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LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2018 Volume XXIII Issue 4

NO MEETING IN JULY

No chapter meeting this month. The Annual Festival of Fruit runs from July 26 - 30th in Campbell, CA. Saturday, July 28, will be a full day of speakers, presentations, vendors, raffles, and lunch, along with a dinner buffet with guest speaker. Guided tours will be held July 26 through July 30, on Thursday, Friday, Sunday, and Monday. July 12 is the last day to register (or request a refund). For more information, go to <http://festivaloffruit.org>. The website also lists local hotels and provides maps.

FIELD TRIP: Home of Fang Liu and Jany Han

Date: August 25, 2018 at 10:00 am

Place: Private residence

Program: Garden Tour

Chapter Members only, please

Although Fang and Jany have only lived in their home for 2 years they already have 15 pomegranates, 16 grapes, 2 jujube, 3 stone fruits, and 5 cherimoyas with lots of grafts on them. There is a huge Chinaberry tree in the middle of the property that's preventing them from planting under its canopy. They do a lot of close, staggered rows of plantings to save space. At their home along the 5 freeway flood zone, the soil is different from the soil in the valleys. The ground is sandy: water and shovels go freely through it. But with enough mulch and compost and plantings, it can become very good soil.

SAVE THE DATES - CALENDAR FOR 2018 LA CHAPTER

- September 22nd - Sepulveda Gardens Jorge Ochoa - Fruit in an Urban Landscape
- October 27th - Sepulveda Gardens Charles Mali - Whitewashing for Longer Lasing and Healthier Plants
- November 17th - TBA
- December 15th - Sepulveda Gardens - Holiday Party

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Words From Our Chairman



If you missed our last two monthly events you missed some great information and great opportunities. In May we attended a tour and were able to purchase trees from LaVerne Nursery in Piru. We saw a great demonstration of commercial fruit tree grafting in the nursery. After the tour at LaVerne, we drove down the beautiful 126 Highway to 2B Green Farms in Fillmore. Our hosts, Eric and Patti, gave us tours of the 700 avocado tree orchard and the other produce and hydroponic gardens they have growing at their beautiful estate. We picked hundreds of avocados and everybody enjoyed the beautiful fruit they took home.

Our event in June at the Sepulveda Garden Center was a talk by Garrett Long who works with the folks at Apricot Lane Farms in Moorpark. It was interesting learning about how important soil nutrition is for trees and plants we all grow. We look forward to an opportunity in the future to tour the beautiful grounds of the Apricot Lane Farms.

My wife Monica and I have reservations to stay the end of July at the Festival of Fruit in Campbell, California. I encourage all of our members to attend the festival as it is a wonderful weekend with some beautiful gardens and seminars with helpful information for those of us growing rare fruits. We also get to visit with members of other chapters and can learn from their gardening experience.

I hope everybody's gardens are doing well at this beautiful time of year. We have enjoyed watching our many varieties of avocados giving a nice push of new fruit, including our Stewart avocado which has its first big crop of avocados that we've had since it was planted six years ago.

--Tony



LOOKING BACK

By Debbie Oisboid, Editor &
Debbie Schopper, Member at Large

May Meeting

In May we had an unusual event: a DOUBLE field trip! LaVerne Nursery in Piru was a fascinating education in how plants are grown for retail sale. Director of Nursery Operation, Daniel Nelson shared with us some of their preferred grafting techniques. (98% success rate on avocados!) After dipping our shoes in green copper crystals (a preventative against bringing fungus and other nasty things into the greenhouses), we were treated to a display of some of their rarer trees including a scented crabapple, moringa, and the hottest new variety of avocado - Jamie Ruse, developed by a CRFG member.

After a description and history of the facilities, we had an expert grafting demonstration and were informed that the nursery has a 98% success rate with grafting! Then the walking tour began. We saw trays loaded with rooting passionfruit cuttings, tables of citrus seedlings awaiting grafting, humidity tents within the greenhouses for newly grafted trees, and

shade houses and fields full of plants getting ready for sale. And then we were able to purchase (or pick up previously ordered) trees.

The second field trip was nearby at 2B Green Farms, an avocado farm about 15 minutes up the road from LaVerne nursery. Eric Bartolotto and Patti Breyfogle had purchased the 10-acre property a couple of years ago and have done amazing things with it, starting with automating the watering and reducing water consumption by over 50%, and by converting to 100% solar-powered operation. They sell the fruit direct to the public online, but also sell to a few restaurants, to a commercial customer in Valencia, and occasionally to a fruit wholesaler. They are trying to move towards all organic farming, but that's a tricky thing.

We got to pick avocados or, if you weren't up to the hike around the hills, they had some pre-picked fruit for sale back at the house. We had some of their delicious home-made guacamole as well. Many thanks to both Dan Nelson and to Eric and Patti for their hospitality.

