



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2024 Volume XXIX Issue 5

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

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Meeting – NOTE THE SPECIAL START TIME!

Date: Saturday, September 28, **12:00 pm**

Location: Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, 91436

Topic: Celebration of Service honoring
Steve List

Steve List will be our guest of honor as we celebrate his long career of service and education. Steve has been teaching at Sylmar High School since 2007 and is currently the head of their Agricultural Department. Although he still loves teaching and gardening, he is preparing to retire, or at least step back and find some free time for himself. We want to celebrate his many years of teaching and inspiring his many students and CRFG chapter members to go the extra mile in their gardens.

We might have a mini-plant sale at the event. More details to be provided.

To all members: please bring something to share for a potluck lunch table.

Meeting

Date: Saturday, October 26, 10:00 am

Location: Sepulveda Garden Center

Topic: Master Gardener information by
Kathleen Doran-Sapelli

Kathleen is a certified Master Gardener and keeps close watch on critical agricultural issues such as the deadly citrus tree disease Huanglongbing (HLB) which is spread by the Asian Citrus Psyllid. She also keeps an eye on the latest fruit fly and other quarantines in the Los Angeles and Southern California locales. Join us for an educational experience!

All members are requested to please bring something to share for our snack table afterwards.

Save the date!

CALENDAR FOR L.A. CHAPTER 2024

November 23 Hands-on grafting workshop

December 7 Holiday Party

LOOKING BACK

By Deborah Oisboid

July 27 - Mark Steele's Bananas and Figs

Do you like bananas? Mark Steele does. For a long time, bananas were the only plants he added to his garden. In a neighborhood of 5000 - 6000 square foot parcels, there's not a lot of planting room available, but he has managed to grow a whole bunch of them in his garden!

Mark studies ichthyology and has a PhD in biology. His wife studied ichthyology, environmental science, and resource management. They have 10 fish tanks in the garage, as we learned from his VERY enthusiastic young son. (Soon to be 9.)

Mark and his family have lived at this house for 15 years. When they moved in, he immediately knew he



wanted to put in fruit trees. They all agreed on an edible garden. They took out many plants but kept a few, such as the fig tree in front. At first, almost everything he put in was a banana, but he has been adding other fruits since then.

When we visited, we were amazed at the rich variety of fruit trees, including citrus, loquats,

Eugenia, mulberries, avocados, stone fruit, and Mark's other favorite - FIGS!

We learned a LOT about bananas that day.

Although there are hundreds of banana varieties, almost all modern cultivated varieties of edible bananas and plantains are hybrids of two wild, seeded banana species, *Musa Acuminata* and *Musa Bulbisiana*.

Unlike cultivated bananas, wild bananas have seeds about the size of a BB. Like the bananas sold in grocery stores, the ones he grows are seedless and produce fruit parthenogenically. (The ovary develops into fruits asexually, without pollination.) Mark's banana trees are (mostly) triploid. Mark told us bananas "...are kind of weird, so they need three parents."

A quick online search reveals that bananas are categorized using A's and B's, which represent the relative contribution from the two original cultivars, *M.Acuminata* and *M.Bulbisiana*. The letter scheme indicates their "ploid" level. (Diploid = 2 chromosomes, Triploid = 3 chromosomes, Tetraploid = 4 chromosomes.)

For example, AB is diploid, AAB is triploid, and ABBB is tetraploid. The majority of our familiar seedless cultivated varieties are triploid hybrids (AAA, AAB, ABB), and are usually sterile because they can't pair into even-numbered chromosome groupings. Diploids (AA, AB, BB) and tetraploids (AAAA, AAAB, AABB, ABBB) are much rarer, and usually result from experimental hybridization.

Cultivars derived from *M.Acuminata* are sweeter and more likely to be used as dessert bananas, while *M.Balbisiana* and hybrids of the two are usually starchier plantains or cooking bananas.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_banana_cultivars

www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/bananavarieties.htm

Two of Mark's favorite bananas, Dwarf Namwa and Dwarf Brazilian, are genetically AAB. (For comparison, Cavendish is AAA.) Other varieties he is growing include Raja Puri, SH3640, and Ice Cream bananas.

