberosa** sports red and yellow flowers while **A. curassavica** ‘Silky Gold’ has bright golden yellow blooms. Other favorites include **Pentas lanceolata**, with its masses of red, pink, white, or lavender flowers; the brightly colored and nectar-rich red **Penstemon**; and **Russelia equisetiformis**, the “Fountain Plant.”

Look for all these, plus hundreds of other great finds, at this year’s sale. In order to present the widest variety possible, quantities of each are limited and popular items may sell out quickly. Arrive early for the best selection, and bring a wagon or cart to carry your purchases.

Bee Colony Collapse May Have Several Causes



When suspiciously large numbers of honeybee colonies started collapsing in late 2006, the search began to find the culprit behind the mysterious deaths. Now it seems a whole web of problems may be causing what’s known as [colony collapse disorder](#).

It’s becoming clear that there is no single parasite, virus or chemical to blame, argues Frances Ratnieks, a bee scientist at University of Sussex in Brighton.

Instead, honeybees are probably dying for all kinds of different reasons from loss of their foraging grounds to increased exposure to global pathogens, Ratnieks wrote in a review of the issue in the journal **Science**.

“We may conclude that colonies are dying for different reasons in different parts of the world and I would say that if that is the case, I would not be the least bit surprised,” Ratnieks told *Wired.com*.

A variety of pests, viruses and parasites could all be working together to stress the bees. And in some ways, that’s worse than trying to take on a single culprit: The problems with beekeeping are systemic, Ratnieks said, and can’t be solved with a new pesticide or technique. In an increasingly globalized world, bee pathogens travel quickly between bee populations. Over the last decades, the **Varroa destructor** mite has spread from Asian honeybees to the rest of the continents. The gut parasite **Nosema ceranae** has taken the same path. Both species are believed to make existing bee diseases worse. **V. destructor** took about four decades, reaching North America about a decade ago. **N. ceranae** circled the globe in a quarter of that time.

“It is certainly a case in the modern world, pathogens can be transmitted from one corner of the world to another quickly,” Ratnieks said.

He compared the bee pathogen problems to those humans are encountering with swine flu and other emerging diseases, which can spread quickly thanks to modern transportation.

“Even though the U.S. is a big country, what shows up in one part of the country shows up in the other parts of the country in no-time flat,” he said.

That’s in part because of the economics of beekeeping. The \$2 billion almond crop in California requires 1,000,000 honeybee hives for cross-pollination. That’s more than 40 percent of all the beehives in the country.

So, come almond-tree flowering season, which begins in February, apiarists load up their hives on flatbeds and truck them to San Joaquin Valley. While this pilgrimage may be necessary to keep churning out cheap almonds, it also creates a melting pot of pathogens. And the moving and trucking itself could negatively impact the bees, too. Ratnieks also suspects that honeybees are more susceptible to disease because their natural forage — weeds and gardens, etc. — has been wiped out by single-crop farming in the major farming valleys of the country. Add it all up and the honeybees are fighting the battle to survive on several, interconnected fronts.

“It’s harder to keep a hive alive now. It used to be with bees in America, if the hive was alive and thriving, chances are the hive would be alive and thriving the next year,” said Ratnieks. “Now, they are feeding their hives with supplements and feeding them with chemicals, they are having to pedal quite hard just to keep their hives alive.”

Last year, there were enough honeybees to keep the almond trees pollinated, but last summer’s weather conditions were bad in North Dakota and the neighboring states where the California hives often spend the season.

With the big almond flowering coming up, and the bees in bad condition, the beginning of next month could harbor a nasty surprise for nut farmers.

“In early February, that’s when the rubber hits the road or the shit hits the fan,” Ratnieks concluded.

Citation: “Clarity on Honey Bee Collapse?” by Francis L. W. Ratnieks and Norman L. Carreck in Science, 8 JANUARY 2010 VOL 327.