June Meeting

Garrett Long from Apricot Lane Farms in Moorpark was our guest speaker at Sepulveda Garden Center in June. Garrett holds an MS in Soils & Biochemistry from UC Davis and his topic was, "Soil Health and Regenerative Practices."

Biodynamic agriculture and/or Anthroposophy, as explained by Rudolph Steiner, is against the use of synthetically produced fertilizers and pesticides and promotes the idea of bringing balance and renewed health to the farm by using livestock, crops, compost and soil to restore and enhance an ecological harmony.

Garrett gave examples of the five principles to improve soil health:

1. Keep crops covered. Use mulch or straw.
2. Integrate animals with crops.
3. Keep a living root in the ground.
4. Maximize biodiversity.
5. Do not disturb. Don't till, plow or turn soil over.

We learned that soil is about 50% broken-down rocks (sand, silt, minerals, etc), 47% air and water, and only 3 to 5% organic matter/humus – and yet of this

organic matter the most important stuff is "dead microbes" or "necromass" which makes up between 50 – 80% of the organic material and is responsible for 90% of plant growth. Do the math: 1 – 2% of all soil mass feeds 90% of all plant material!

There was time for member questions at the end of the meeting. Our meeting concluded with a pot luck lunch and a silent auction of plants and garden accessories.

For more information, please visit the website www.apricotlanefarms.com and www.nrcs.gov.

The Anatomy of Garden Weeds, Part 2

By Roy Imazu

In my area of weed control there is a method of prevention that reduces or eliminates many soil-inhabiting pests that is called **soil solarization** (SS). This procedure uses heat and moisture to control weed seeds and harmful soil organisms.

The area for this application should be in full sun and be done during the warmer parts of the summer, preferably June and July. The location should be in strips 48 to 60 inches wide with a north-south orientation. The plot should be smooth with no dirt clods or vegetation and have a watering system such as drip irrigation to keep it damp. It needs to be covered with clear plastic with edges sealed. One mil plastic would be acceptable; avoid four mil or thicker.

The degree of pest control would depend on the intensity, depth and duration of the elevated soil temperature. The cooler temperatures along the coast would diminish the effectiveness of this procedure. Polyethylene tarp should not be left on longer than six to seven weeks. Problem weeds such as Bermuda grass, field bindweed, Johnson grass, and yellow nutsedge are suppressed but not completely controlled by this procedure.

The reference for this report is the University of California Agriculture and Natural resources publication 21377. Call (800) 994-8849 or go to <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu> for availability.

--Roy Imazu

Back To Basics:

Soil Types and How to Prepare Them

Excerpted from "Plant Propagation" by A.Toogood (Editor)

An appropriate growing medium is crucial to success in propagation. Any propagation medium must be moisture-retentive but also porous to keep it aerated. It must be sufficiently free-draining so that the medium does not become waterlogged, but not so much that the medium dries out.

The following chart lists the basic soil types and best ways to prepare them for plant growth.

| | |
|---|--|
| SANDY: Dry, light, gritty, and very free-draining. A handful will not "ball" or stick together. Easy to work; warms up quickly in spring but not very fertile. Usually acidic (low pH). | Improve loose structure with small amounts of clay. Water and feed often. Add organic matter to hold moisture. Water-retentive crystals are useful on a small scale. |
| ALKALINE: Pale, shallow, stony, free-draining and low fertility. "Chalky" with pH of 7 or higher. May be deficient in minerals such as boron, manganese, and phosphorus. | "Hungry" soil that breaks down organic matter quickly; dress seed and nursery beds often with organic matter, preferably acidic, such as bark or well-rotted manure. |
| PEATY: Dark, crumbly, and rich in organic matter. Retains moisture well but can be too wet. Acidic (pH below 7). May lack phosphorus and contain too much manganese or aluminum. | Makes excellent soil if limed, drained, and fertilized. Add lime or mushroom compost to achieve best pH of 5.8. Add grit to improve drainage for seed and nursery beds. |
| SILTY: Silky or soapy to the touch, with fine particles and a low amount of clay. Reasonably fertile and moisture-retentive but compacts easily, especially when dry. | Encourage crumbly structure by adding some clay or adding plenty of bulky organic matter. Ideal soil for propagation use, especially for early sowings. |
| CLAY: Wet, sticky, heavy, and slow-draining. Rolls into malleable ball if pressed and goes shiny if smoothed. Usually very fertile. Slow to warm up in spring; bakes hard in hot weather. | Add lime to encourage fine particles to clump together; lay drainage channels of coarse sand or gravel. Add plenty of bulky organic matter and grit to open up soil texture. |

The Quiet Rescue of America's Forgotten Fruit

by Anne Ewbank

Excerpted from an article on Atlas Obscura, March 27, 2018

The epicenter of America's tech industry was once orchards as far as the eye can see. Google, Facebook, and other businesses have pushed out most fruit growers. But some are left. C. Todd Kennedy is one of California's premier fruit experts, collectors, and growers. As a co-founder of the Arboreum Company, he distributes rare and vintage fruit trees that produce prickly pears and little-known peaches. But his four-decade dedication to fruit has been remarkably important in another respect: preserving and adding to America's agricultural legacy.