SH3640 is one of his taller plants. His son says that it sounds like a fish name, or like a code name. Mark told us it was part of a banana breeding program, to create new productive varieties that are resistant to diseases that Cavendish is susceptible to. The fruit is a lot like North Brazilian, but he doesn't like the flavor quite as well as Brazilian. It's also a slower fruit producer. But it is a beautiful tree. The tallest in his clump is approximately as tall as the roof of his house.

For some reason, SH3640 fruited during the past winter, which is not always good. In the tropics you can go from planting to harvesting in a few months. In California, bananas grow slower as it cools off, and harsh winter cold can kill a tree. There are super-dwarf varieties, and those bananas are even smaller. Raja Puri is the smallest fruiting banana he is growing. One of his favorites is Dwarf Brazilian. It grows really well in his climate, which is 3 miles from the beach. Mark's zone gets 0 (zero) frost hours per year. He thinks he's seen frost in his yard 3 times in the 15 years he's lived here.

Some banana varieties, such as Raja Puri, are more tolerant of cool temperatures. But no banana can tolerate a lot of frost, or the leaves will die. If it's cold enough the plant might die all of the way down to the ground.

It's really hard to grow fruit when the tree has no leaves. Leaves can be considered like solar panels, which collect and send energy to the fruit. If there are only a few healthy leaves, there's not enough energy to fill out the bunch.



Our Santa Ana winds are also bad for bananas. When he gets 40 to 45 mph winds and it's 100°F outside, the fruit do not do well. Medium height bananas can get blown over by the wind, so he grows dwarf and relatively short varieties. He has lost some excellent medium-height bananas to the wind because he couldn't keep them propped up.

Fruiting bananas grow a long stem from the top of the tree, which bends down towards the ground. At the very tip is a colorful cluster of false leaves, called bracts, which protect the flowers. The bracts fall off one at a time to reveal a line of flowers around the stem, called a "hand". Female flowers on top produce bananas, and male flowers show up later as the bract "petals" continue to fall off. When Mark recognizes the male flowers growing, he will often cut off the bottom of the cluster, leaving just the female (fruiting) flowers on top. This reduces weight and prevents the stem from pulling the tree over.

Mark will typically chop a banana trunk down to about chest height after it has finished fruiting. That way there's less competition for light and growth.

Although bananas can ripen on the tree, commercial growers pick them when they're fully swollen but underripe. It's easier to get a crew into the field and pick everything at once instead of picking sequentially.

In your own backyard it's better to pick bananas as they ripen to spread out the crop. You can have bananas every day!

Bananas don't necessarily ripen in sequence. He pointed to one cluster which was partly in shade and told us the top (shaded) bananas will probably ripen after the ones that are in the sunlight.

The best thing you can do to make bananas happy is use plenty of compost and plenty of mulch. Fertilizer is not as important. His climate is so moist, and he's got heavy clay so he doesn't have to water a lot.

Clay soil can be good and bad. The good thing about clay is that it holds water, which is very helpful in summer. And it also holds on to nutrients better. But if you overwater, it's going to be a problem for the roots of many plants. By contrast, a well-draining Cactus mix will quickly dry out in summer, and you will have to water more often

You should be aware of the amount of water you're putting in. Dig a hole, fill it with water and time how long it takes the water to drain. Then fill it a second time and time it again. Now you know how long water lasts in your soil.

Someone asked what he thinks of putting a large pipe adjacent to a tree for deep irrigation. Mark thinks putting water deep in the soil isn't ideal; it doesn't allow the water to get to the wide-spread surface roots. He recommends hand watering because you can be precise about how much and where the water goes. It also depends what type of soil you have.



Mark puts down a couple of inches compost (all plant-based) first, and then adds several inches of wood chips on top of that. This keeps his soil moist, and his plants super-happy. He gives the bananas a little potassium because bananas like potassium. He uses a mix called Sul-Po-Mag (Sulfur, Potassium, Magnesium, available

from Green Thumb Nursery), although he thinks it may affect the sugar level in the fruit.

After much talk about bananas, and being regaled by his son about the garden, we toured the relatively small but densely planted front yard. Citrus and loquat trees lined one side of the driveway, and a stunning, spreading, low-pruned fig tree stood on the other side. The fig tree has been there since they moved in, its branches gnarled and covered with tags: somewhere between 60 - 100 grafts cover every inch!

