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LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2023 Volume XXVIII Issue 4

GARDEN TOUR – George Campos

Date: Saturday, July 22, 10:00 am

Location: To be provided

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We will be touring the unique, remarkable gardens and wonders of a private residence. 11 “themed” gardens, large and small water features, and much more. Please wear comfortable shoes if you’d like to climb the hill (optional).

This tour is very special, and for roster members ONLY—no guests, no relatives, no children, etc. To attend, please RSVP by email or call (no texts) to Karen Payton. (Contact information in the green Chapter Officers panel at left.)

Please bring something to share for the potluck refreshment table after the tour.

LECTURE/PRESENTATION – David Karp

Topic: Fruit Knowledge

Date: Saturday, August 26, 10:00 am

Location: Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia, Encino CA
91406

David Karp is the co-editor of the Register of New Fruit and Nut Cultivars, as well as Assistant Specialist in the Department of Botany and Plant Sciences at UC Riverside. David will discuss the infrastructure of Fruit Knowledge, his full-time focus for the last five years.

All members are asked to please bring something for our potluck which will follow a question-and-answer session.

Save the date!

CALENDAR FOR LA CHAPTER 2023

September 23 Speaker - Los Angeles County Beekeepers
October 28 Speaker - Mark Steele
November 18 Speaker - Charles Portney: Pawpaws
December 16 Holiday Party

LOOKING BACK

By Deborah Oisboid

May 27 - Private gardens of Reza & Lydia Shabestari

Have you ever walked through a gate into someone's garden and then just stood still for about 5 minutes taking it all in with jaw-dropping admiration?

Welcome to Reza and Lydia's Persian Palace gardens.



What a treat to be invited to visit! The Shabestaris have lived there for 28 years but have been hardscaping the backyard over time, and completely remodeled everything about three years ago.

Their house is up against a hillside and has been sculptured into several levels. The ground level has a generous cooking area, with a large open patio surrounded by planters full of gorgeous flowers, stacked towers dripping with strawberries, and low pots full of delicious herbs. The fruit trees in this area include pistachio, papaya, cherry, avocado, fig, mango, pomegranate, pear, sour cherry, mulberry, and a multi-grafted apple.

Just past the seating area is a stunning arch covered in climbing, scented pink-and-white roses. Through the archway is a tiny hidden gem of a garden, which they have playfully nicknamed "Berryland." It has a slow dripping fountain in the center and delicious berry bushes on the three remaining sides: blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and boysenberries. Plus a row of bananas behind the canes.

Their thornless Prime-Ark[®] blackberry canes drew the loudest gasps and most enthusiastic compliments. The canes were strong and vigorous, 8 to 10 feet tall bearing thick clusters of 1 to



2 inch juicy berries. (Note to members, Prime-Ark[®] is a patented berry and personal propagation is not allowed.) Reza said the thicket had been producing fruit through the winter and well into spring.

The Shabestaris keep bees, and the central fountain keeps their bees hydrated. Visitors are encouraged to NOT stand between the hives on the hillside and the garden fountain for very long.

Moving up a short flight of stairs brings you to the pool deck, again surrounded by pots and planters full of fruit trees and herbs, as well as Reza's propagating pots. Along the side wall are storage closets and a well-appreciated and well decorated bathroom.

Fruit trees on this level include many varieties of guava and nectarines and plums, as well as apricot, pluots, almond, pear, a grafted peach/plum, cherry, mulberry, and several grapevines.

The rest of the garden basically goes UP at a steep angle of more than 40 degrees. They created levelled zones approximately every 20 vertical feet for plants and for human stability. From the pool deck, you go up a flight of stairs to the first flattened area with relatively young fruit trees. Further up a path of half-buried stones is a small, railed patio containing their beehives.

The property continues up from there but has not (yet) been terraced or planted. They were fortunate to not



have had any problems with mudslides during this year's extraordinarily wet winter.

Trees on the hillside include pomegranate, a Persian tangerine, Burgundy plum, a venerable 25+ year old lemon, a Persian mulberry, and a moringa.

Plants on the hillside get a chicken wire cage around the roots to protect them from gophers. And, yes, they get plenty of coyotes in the yard as well.

Trees get drip-watered underground. Pots get hand watered. I'm told their water bill really isn't as bad as you might think.

Reza and Lydia have been active beekeepers for about 7 years. They have four hives right now and are about to get a new queen soon. They typically harvest about 100

pounds of honey per year, keeping about 50 pounds for themselves and retaining the rest to feed the bees through winter.