In 2010, horticulturist Clay Weeks estimated that half of the national collection of old stone fruit cultivars come from Kennedy. When asked, Kennedy makes only a slight correction. "Half of the named varieties in the national collection come from me," he says.

Kennedy's contribution is the result of a long partnership. The U.S. National Plant Germplasm System has repositories across America, each focused on preserving and researching different types of food plants. The genetic diversity they house may hold the key to overcoming devastating plant diseases (such as the citrus greening currently devastating Florida's orange crop) or developing fruit cultivars that can withstand climate change.



White apricots, "Mesch Mesch Amra" plumcots, pitangas, "Beauty" plums, and "Shakar Parih" plumcots from Kennedy's collection. Courtesy of C. Todd Kennedy

But these important endeavors can be overlooked and underfunded. In the late eighties and early nineties, Kennedy says, many federal repositories lacked the

money or space to receive new genetic material. According to Thomas Gradziel, a University of California, Davis professor and plant breeder, knowledgeable fruit growers (Kennedy chief among them) saved many fruit varieties from disappearing forever.

In a way, fruit is Kennedy's heritage. "My parents had a large property in Atherton," Kennedy says. "My father had been raised on a prune and apricot ranch in Los Gatos." In the 1980s, Kennedy's father wanted to plant old fruit trees that he remembered from his youth and he asked Kennedy to help.

But Kennedy wasn't a horticulturist. He's an agricultural lawyer who works with farmers on employment and land-use issues. So he turned to state research stations to find his father's fruits. Many were at what he calls "land-grant" universities established on government land, such as the many campuses of the University of California.

Research stations had maintained collections of fruit trees since the 1880s, but time was short. "I discovered that these land-grant universities were shutting down their orchards," Kennedy says. He had to work fast to collect the varieties he wanted; others simply vanished. "I got a lot more varieties than ... intended," he notes. "So I saved them." Kennedy started collecting cultivars he found to be interesting or "famous old fruits." That choice turned out to be monumental.

When funding was once again allocated to federal repositories, representatives came to collect twigs and bud sticks from Kennedy. Kennedy's contributions helped these institutions fill out their collections. This genetic material is referred to by growers as "germplasm," and it allows new trees to be propagated and preserved. Currently, the tally of his donations is 689. He's donated even more on behalf of members of the California Rare Fruit Growers.

Occasionally, Kennedy even finds rare fruit on the street.

He had long been looking for a tejocote, a type of tree native to Mexico. (Importing its fruit was illegal until recently.) While driving one day, he caught sight of tejocote fruit in a gutter.

"I just followed the line of [tejocote fruit], kind of like Hansel and Gretel," Kennedy says. With material from that tree, he grew his own tejocote.

Kennedy is no longer a hobbyist. He lives in San Francisco, and the Arboreum Company orchard is two hours south, in Morgan Hill. Now that it's spring, he's busy sending saplings to gardeners who want what he calls "older and better fruits." While Kennedy says his trees come from all over, the greatest number come from the American west. Kennedy's knowledge of fruit trees and how they grow in California is just as momentous as the germplasm he's collected. Kennedy is often referred to for his expertise.

The health of Kennedy's and other private groves is increasingly important, because the federal repositories are once again in trouble. Kennedy believes the current political climate means deep funding cuts are inevitable, while the Davis branch, which is dedicated to tree fruit, nuts, and grapes, is "in a dire situation right now." More money and land is needed to care for and store incoming plants (either as planted trees, cryogenically frozen buds, or preserved seeds).

The trees maintained by Kennedy and other fruit growers serve as "backup collections". It's a matter with international implications. Even at the Arboreum Company orchard, it's not feasible to propagate all the trees every year. Instead, Kennedy chooses only a handful. Available fruit trees on the website have poetic descriptions beyond what you'd see in a typical nursery catalog, providing historical and even artistic context

The detail is deliberate. Kennedy grows fruit for qualities such as juiciness and taste, but also for their history. "They have a story to be told," he says.

SOURCE:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/growing-collecting-rare-fruit>

Letters to the Editor

Have a suggestion? A question? A story to share? Send it to editor@crfg-la.org and see it published here!