Mark calls himself a fig nerd and he loves trying out new varieties. He has grafted so many different types that he doesn't get a lot of any particular flavor. But if he really likes a fig, he will graft on several more of that variety.

Most of the young fruit we saw were covered with mesh bags. These are to protect against the Black Fig Fruit Fly. BFF is not a regular fruit fly which will attack ripe fruit; they burrow into immature fruit. The rule of



thumb is, if the young fig is bigger than a pea, the fly will attack. The female lays eggs in the eye of the fig (the ostiole). It eats the fruit from the inside out. You can sometimes feel a soft spot if the fruit has been invaded.



Mark sliced open a fig which had become infested: several tiny worms crawled inside the undersized fruit with dark skin color. The adult looks like a common black ant but with wings. There are so many ways figs can go bad that Mark cuts all his figs open before he will eat them.

The mesh bags do not protect against mammals or birds. Larger birds can peck right through, and they're no challenge at all to squirrels. Rats will not only eat the figs, but they will eat the young green growing shoots

of the fig. Also, if the figs hang too long, regular fruit flies can attack. It's a constant battle against pests!

He doesn't think there's an easy solution to rodents, especially since people now trap their local pests and release them somewhere else, spreading the wealth - I mean spreading the misery. He has rats and opossums to contend with in his neighborhood as well as squirrels and rats. Aluminum ducting and siding can be wrapped around a tree trunk for some protection. (Some climbers can't grab the slick metal sides.)

When he has an ant problem, he will wrap plastic tape around the base of the trunk and smear Tanglefoot on it. That keeps the ants from climbing up and farming aphids.

He's all in favor of spiders, however. A lot of his trees have webs on them, and he says they capture the insects for him.

Mark has another fig near the sidewalk, which is actually two trees. They are about 10-ish years old and contain scores of grafts as well.

He prunes his trees any time they get taller than he wants, at any time of the year. When he doesn't prune, he gets a lot of vegetative growth, making the trees top-heavy. Mark says the sidewalk fig tree would be 10 feet tall if he didn't keep topping it. Because the smaller fig is shaded by a nearby eucalyptus tree, it doesn't get a lot of fruit set.

Mark says he cuts the figs back so often it's not always easy to match diameters for grafting, so he makes lots of bark grafts. He prefers whip-and-tongue grafts when possible. It's strong and secure.



He usually grafts when there are no leaves because it's easier to see what he's doing. But he says you can graft any time of the year.

He tries to use two marks to identify each graft. First, he will paint or write the variety directly on the stem, and then hang a tag from the twig. Industrial Sharpie™ pens last longer than regular Sharpies (whose ink last less than a year).

We learned that there are three types of (female) figs: Common, Smyrna, and San Pedro. Common figs generally do not require pollination. Smyrna only produce female flowers and require pollination, but do not produce a preliminary Breba crop. San Pedro figs produce a Breba crop which does not require pollination, followed by the main crop, which DOES require pollination.

Most of Mark's figs are Common and might or might not need pollination. He says figs taste quite different when they get pollinated. The flavors are much more intense, for one thing.

He hand-pollinates some of his figs. He pulls pollen out of a capri fig (the male fig), then walks through his garden, as he described it, "looking like a junkie with an apron and a syringe," injecting pollen into the female fruit. He is imitating the fruit wasp which normally does this job. The syringe allows him to pollinate straight through a mesh bag and into the heart of the fruit.

The garden isn't all figs and bananas. Mark also has two shade grown coffee plants. (They look a lot like citrus.) He thinks he bought them at Wellspring Gardens online. He has several mulberry trees, including a variety called "The Best," which he says is prolific but doesn't taste as good as other mulberries.



In the front yard we also saw several blueberry bushes, creeping jasmine, rosemary, pineapple guava, mango, loquat, lemon, tangerines, oranges and other grafted citrus. There was also a Cherry of the Rio Grande, a Brazilian cherry (aka "grumichama") which has never produced fruit, several more citrus, a couple of avocados, and some cherimoya seedlings. Up against the house are sage, orchids, fig, plumeria, zucchini, gardenia, potted strawberries, cucumbers and tomatoes, and another Cherry of the Rio Grande.

