



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2021 Volume XXVI Issue 2

CRFG-LA meetings at Sepulveda Garden Center are currently suspended. We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy.

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

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ZOOM MEETING:

Saturday, March 27, 10:00 am

Speaker: "You!"

Topic: Fruit tree (and other) pruning

What do you do when your fruit tree needs to be pruned? Let's find out together! We will share a video or two by Tom Spellman, but we also want to hear from you. When and how do you trim your tree(s)? What is your goal? What tools do you use? Be prepared to share stories, photos, and maybe virtually visit other members' trees as we explore this topic together.

ZOOM MEETING:

Saturday, April 24, 10:00 am

Speaker: Charles Malki

Virtual Garden Tour

Charles will host us in his own home garden in the Hollywood Hills. Charles Malki was originally a real estate attorney and founder of Florida Real Estate Law Group. In November of 2015, Charles created **IV Organic** plant-growing products, where he serves as Director of Horticulture and Education. Many of us have made a habit of consulting his hugely useful online library of informative and instructional YouTube videos. He's the author of *Saving the World With the Home Garden*. He's well-known and a generous asset to many diverse, plant-growing concerns, including our own chapter!

CALENDAR FOR LA CHAPTER 2021

May 22	Mark Steele – Virtual garden tour
June 26	Zoom meeting Speaker - tba
July 24	George Campos – Virtual garden tour
August 28	No meeting Festival of Fruit?
Sept 25	Zoom meeting Speaker - tba
October 23	Bill Brandt – Virtual garden tour
Nov 20	Meeting Speaker - tba
Dec 18	Meeting Holiday Party

Words From Our Chairman

By Jerry Schwartz



“Growing fruiting plants according to Jerry.”

COVID-19 has given me the time to observe my garden. I’ve read over and over that plants should be grouped together based on their requirements for water, sunlight, heat, etc. Also: citrus with citrus, stone fruit with stone fruit, Tropicals together, etc.

My method is much simpler. I don’t group fruit plants. Fruit trees are planted every 3 to 4 feet, no rows. With one exception: I group cross-pollinating fruiting plants. Some fruiting plants are one foot apart. Note: all plants must receive proper sunlight. This requires constant pruning. All plants, especially trees, must be deep watered weekly their first year after planting for deep root growth. I have over 200 fruit trees thriving.

My zip code is in zone 9b, but the plants are in multiple zones. I have multiple Kishu mandarin trees at various locations in my yard. Fruits ripen at different times each year. One in December - January. One in January - February. And one in March.

Also, the deciduous trees (or “sticks”, as my wife calls them at this time of the year) in one location are blooming now, but those 100 feet away are still just sticks.

Time to get planting, watering, and mulching!

Jerry

LOOKING BACK

By Deborah Oisboid, Editor

January Grafting Demos

January’s meeting had over 30 attendees, including several non-member guests. (Some even joined the club while the meeting was still in session!) After a bit of social talk, we got down to business.

Bill Brandt and Emory Walton had filmed four videos of grafting techniques: Vee (or Cleft) graft, Tee-bud grafting, Splice grafting, and Whip-and-Tongue. Each video was less than 10 minutes long, and Bill demonstrated each technique very clearly, so everyone could follow along.

(We are currently working on uploading the videos to our CRFG-LA photo-sharing website at <http://www.crfg-la.org/piwigo/>)

Grafting Rule #1 (particularly here in So Cal): Always make sure - especially with citrus and avocado - to cover EVERY PART of a scion with parafilm when grafting. Otherwise it will dry out and you will lose the graft!

Grafting Rule #2: the thin green line between the bark and heartwood are stem cells, and the only part which multiplies. Make sure the rootstock and the scion have this layer (cambium) contacting each other, so they share energy and merge.

Grafting Rule #3: “Any month except November is good for avocado.” -Bill Brandt

Grafting is successful when rootstock and scion are closely related:

- pears & quince
- stone fruit to stone fruit
- apples to apples

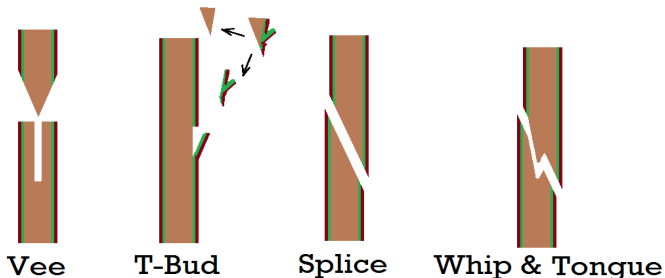
The Vee/Cleft graft: The scion is cut into a flat, pointed “V” shape; the matching rootstock branch is sliced open. This method provides two surfaces for cambium contact between rootstock and scion, but branches need to be close to the same diameter. The cuts must be perfectly flat to avoid air gaps between cambium layers.