They purchased a special breed of bee, as part of a program to develop honeybees resistant to the Varroa mite. These insects will actually bite off mite legs and remove any of their own bee larvae which may have become infected.

All that climbing is enough to make a visitor hungry. Good thing our CRFG knows how to solve THAT problem very nicely! Potluck lunch was delicious and varied and exotic, with plenty of fresh fruits and salads/vegetables, as well as typical desserts and less typical dishes such as baked kale chips, a huge pot of vegan chili, and delicious, refreshing drinks of calamondin/ginger/sugar and calamondin/mint/honey.



Not to make anyone jealous or anything, but there was delicious, fresh organic honey for sale that day as well. Yummy!

As the potluck was ending, one of the Shabestari's neighbors offered a mini-tour of his own garden, which was only a couple of blocks away. About a half dozen of us followed him out after the main event ended.

Alasdair Burton is a long-time CRFG member. His house is on the corner of a calm intersection. It appears unassuming until you look closer at the trees. There is an ENORMOUS pair of lush macadamia and mango trees (the mango in fabulous full bloom), skirted by a pair of clementine trees.



He told us that mangoes in their native land have four months of monsoon rains followed by 4 months of drought where the tree thinks, "I'd better put out fruit to stay alive." So he reduces his watering at the appropriate time of year and gets a nice crop.

Against the house is a row of banana trees (gradually increasing in size along the external staircase) with a mature longan tree and clumps of shell ginger at the base. Shell ginger root is similar to cooking ginger root but much more fibrous and has prettier scented flowers. (Shell ginger is technically edible but is more often used in Chinese medicine.)

The front grassy area is a bit uneven, full of gopher holes. Alasdair suggests it is therapeutic: he claims the gophers are trained to make sure the ground does not stay perfectly level, so older people have to practice their balance. (I think he may be kidding, but then again, who knows for sure?)

There is a wild beehive at the top of his gutters, which he generally leaves alone, and they leave him alone except for pollination. Apparently, they are living in the gutter itself, not between the roof tiles, nor under the protective solar panels. They are very polite bees.

On the other side of the yard are two avocados, a volunteer fig (which hasn't produced fruit yet), a Wampi fruit tree, some pineapple guavas grown from seed, a volunteer Macadamia tree, an apricot, a pomegranate, and an "old and venerable" Asian pear. He also has a gigantic camphor tree which makes babies all over the yard, with help from the local birds. We learned that the resin from camphor trees is used in Hindu ceremonies. Like macadamia, a camphor tree is basically a weed once it's established.



He uses a 5-gallon bucket with small holes to slow-drip water the smaller trees, and he mulches with coffee grounds, which helps acidify the soil.

Crossing back to the garage, we saw a kumquat tree which only had fruit at the top. He has trouble harvesting the mango and the Clementines and the kumquats because of the local "two-legged rats," who don't leave him very much on the lower branches. Fortunately, with the kumquats, he can shake the

branches and get some to fall from the upper branches. (And those are the best tasting ones anyway!)

Confession time: Alasdair admitted that the two clementines were originally purchased from Costco for \$19.99 each. The kumquat was from Armstrong Nursery.

There is a large camellia hedge by the garage, along with some champagne grapes, a volunteer fig tree, an angel trumpet vine and a guava.

The backyard is impressive, overwhelmingly filled with amazing, and almost all edible, plants. He recently removed the pre-existing privet hedge along the backyard fence and planted trees and covered the new pool-style wrought iron fence with passion fruit vines.

One of the reasons he and his wife bought the house is because it had a Washington Naval and Valencia oranges and a lemon tree. The oranges have died but the lemon is still alive.

In no particular order, his backyard includes: a finger lime tree, a Big Jim loquat tree (the parent of Reza's



loquat), a "rescue" grapefruit, plenty of young camphor trees, coffee trees, pomegranates, blackberries and raspberries, a Fino de Jete cherimoya, four different Tim Thompson mango

varieties (Antonio, Camarillo Sunset, Gold Nugget, and Tequila Sunrise, all of which are supposed to be cold-tolerant - and have been, so far!), a Gold Nugget tangerine, a Tango tangerine, huge kiwi vines, and, of course, the passionfruit vines on the fence.

Alasdair told us that finger limes are apparently immune to HLB (citrus greening disease).

We had a moment of apprehension as a nearby bee swarm decided to pass through his yard just as we reached the far side. Fortunately, the tour was mostly over by then. We quickly and quietly walked the other direction out of the yard, and said our goodbyes and thanked our host for sharing his gardens and stories with us. It was a delightful bonus tour!