We eventually left the front yard and walked past a passion fruit vine taking over the fence leading into the backyard. Before we entered the back, we were warned that there is a beehive in their backyard.

The beehive is a new addition. There was a swarm of bees which had recently settled in one of their trees. They hired someone to capture the swarm and put it in a hive. Then, Mark's wife and son wanted to keep them! So now they're beekeepers with one brand new hive.

Their bees are very friendly. Mark regularly works within inches of the hive, and they remain calm. And we all walked past the new wooden box without any issues that morning.



Mark has a barrel-pond with a small waterfall which is covered with grating to protect the fish from the local raccoon(s). He said he hasn't seen bees landing in his pond for water so maybe they're going somewhere else? Or maybe the water is too busy for them to drink.

(CRFG beekeeper Lydia Shabestari explained bees have two jobs: collecting pollen and collecting water. She offered this advice: If you see bees buzzing around, they're not interested in you. Don't panic if they bump into you, they just want you to move. Slowly turn around and walk in the other direction. You should be ok.)

So far Mark's beehive has not required any work. But he's only had it for a few months, so he might have a different story next year.

In the backyard he is growing plumeria, lemon guava, lots more bananas (dwarf Namwa and dwarf Brazilian), sage, canna flowers, more figs, strawberries, succulents, mango and avocado. He used to have cherimoya, but it succumbed to the drought. He has potted Prime Ark Freedom blackberries vining over an arch. He says the berries are huge, but the flavor is "just okay." They're not as tasty as he expected.

Mark also has many stone fruit trees, mostly apricots and pluots (Emerald Drop, Splash, ASA, Shiro, Inca, and



many others). His stone fruit have multiple grafts but not as many as his figs. He thinks Inca may be his favorite pluot. Even in a good year the pluot is not a heavy bearer, and he thinks they may need more heat. His Primark blackberries, on the other hand, grow enthusiastically and he has to keep cutting it way back because otherwise it would take over the backyard.

When we finally ran out of questions, we went back to the front yard for an incredible feast. So many delicious dishes from all around the world! Homemade cheese bread, homemade jam, quinoa salad, chicken with rice, tuna sandwiches, a cheese platter, fresh fruit, roll ups, cookies, and many desserts including an amazing Saffron Pistachio Miso Coconut Mochi Cake!

We thank Mark for sharing his incredibly prolific garden with us and inspiring us to greater heights in growing bananas! (And figs.)



August 24 - Jose Ramirez Garden of Art

It's a jungle out there!

Keep that in mind when you visit Jose Ramirez' amazing garden. Jose is an artist, an LAUSD teacher, and the king of the jungle (in his own backyard). He and his wife Sara live on a steep street in Los Angeles, not far from USC. Jose has been creating art for 30 years, and painting for 20. He holds events to show off his art

gallery and the events often include garden tours.

Jose's father was heavily into gardening, but Jose did not become interested until later in life. Now he is



particularly fond of fruit trees, and when he started planting them in his yard, his wife thought they were too close together. Now the trees create a lovely shade canopy to protect the "understory" plants.

Jose didn't start by planning his landscaping, but he frequently studies online websites, videos, books and blogs to educate himself in the best ways to garden and what his different varieties of trees need to thrive. The trees are well identified with both Latin and common names on small clay tablets. (Very erosion resistant!) He has also started placing some of his more colorful ceramic sculptures around the garden for added interest.

His garden started in earnest about 15 years ago. He bought many fruit trees and enjoyed "just putting them around" at first, but many of them died. Eventually he started making plans and figuring out where he wanted to put his sculptures.



Jose house is on a 4000 square foot lot, but several years ago they purchased the adjacent lot and expanded the ever-changing garden upward and outward.

For a garden with so many plants, they don't use a lot of water. Rainwater is directed off of their roof into the center of the main garden, where it spreads out to the rest of the yard. They use removeable 3" pipes to route greywater from inside of their house to where they want it in the garden. At the time we visited, Jose said the lower garden didn't need any additional water at all this year.

When they do need more than the available house and rainwater, they use drip irrigation. Jose makes sure to check the lines multiple times per year to ensure no critters have been chewing through the pipes.