Once Again a Scion Exchange in May

As always January/February tends to be our most favorite meeting time—it is the GREAT SCION EXCHANGE. But folks, what about that delicious citrus fruit you are growing and those lushes avocados? The winter months are just not conducive to grafting for these popular fruits. Budding and grafting of citrus and avocados are best done in the spring or fall when the bark is easily separated from the wood. It should be timed to be early enough so that warm weather will help ensure a good bud union, yet late enough so that the bud will not begin to grow and callus will not grow over the bud itself. . Avocados are best grafted in the spring when the bark is easily separated from the trunk. And so **we are asking that you bring in your tastiest cuttings from your citrus and avocados to our May meeting.**

The best citrus budwood is located just below the most recent flush of new growth; the best avocado budwood is located near the terminal end of shoots that have fully matured, leathery leaves. So once you have chosen your cuttings please keep them moist and bring them in labeled and ready to exchange with your fellow members. Oh and by the way, don’t forget to continue saving those seeds and bringing them to exchange.

Loquat Jelly

5 lbs. ripe loquats
1 cup water
1/2 cup lemon juice

1 package pectin
5-1/2 cups sugar



Gather loquats when full size, but still hard and only partially turned in color. Wash, remove seeds, and blossom ends. Barely cover with cold water. Simmer covered for 15 minutes Cook slowly until pulp is very soft. Strain juice through jelly bag. Measure 3-1/2 cups loquat juice and lemon juice in a large kettle. If more juice is needed, fill last cup or fraction of a cup with water. Add pectin. Stir well. Place over high heat and bring to boil, stirring constantly. Add the sugar and mix well. Continue stirring and bring to full rolling boil. Boil exactly 2 minutes. Remove from fire and let boiling subside. Skim carefully. Pour into hot sterilized jelly glasses, leaving 1/2-inch space at top to cover at once with melted paraffin. (Or pour into hot sterilized jars and seal with sterilized lids.)

JOE SABOL TAKES THE REINS

After six years as CRFG President,



Bill Grimes has stepped down from this position and **Joe Sabol** has been named to replace him. We thank **Bill** for his outstanding years of service and dedication to our organization. **Bill** made many contributions to CRFG. Using his expertise in computers our website was improved and updated. Thanks to **Bill**, we also can offer our *Fruit Gardener* magazine electronically- making it easier for our readers worldwide. We wish him well and know he will always be an active member and supporter of our organization, **CRFG**.



Joe Sabol

Joe is an active member of the Central Coast Chapter and previously was Vice President of **CRFG**. He created the very successful apple grafting program which has provided grafting instruction to high school students. **Joe's** dynamic and enthusiastic personality will bring much to our group and under his leadership **CRFG** will continue to prosper.

Also, congratulations to our very own LA Chapter member **Margaret Frame**. She has been named Vice President and is a fine representative of our **CRFG** needs. All the best in your new role.

If you're an organic farmer, you till it like it is!

THANK YOU, JORGE!!!

For years **Jorge Pelaez** has generously and without fanfare served the needs of both the Los Angeles Chapter and **CRFG, Inc.** His continuing, outstanding contributions started long before his service as our chapter chair, and have proceeded unchanged afterwards.

No one needs to ask **Jorge** for his help. **Jorge** has always taken the initiative to pursue opportunities to promote **CRFG** and has spent many long hours through the years manning one booth or another at such places as Earth Day celebrations, the Pierce College Farm Walk, and many others, has been part of a television presentation, etc. Often he is the first **CRFG** person at the event, the last to leave, and sometimes the sole **CRFG** representative. **Jorge** has had a major role in all local **CRFG** enterprises.

It is not his way to seek attention or credit, so we need here to make a point of saying **THANK YOU, JORGE!!!**

Pierce College Farmwalk



Don Webber, Jorge Pelaez, Judy Webber, Pat Valdivia

The annual Pierce College Farmwalk turned out to be a wonderful day. Many curious visitors had their various garden questions answered by our very capable members. Besides the LA Chapter members listed in the picture above, **Edgar Valdivia, Bob & Kathy Vieth, Bill & Nina Brandt and Karen & David Payton** came out to support this event.