Many thanks to Reza and Lydia for hosting us in their amazing and beautiful gardens, and our sincere gratitude to Alasdair for sharing his time and hospitality as well! It was an amazing double-tour day!

June 24 - CRFG-LA's Fabulous Annual Plant Sale!

What an event! The West LA and Foothill Chapters of CRFG were invited to join us at our huge plant sale, which meant twice as many people attended as usual. However, the event was generally well organized and, except for a couple of minor incidents, it went extremely smoothly.

SO MANY PLANTS! Not only did we get Charles Portney's incredible and generous donation of rare fruits, but Steve List from Sylmar Agricultural Center was also able to attend and donated several of his vibrantly healthy grafted fruit trees plus a new variety of blueberry, PLUS bedding plants and flowers! The biggest draws were a 10-foot tall "Becky's Mystery" banana tree from Charles, and an awesome 8-foot tall multi-grafted pluot tree donated by Richard Renshaw. Extra thanks are owed to Eve Guth and Ed Livingston for helping to transport Charles' plants all the way from Santa Monica the morning of the sale.

Wearing a shirt which announced he was, "Introverted but willing to discuss plants," Charles led us around the room, dripping fascinating facts about each plant he introduced for sale.



We learned that Wax Jambu seeds should be soaked in water for 24 to 48 hours so they plump up before you plant them. It will be a few years before you get fruit. They are somewhat frost sensitive.

Epazote is a Mexican perennial. You can use the leaves and buds in almost any food. It grows okay in pots. Charles does not recommend growing it in the ground.

Don't try growing turmeric from supermarket roots because they put suppressant on it.





Haku Botan pomegranates grow greenish white fruit that are quite sour, but the flowers are curly white and gorgeous. The arils (seeds) are brilliant white as well.

Cherry of the Rio Grande (which is NOT the same as a Surinam cherry) are as close as you can get to growing a black cherry around here, even though they're not from the Rio Grande nor are they

cherries. They can grow to 40 ft tall, but Charles keeps his trimmed to 10 ft for ease of harvest. It's a *Eugenia* fruit. *Eugenia* is a huge genus in the Myrtle family. Charles says if they had a family reunion for all the *Eugenias* they'd have to rent out Yankee stadium!

Becky's Mystery banana was supposed to be a dwarf red Jamaican. It's none of those. Extremely sturdy, Charles says it doesn't fall over unless you run over it with construction equipment, even though it can grow up to 20 feet tall. He gets 200 to 250 bananas on a stock depending on fertilizer. He also cautions that "bananas are pigs, they love fertilizer!"

He advises never to remove banana leaves even if they've been shredded by the wind. They still photosynthesize and feed the plant. Only remove banana leaves when they're dead.

Steve's donated blueberries had numbers instead of names. This means you can't buy them commercially.

After the introduction (with Jim Schopper helping out towards the end), David Payton explained the rules of the sale: auction first, followed by the general plant sale. (All non-auctioned plants had been labeled with a fixed price.)



The food table had to wait until after the general sale was well under way. And you know, us gardeners don't skimp when it comes to flavor! In addition to fresh fruits, vegetables, and desserts, we had a flavorful chicken soup, several salads, and Charles' famous

sorbets, including such flavors as Cherry of the Rio Grande, banana and brown sugar yogurt, chocolate persimmon, and pineapple guava.

OK, here's the inventory, for those of you who absolutely needed to know. No, not everything was edible. (*Takes a deep breath...*)

Abutilon (aka "Chinese Lantern flower"), agave, air plants (*Tillandsia*), Blenheim apricot, Hass avocados, Double Delight nectarine, Mariposa plum, Flavor King pluot, Richard's amazing multi grafted pluot, Becky's Mystery



banana (pups and 10-foot tall specimen), an unknown banana, yellow and red bell peppers, blackberries, blueberries, Australian bottle tree, cannas, cape gooseberries, cape gooseberries, cardoon, *Centaurea Cineraria*, white chayote squash, cherimoya, cherry of the Rio Grande, chile de arbol, chipotle, comfrey, dahlias, dogwood, dragonfruit (AKA "pitahaya"), elderberries, yellow long-neck fig, blackjack fig, flowering euphorbia, red geranium (not the edible type), wolfberry/goji berry, sweet goumi, golden muscat grapes, blueberry grapes, pink guava, strawberry guava, Chilean guava, pineapple guava (aka feijoa), Indian guava seedlings, heuchera, jacaranda, jade, kalanchoe, lemongrass, loquat seedlings, various mints, everbearing mulberry, naranjilla, natal plum, fan palm, pawpaw, golden and orange pepinos, white pineapple, plumeria, pomegranates (Afghanski, Desertnyi, and Haku Botan), rooted pomegranate cuttings, California poppies, rose apple, rosemary, pineapple sage, lots of succulents, sugar cane, thyme, a HUGE Sun Gold tomato vine which took over half the table, unknown tomatoes, Tradescantia "bridal veil," turmeric, and Venus fly traps.