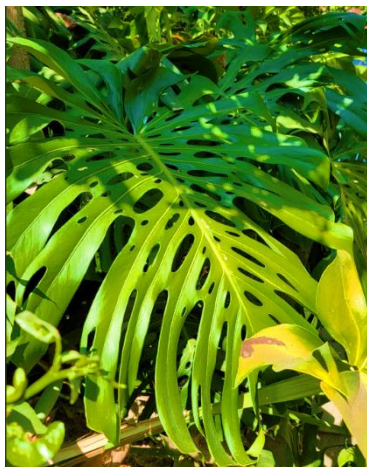
After a brief introduction in his garage/art room, where we could see his prolific and incredibly detailed and colorful paintings, we walked around the house and up some steps into the backyard. Standing under the canopy of trees, we could see a huge variety of almost every fruit you can imagine. Jose introduced them to us as we walked through them.

Keitt mango, tamarind, cinnamon, dragonfruit, banana, carambola (starfruit), persimmon, Guanabana, New Zealand spinach, a papaya that's very old which has stopped making fruit, Anna apple (very large and productive, but he has no Dorset golden for cross pollination), and a Gala apple somewhere else in the garden. There's a lime tree which has been there for many years, several guayabas (guava variety), Mandarin orange (possibly Yosemite Gold variety), Manila mango, Mexicola avocado, fig, Acerola (Barbados cherry), and several coffee bushes loaded with coffee cherries.

Under the cool leafy canopy and rolling down the hill in lush green waves is a large clump of *Monstera Deliciosa* which used to be his mother's indoor plant. She wanted to get rid of it, and Jose took it and kept it going. He had no idea it grew fruit! We saw several cones on one plant, which he tells us tastes a little like pineapple. But you have to let the fruit ripen all of the way before eating them.



His Goumi tree is a nitrogen fixture and grows a fruit with the consistency of a gummy bear. It has produced some fruit but not a lot. You need male and female for best production. (If anyone grows Goumi, Jose would be interested in talking with you!)



Jose loves variety and tries to find and plant as many different things as possible. One of his go-to sources is Mimosa Nursery. Four Winds Nursery (online) has a good selection of citrus. He also likes Exotica Rare Fruit Nursery near San Diego.

There are two structures in the main backyard. One is a small "art room" in the very back, with a kiln for his ceramics. The other is still under construction, with several walls built out of glass doors and windows, donated by a friend. They aren't planning on it being a greenhouse, although it looks that way. Under the building is a huge-trunked olive tree which comes up through the floor. The olive has been there since before they moved to the neighborhood. Seen from underneath, the new building looks like a treehouse.



Continuing our exploration of the main yard, we saw what he called Indian gooseberry, or amla. Jose first saw the word "Gooseberry" and immediately wanted to get one for

his garden. He later learned that it's also known as amla. It has a sour taste but reportedly many health benefits, and has many uses, including making jams and chutneys. The 1/2" yellow berry is ridged like a pumpkin, or like a Surinam cherry.

We saw a chile tree, which his father planted from seed. Jose does not know the variety, but it is super-hot-spicy. His father called it "chile negro" because it changes from green to black to red. Jose tried cultivating it from seeds without too much luck. However, he is now finding chile seedlings all over his yard and is hopeful some are from his father's tree.

Other fruit he is growing in the main garden include Alano sapodilla, feijoas (which don't produce much fruit), Surinam cherry, a HUGE sapote loaded with fruit (which came with the house), a peanut butter tree, several avocados, a "Cot N Candy" aprium, Asian pears, Oro Blanco grapefruit and several other citrus (Robertson orange, Cara Cara Orange), a stand of bananas which were starting to ripen, many stone fruits, and pomegranates.

Pomegranates LOVE his garden and just take off! Stone fruit are a little more challenging. Apricots are his favorites, but he's had difficulty keeping them full of fruit.

He also has atemoya and cherimoya, and one soursop, which he calls "guanabana". He does not hand-pollinate but thinks they might produce better if he did.

There are some furry pests in his neighborhood including squirrels, an occasional raccoon and coyote, and lots of stray cats. He says the coyotes keep the other populations in check. His biggest concern is when the critters chew up his drip irrigation tubes for water.