T-Bud grafting: don’t remove the branch from the rootstock, but simply cut a “T” in the bark and peel it back. The scion is a small petiole/bud, with the heartwood removed. Slip the bud inside the “T”, fold

the bark back, and wrap REALLY WELL with parafilm. Bill does not recommend using green garden tape here, as growth will happen dramatically and you don't want to restrict it. Wait a month or two until the bud starts to grow, then cut off the top of the rootstock so the bud can take over.

Whip (splice) graft: Flat, angled cuts on rootstock and scion, simply tied together. A full circle of cambium contact beneath the bark. It's ok to use a hand-plane to get the angle cut nice and flat.

Whip And Tongue graft: Start with a splice graft cut on both rootstock and scion, and add a half-slice about halfway down. When you bend the cut surface a jagged point sticks up. These two points face each other at the graft surface and fit together like a puzzle. The "spur" provides extra holding power, plus extra cambium contact. This is a terrific graft for figs.



Bill strongly recommends grafting close to the trunk, which provides a stronger joint, resulting in larger branches.

Figs push a lot of sap, so it's not a bad idea to wait an hour or so after cutting until it stops oozing before grafting. January through February is better for grafting figs. Sap begins to run as it warms up in March, and the cuttings will "bleed" a lot, which could interfere with the graft.

One of Bill's apple trees was suckering badly. He cut the suckers off drastically, noticed they had roots on them, grafted onto them. So, yes you can use suckers from rootstock as new rootstocks.

Clean your tools! Lysol spray or alcohol or 10% bleach are all good. Some people treat their scionwood with bleach, but Bill doesn't do that. However, he agreed that wiping them with a semi-damp paper towel using a 10% solution (and don't wipe it off before grafting) wouldn't hurt.

Someone asked if scions should get rehydrated if they

have been in storage (refrigerated)? Bill thinks this is not a bad idea. Put the scion(s) in a glass of water for half an hour if it looks dried out. Recut the bottom to ensure good moisture absorption. Is it OK to keep a scion in your mouth to keep it moist? Maybe. It might keep the cutting from drying out, but won't rehydrate.

There was some discussion where to pick up Lysol when the local stores are sold out.

Sagi offered tool advice: Whatever you use as a grafting knife, you need to take care of it. Keep it clean, and keep it sharp. What kinds of knives are recommended for grafting? Anything sharp - you can even use a box cutter, or a small hand plane! He described several brands that he has used in the past:

- Tina is an expensive German knife that the professionals use. It keeps sharp for longer but is harder to sharpen. It runs about \$80-110.
- The Swiss army/Felco brand grafting knife is inexpensive but good. It has a beveled side and a sharp side. It costs just over \$20.
- Opinel Carbone knives are cheap and good but not beveled like grafting knives

Someone asked where can you get M111 apple rootstock for grafting? www.onegreenworld.com/product/m-111-apple-rootstock-empla-111 is a good choice.

<https://www.burntridgenursery.com/products.asp?dept=98> has several different rootstocks to choose from.

We had a nice conversation about what is growing right now, frost requirements, bloom time, and growing zones.

We met Tyler and Connor who have fallen in love with fruit trees, want to create a DIY in their back yard. This led to Karen Payton reviewing the CRFG membership application process and costs.

There was a brief description of the Scion Exchange and the process we followed for this extraordinary year. (See article below.)

All in all, there was a LOT of good information shared. Thank you very much to Bill and Emory, for the wonderful videos showing us how each of the grafts work! Hopefully we will have a weblink available soon, so you can see them again.

February Mead Making

With a whopping 35+ attendees, this was the biggest crowd we have had at a meeting yet! Our guest speaker, Roger Taylor, gave us the ins and outs of making mead, a traditional drink made with honey, yeast, and flavoring.

He started with a history of beekeeping, which has been around for millions of years. The first evidence of beekeeping was in ancient Egypt, where they used ceramics to contain the hives. When bees make honey they spread nectar in their comb and wave their wings to evaporate all water moisture. It doesn't spoil. Honey found in the Egyptian tombs is still edible!