Had enough yet? But wait, there's more!

Seeds: Hungarian paprika, wax jambu.

Other Edible stuff: Dried lemon verbena leaves, Fuyu persimmon butter.

Freebies: Epazote cuttings, parcel (Parsley/celery hybrid), moringa cuttings.

Lots of books. Classic "Fruit Gardener" magazines.
Posters of Hawaiian fruit from Ken Love.

OK, that's enough. As you can tell, it truly was a fabulous sale and we couldn't have done it without YOU! Many thanks to Charles, Steve, Richard, Jim, Eve and Ed, Karen and David, and all the organizers who made this event so successful.

OFFER: ROOM TO RENT WITH GARDENS

Room to rent/house to share in peaceful Simi Valley. Must love plants, gardens, exotic fruit, dogs and outdoor water features. (You do not have to garden but your opinion will be frequently asked for.) Lots of amenities. Some flexibility on price. If interested, email roomforrent_1@crfg-la.org for price, location, photos, and more information.

LEFTOVERS COLUMN

Baked Kale Chips

By Eve Guth

Crunchy and flavorful, these odd looking and excellent flavored "chips" were served at the garden tour in April.

Ingredients:

- One bunch of kale
- One tablespoon olive oil
- Sea salt

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 300F. Remove the stems and cut or tear the leaves into large pieces. Toss with the olive oil, using your fingers so that every leaf is well coated. Sprinkle with the sea salt and toss again to blend.

Spread the prepared kale leaves in a single layer on 1 or 2 cookie sheets. Bake for 20 minutes, or until crisp. Eat them out of hand or use them as a garnish on soups and salads. The chips will stay crisp for several days.

Makes 2 servings.

Variations:

- Substitute flavored popcorn toppings, such as cheddar cheese, for the salt. Toppings with a powdery texture adhere well to the chips. Dust before baking, then add more afterward to taste, if needed.
- Toss the raw kale in 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1 tablespoon vinegar before baking. (Yes, you really need that much vinegar.)
- Toss in finely grated parmesan or asiago cheese after baking. The finer the consistency, the better it will adhere.

The recipe was cut out of a newspaper and gives the following credits:
Recipe = Go Green Get Lean by Kate Geagan (Rodale press).
Variations = Kim Pierce.

Chicken Soup With Moringa and Green Papaya

By Flora Agpalo

This delicious soup was served at the Fabulous CRFG Plant Sale at the end of June. It was VERY popular!

Ingredients:

- 3-4 lbs of chicken pieces, preferably thighs & drumsticks (or use a whole chicken)
- 3 cups Moringa leaves
- 2 stalks of lemongrass, cut into 2 inch pieces, smashed to extract flavor
- 1 green papaya, peeled, seeded, and cut into 2-inch wedges
- 6 cups of filtered water
- 2 cups of chicken broth
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 thumbs of ginger, sliced
- 1 thumb turmeric sliced
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a pot on medium heat
2. Sautee onion until softened
3. Add garlic, ginger, turmeric, & black pepper, and cook for 2 minutes
4. Add chicken, fish sauce, and lemongrass
5. Cook for 10 minutes, or until juices run clear
6. Add water and chicken broth
7. Bring to a boil and cover
8. Set to low heat and simmer for 50 minutes
9. Scoop out and discard the scum and oil
10. Add the bouillon cube and papaya, cook for 8-10 minutes
11. Add moringa and oregano, and cook for 2 more minutes
12. Add salt, if needed
13. Transfer to a serving bowl and enjoy!

Note: Use Red Boat Fish Sauce, if available

Recommendation

Charles Portney mentioned this book during the plant sale introduction: Buried Treasures : Tasty Tubers of the World by Beth Hanson. (Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guides, 2007)

This book discusses growing and preparing unusual edibles such as elephant ears, yautia, and jack-in-the-pulpit.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2234323.Buried_Treasures

https://openlibrary.org/books/OL12187424M/Buried_Treasures