The border between their house and the more recently purchased property is nearly completely vertical. The backyard was originally sloped, but with much work over many, many years, it is now well terraced and the majority of the property is flat. There is a stacked-stone wall along the upper property line, with stone fruit trees, blackberries, and grapes growing in front of and within pockets of the wall. A narrow staircase leads to the top, with a completely different garden.



Although it looks exposed and dry, the upper garden includes some tropical trees such as bananas, mango, and jackfruit. The jackfruit has grown some fruit buds, but none have made it to full ripeness. (Yet!)

There are also more drought-tolerant and heat-loving plants such as Cuban oregano, a Reed avocado, Surinam cherry, Peter's honey fig, pomegranates, elderberry, Gordita orange, Mandarin, Sir Prize avocado, pluots, pigeon peas, and ice cream bean (*Inga Edulis*, aka paterna). Jose heard you can boil the ice cream bean seeds and eat them. Someone mentioned children eat the fruit off the trees in the streets of El Salvador.

We saw a Chaya plant ("Spinach tree") which is very prolific. It's lobed leaves look a little bit like papaya. Chaya is in the euphorbia family, and the leaves cannot be eaten unless cooked first.

Several years ago, Jose planted vegetables randomly throughout the garden(s), and it didn't work too well. Now most of the vegetables are in one location above the supporting vertical wall, with plenty of sunshine. They grow lots of purslane, but also squash, peppers, amaranth, beans, New Zealand spinach, ground cherries, kale, tomatoes, herbs, and Katuk (*Sauropus Androgynus*). Katuk is an Asian shrub with almost every part edible. (Shoots, flowers, fruits, and seeds.) If grown in full sun, this herb likes to keep its feet moist.



Other fruit trees we saw in the upper garden included persimmons, apples, pomegranates, guava, Kale tree, curry plant, passion fruit, moringa, and pluots (he loves pluots!) Flavor Grenade pluot is one of his favorites, he says the flavor is awesome! He has a coconut started and is hopeful it will continue.

How does he fertilize? He used to use rock dust and then tried spreading bags of fertilizer. He also spread a bunch of sunflower seeds and wood chips to capture falling rainwater. Wood chips took a LOT of effort, and he doesn't bring them in any more. The house has a tiny driveway, and the street is very steep, so they can't have chips or mulch delivered because there is no place to put it. Jose used to drive to a local "drop off" location where arborists would dump their chips and cuttings, load up bags and barrels, bring everything back home, and then haul it all through the narrow side yard and up the stairs into the garden.

Now when he prunes the trees, he lets everything fall under the tree and lets them feed themselves.

Instead of making a single compost pile, they have smaller islands of compost. They call them their "Mount Hoods" of biodegradable material. Food scraps are covered with cuttings and leaves from the trees, lasagna-style. It is a lot easier than hauling wood chips.

Their household uses biodegradable soaps so they can use the resulting greywater. And since they don't eat meat, all food scraps can be composted in the small mulch islands to enrich the soil.



We went back down to the side of the house where he had a display of postcards and art posters of his paintings. (All for sale if anyone wanted.)

We eventually went back into the garage where we took a lovely group photograph surrounded by Jose's beautiful artwork. Jose's wife Sara took some videos of that day and posted it to their Instagram account.

You can see at:

www.instagram.com/reel/C_J86CEvIWOSBVxL9hFuE2vQPyeYKP8p4IXR00/

(Hover your mouse over the video and click the square "breakout" icon to expand the video into its own window. Then unmute to hear the lively Latin music accompaniment.)



We thank Jose and Sara very much for graciously hosting us on a fabulous tour through their amazing, exotic gardens!



...And Then Some

How To Cherimoya

Kathleen Doran suggested this extremely useful website which has lots of helpful information all about cherimoya: history, propagation, growing, pollination, pest control, and so much more.

ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=60060

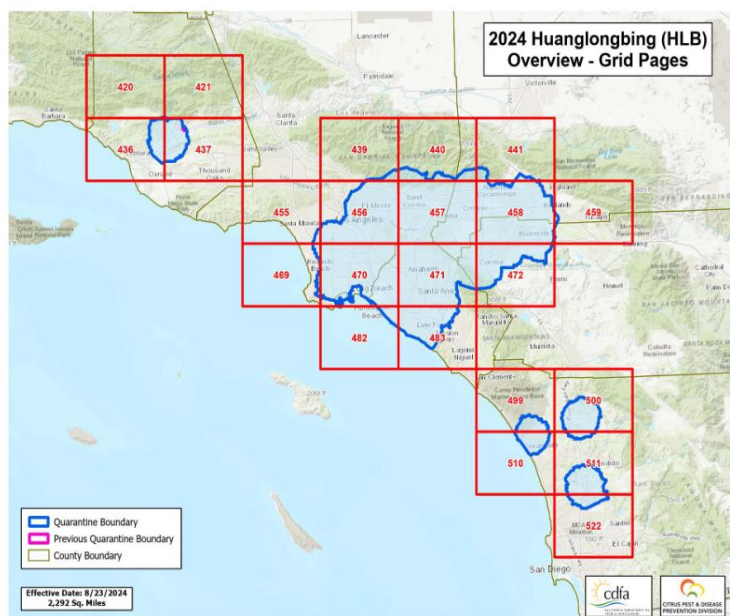
"Back in the early 1990s the California Cherimoya Association decided to put together all their knowledge about the fruit and plant - from history to pollination and costs of production. There are numerous authors who are steeped in love of the fruit. It took several years to bring this all together, finalizing in 1995. It was only available to members of the Association, but now it's available on-line. If you make citation to this work, please recognize the CCA for all the effort that went into it, as well as the individual authors. This is the definitive work on California cherimoyas."

Uh oh! HLB Quarantine Expansion

The following information is about Huanglongbing, or Citrus Greening Disease, a particularly insidious virus which attacks citrus and their relatives. It is most often spread through the Asian Citrus Psyllid, a tiny insect which exudes long strands of wax as they suck the juices of the trees.

Effective June 26, 2024, the US Department of Agriculture is expanding the HLB quarantine boundary in the Commerce area of Los Angeles County in grid 456. A map of the expanded boundary can be found below. If you click on the map itself, you will open an online PDF which allows you to select each red zone for a closer view.

maps.cdfa.ca.gov/QuarantineBoundaries/HLB/HLB_PQM_OverviewGrid.pdf



Good News! Fruit Fly Quarantines Lifted!

The CDFA announced in August the end of several fruit fly quarantines.

The Tau fruit fly was first detected in the area in July 2023 and led to the first-ever quarantine for the pest in the Western Hemisphere. Tau quarantine was lifted on July 1.

On August 6, two more quarantines were lifted, for the Mediterranean Fruit Fly and the Queensland Fruit Fly.

The Mediterranean Fruit Fly, also known as the Medfly, was eradicated with the help of dispersing hundreds of millions of sterile Medflies. This pest can infest over 260 types of fruits and vegetables, threatening California agriculture as well as home landscapes and gardens.

The Queensland Fruit Fly quarantine went into effect a year ago in October 2023, in Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

"Last year, California experienced an unusually high population of invasive fruit flies, and the response required coordination from residents, agricultural industry members and agricultural commissioners in both counties," said Victoria Hornbaker, director of CDFA's Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division. "Through this coordination, we're incredibly proud to have successfully achieved the eradication of several species of invasive fruit flies in Southern California – including Mediterranean, Queensland and Tau – but the threat is never completely gone."

A number of invasive fruit fly quarantines have now been lifted in California. One active quarantine remains, for the Oriental fruit fly in the Redlands-area of San Bernardino County.

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/Public_Affairs/Press_Releases/Archive/pr.html?id=24-081

Got Citrus? Grow Some Alyssum!

Plant plain old cheap white alyssum under your citrus. The flowers attract a species of hoverfly which will lay its eggs on the nearby citrus leaves. Guess what the larvae eat? Asian Citrus Psyllids, which carry the infectious HLB ("Greening") disease! You will also need to control ants on the citrus trees because ants love to eat Psyllid poop and will try to keep the hoverfly maggots away. This helpful information, and more, will be presented by Master Gardener Kathleen Doran-Sapelli at our October 26 event at Sepulveda Gardens. Mark your calendars!

https://entomology.ucr.edu/news/2022/11/22/how-hoverflies_spawn-maggots-sweeten-your-oranges