In the 1800s, the Langstroth hive was invented, with its removable frames for the honeycomb, and which is the commonly used design of today. To harvest the honey, you remove a frame, slice the wax caps off, pour out the honey, clean the frame, and give it back to the bees. Simple and economical.

Roger has been a beekeeper for 57 years, and has been a home brewer for many years. Several years ago, one of Roger's hives gave him 5 gallons of honey every 5 months! What can you do with all that honey?

A friend told him to make The King's Mead. (The movie Beowulf had just come out that year.) So Roger began to do some research.

Mead, at its most basic form, is a mix of fermented yeast and honey and water. Add fruit or spices to get a new flavor. As time went on, people discovered fermented grapes make wine, and fermented grain becomes beer. These alcoholic beverages were easier to make than mead - there was no need to fight stinging insects for the ingredients! Soon, fancy liquors became popular and mead fell further out of fashion.

But mead is starting to come back in popularity. There are so many flavors it's hard to describe it. It's sort of a combination of ale and wine, but that doesn't really do it justice.

And it's more than just yeast and honey and water. For one thing, you don't want to kill the living yeast. Roger advises against using tap water - it's got

chlorine in it! He uses filtered, or sometimes alkaline waters. Most honeys are a little acidic, so alkaline water is good to keep things balanced.

There is an incredible variety of honeys. Honey flavor depends on what the bees have been eating most recently, and there are billions of flowers in the world. Lighter honey can be almost clear, and typically has a small, sweet flavor. Darker honeys have a richer flavor and aroma.

There are also many types of yeast: wine, bread, saki, and beer all use different yeast species. Yeast also comes in many forms: powdered and liquid are the most common, but there are also natural yeasts (which can affect fermentation) randomly living in the air.

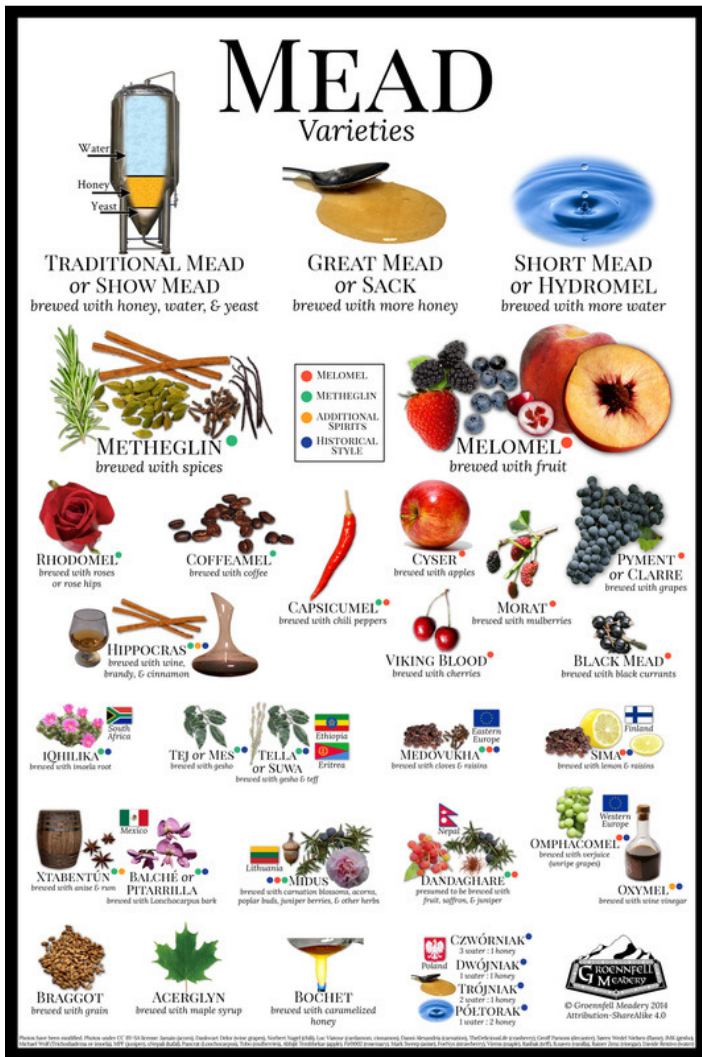
A lot of the mead's flavor will come from the yeast. Some yeasts tolerate alcohol better than others, but others will stop fermenting at a low alcohol content. Some yeasts don't tolerate sugar well, others thrive at certain pH levels.

Temperature is important as well. For instance, Kveik yeasts can tolerate high temperatures and produce better flavors (in his opinion). There are also tailored/organic honey nutrients which can be used to feed the yeast.

Yeast needs food and oxygen to start fermenting. Dried yeast must be put into water with nutrients, which brings it back to life. Roger takes it one step further - as the yeast in his mix starts coming back to life, he waits a while, then adds a little honey. That gives the yeast a "taste" of what is to come, and starts the process of fermentation. After another 15 minutes, he adds a "must" (a mix of honey and water).

Mead, and its many incarnations, is characterized three ways: by strength (% alcohol content), sweetness (dry, semi-dry, and sweet), and carbonation (still, carbonated, or sparkling).

Flavoring is where things get interesting. Different fruits produce different types of mead. You can add maple syrup, or spices, or anything else. There's an almost unimaginable number of ways to add flavor. Meads are categorized by their flavoring. (See below.)



<https://www.groesnfeld.com/blog/new-mead-varieties-poster>

Roger has experimented with different fruits, such as pomegranate, blueberries, dates, and even pineapple. Although he does his own beekeeping, he still finds it more economical to buy from other honey makers. He has purchased honey from around the world, including Africa and Brazil. (The Brazilian honey is collected from aphids and conifers - it's honey from honeydew!)

He starts his brew in a 4 - 5 gallon bucket with a lid. It's a good size, inexpensive, and easy to add fruit - remove lid and drop it in. He has a large chest freezer that can hold 30 gallons of mead at a time.

After a while, the yeast runs out of food. When this happens, Roger "racks" it in 5-gallon ("Sparkletts") bottles and lets it clarify - the yeast falls out of solution. Once clear, he moves it into stainless steel kegs. After keging, he can carbonate.

Roger says mead tastes better if aged. He has some brews that are 10 years old, and even older. He prefers them at least 1 year old. Some of his are tasty at 3 - 4 months, but he often puts it in old soda kegs and lets it age for several years. He will sample each batch every so often and takes it out when he thinks it's ready.

Mead making isn't easy. He admits to having made more bad meads than good ones. He told us of the time he tried to make a carrot flavored melomel. He said it was absolutely disgusting! Oops!

He strongly recommends making notes as you make your mead. Write down sources, quantities, ratios, time, temperature. Don't let it oxidize (too much) because it ruins the flavor.

How do you know what flavors to add? You need a good sense of aroma. He took a course at UC Davis, an aroma class. They had 30 containers and students tried to recognize each scent. Roger remembers the ground pepper, because he could NOT recognize it. He knew it, it was very familiar - but he couldn't figure it out. When he finally saw the tag under the container, he went back to associate the smell with the memory of grinding peppercorns. He emphasized that although you can smell something, you still have to REMEMBER what it tastes like! Cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg - would you recognize them without having a spice box in front of you, or would you mix them up with perhaps oranges or doughnuts? It is possible to train your mind to recognize the flavor from the smell.

He also went through a Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP). They have recognized guidelines for how to make, how to judge, how to quantify what you are tasting and smelling. They also have a Fault list - what's bad, and bad flavors to avoid.

Another thing he emphasized is cleanliness and sterilization. You don't want to incorporate anything that can make a bad flavor or, worse, poison! He likes to heat his fruit to about 180 degrees to sterilize it. Some fruit you can just wash. Apples can be pressed for juice.

Other ways to clean the fruit is to splash vodka on it. (Drain before adding.) Another way is to freeze the fruit. This has two advantages: first, it bursts cell walls, making the flavor come out easier. Second, it allows you to save up until you have enough for your batch of mead.

Roger uses both solid and liquid fruit, and even dried fruit. He uses paint filter bags, putting fruit in a bag, dropping it into solution, and pulling it out when done. New bags are fairly clean as purchased, but putting sanitizer on them before use is always a good idea.

We were told about and shown some of the more complicated equipment. A bubbler allows pressure to escape during fermentation. A hydrometer measures specific gravity - it floats higher or lower in the liquid depending on the alcohol or sugar content.

We learned other subtleties - if you stir the "must" rapidly as it's fermenting, it can release CO₂. Too much CO₂ stops the fermentation process. Too-high pH level can also stop fermentation. Using fruit during fermentation feeds the yeast, but some flavor gets lost in the process. . Adding fruit juice after fermentation makes a stronger flavor. (Watermelon is the perfect example - it was added during fermentation, and there was no flavor by the time the mead was ready.)

You can try ice distillation instead of fermentation. Since alcohol doesn't freeze, you remove the water-ice as it forms, leaving the liquor behind. Ports are fortified drinks with a higher alcohol content. 1-gallon batches are easier, because you don't need more equipment and flavor.

Different honeys complement different fruits. If you have a delicate fruit like sapotes, you want a lighter honey to match the fruit. Stronger fruit like oranges or cherries, can work with a stronger honey flavor. What you taste off the tree is not necessarily what you get in the final product. BBQ'd fruit adds a smoky flavor, while aging the mead in oak and wood adds woody and smoke flavor.

You can use bottled fruit juice - as long as it does not contain any preservative (yeast can't survive). Also, beware of cheap honey sold with corn syrup. You can

test this by putting a blob of honey in water. The honey stays put but the corn syrup will disintegrate.

We learned that honeys can be categorized by using a microscope to identify pollen grains.

He hasn't personally grown any fruit but he likes the flavor of fresh guavas. And he knows people who have used cherimoya and sapote.

Roger does not sell his mead. Although he has licensed the name "Monarch Meadery" he has had challenges trying to start a business in this current pandemic. (Los Angeles has a very complicated and cumbersome licensing process for alcohol sales.)

Roger is a member of the Maltose Falcons, a group of homebrewers who meet to share and taste and talk about homemade drinks. They have a lot of information about mead on their website www.maltosefalcons.com. Here are some other resources mentioned during the meeting:

- Bennet's in Fillmore - wholesale honey, taste testing, <http://www.stores.bennethoney.com>
- Tavern Service in Northridge - beer making supplies, grains, malts, yeasts, nutrients, and equipment. <http://www.tavernservice.com>
- Home Beer Wine & Cheese Shop in Woodland Hills - everything! <http://homebeerwinecheese.com>
- More Beer More Wine in Pittsburg, California - online retailer of everything, fast shipping. www.morebeer.com
- Walker Farm in Texas - organic honeys. www.walkerhoneyfarm.com
- Whole Foods and Trader Joe's grocery stores - organic fruit juices and honeys.

Roger compliments the CRFG for growing such interesting fruit. He wants us to know if anyone has an abundance and needs to find a way to get rid of it, please give him a call and he will be happy to give you some mead in return.

On our part, we would like to thank Roger very much for a fascinating and most educational presentation!

Chapter Business

After our February presentation on mead-making, we spent some time taking care of chapter business.

Please remember to vote! The January issue of Fruit Gardener has your ballot. They need to be in by the end of March 2021. A copy is being sent with this newsletter as well.

We are still trying to replace the irreplaceable Pat Valdivia as our Program Chair. Please see WANT ads at the end of the newsletter. We are also looking for other interesting speakers.

We discussed the pandemic and vaccinations. At this time we do not expect to have in-person meetings for the rest of 2021. On the positive side, with our current format, future lecturers can present at our chapter meetings from anywhere in the country!

Will there be a Festival of Fruit this year? We understand the organizers are considering holding it as an online event. There are advantages and disadvantages: tasting events are going to be either rare or impossible, however it will be easier to attend multiple lectures. We do not know what the festival pricing will be yet.

The visiting Maltose Falcons suggested a way to hold our Festival. They occasionally make arrangements with a campground for events. Tents are set up at socially distanced spacing. Wares are placed on the table, everything is pre-prepared, and there is no personal interaction. They also include an internet presence for presentations and meetings. We thank them for the ideas!

Jessica Puppé mentioned the chapter Facebook page, saying she likes to see the chapter get promoted there. That's one way to get people interested in joining!

Our chapter Treasury balance is down a bit, since we have not had regular plant sales. On the subject of fundraisers, it was pointed out that the West LA chapter held a successful plant sale last year. They post online the plants they have and sign up for plants they want. Everything was eventually brought to one member's house and she arranged pickup with the

buyers. There was definite interest in having a plant sale in our chapter. Please see WANT ads at the end of the newsletter.

An Unofficial Exchange

By Deborah Oisboid

Things being as they are (or were), any attempt to hold a scion exchange in 2021 would need a little creativity and lots of flexibility. Instead of our usual gather at Sepulveda Gardens, and spreading the scions out for everyone to select (in turn), everyone who wanted to participate joined the "Unofficial" L.A. Chapter Exchange online. (Chapter members signed in with login and password, to ensure privacy.)

A pair of databases were set up online – one for "wanted scions" and another for "offered scions." Participants were asked to list what they were looking for, and list what they could offer. Sometimes a Want would inspire an Offer, and the lists grew daily.

The two database/lists were eventually combined into a single list of everything being offered. To the right of each scion were columns for members to sign up for the varieties of interest.

Volunteers were requested to become "Scion House" leaders. These people were a central collection point for their local area: Santa Clarita, San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles/Westside, and Thousand Oaks. A Google Map was created for participants to see how close they were to each Scion House. Emails were shared to arrange drop offs and pickups.

Participants were asked to drop off their cuttings to their nearest Scion House by the due date. Cuttings had to be clearly labeled with variety, and the person they were going to.

After all scions had been collected, the Scion House leaders sorted them by recipient into the four Scion House locales. The House leaders met at Sepulveda Gardens and exchanged the collections, with minimal contact and plenty of masking and physical distance.

The actual exchange went very smoothly - with one or two scions left behind or sent to the wrong House but these problems were resolved fairly quickly.

The next day all participants could arrange for a porch pickup from their local Scion House. Everything was distributed within a week!

I would love to say it was quick and easy, but maintaining the databases took a surprising amount of effort.

There are a lot of things I would do differently next time. Hopefully there won't need to be a next time! Let's keep

our fingers crossed that next January we can meet in person again!

CRFG - This Works for Me!

This year, let's help everyone grow their best crops! Describe your experience(s) growing fruit in your area. What worked best for you? What varieties? What special treatment do the plants need? Hopefully your advice will steer others in wonderfully productive directions! Thanks!

-Deborah Oisboid, editor@crfg-la.org

Peach Leaf Curl

By Eric Tennyson

I have a peach tree that developed peach leaf curl. It continued to get worse each year, going from mild to severe. I tried Copper spray one year, Sulfur spray the next year, and dormant oil after using copper the following year, but nothing was working. Someone told me to use worm castings. I spread a full large bag of worm castings around the base of the tree after it lost all of its leaves, just before the first rain of the season. When the new leaves came out the tree was 80-90% better. I did it again the next year and the leaf curl was gone except for a couple leaves which I easily picked off by hand.

There is research showing when the soil is at different levels of oxidation/reduction and pH the plants are susceptible to different types of infection: viruses at one level, bacteria at another level, fungus at another level, insects at another level, with some overlap. There is a sweet spot in a reduced soil with pH on the acidic side, where the plant is resistant to all infections and infestations. It may be the worm castings help the soil get to this sweet spot.

www.tinyurl.com/EH-and-PH-course

This is a link to the Regen.Ag Academy free course called "Redox potential (EH) and pH as indicators of soil, plant, and animal health and quality." This is an excellent course but very detail-oriented. The beginning of the course gives you the basic understanding of Eh and pH. Toward the end they give you practical applications. It even works for growing fish and animals. The information you gain from the course works best if you have a lab and equipment to measure Eh. (Which, unfortunately, I do not have.)

Join CRFG – Get a Free Fig Tree!

Courtesy of Edgar Valdivia and Charles Malki

Edgar Valdivia and Paul Talley have donated many fig cuttings that will be given free to whoever orders IV Organics products from Charles Malki. Edgar takes time in this video to emphasize the importance of joining CRFG. As you well know, Ed is always making viewers aware of our organization and how much they can learn if they become members of CRFG.

Here is the link of the latest video Edgar and Paul made about figs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CDKTOFTzrs>

Editor's Column

(With Classifieds!)

WANTED: YOU!

Attention all CRFG members:

We are still looking for an energetic, outgoing, and enthusiastic individual to become our new Program Chair. Duties include:

- Updating and maintaining the CRFG-LA social calendar,
- Finding, signing, and confirming new speakers,
- Discovering and arranging tours of gardens or other fruit-related locations, and
- Co-ordinating with Sepulveda Gardens staff for use of their meeting room (hopefully soon!)

You will have plenty of help from other Board members who have already filled half of our activities calendar already!

If you are interested, or if you know someone who would be perfect for the job, please contact any CRFG-LA Board member. (Contact information is in the green column on page 1.)

WANTED: Plants – would you participate in a sale?

How many people would be interested in participating in a fundraising plant sale? The West LA chapter managed a successful one last year by having people post their plants online. The plants which were purchased were sent to a central location where they could be picked up. If you are interested – if you have plants to donate to the sale and are willing to deliver them or have them delivered to a central location – please contact me at editor@crfg-la.org or any of the chapter members whose contact information is listed in the green box on page 1 of the newsletter.