



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

May 2014 Volume XIX

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

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MAY MEETING

Date: MAY 24, 2014

Time: 10:00 A.M.

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

Program: Michael Wittman, of *BlueSky Biochar*, will be speaking to us on biochar, a biological charcoal soil supplement. Michael will inform us of the benefits, and history of using biochar in our soil. Its porous nature creates a home for microbes to flourish and collects and stores moisture and nutrients that would otherwise evaporate or be washed away.

In 2006, **Michael** founded, and became chief executive officer of Third Planet Energy Inc., a California biofuel company. He has long been an environmental activist for an ever-growing number of national grass roots movements. **Michael** brings to bear a lifetime of experience in Alternative Energy.

In 1970 he was a volunteer organizer of the very first Earth Day in New York City. His highest priority has long been the defense and conservation of all natural resources. While continuing to expand and facilitate biofuel and alternative energy interests, in 2010 he launched The Blue Sky Enterprise, an alternative energy consultation and supply company.

You will not only learn but you will be inspired by his very dynamic and charismatic presentation.

JUNE PROGRAM:

Date: June 28th Jerry Schwartz garden in Northridge

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Contact *Program Chairman* for location

Program: Visit to fellow member, **Jerry Schwartz's** garden;

Welcome to the fruit jungle in Sherwood Forest. Here is a sampling of what you will see: raised veggie beds and over 250 fruit trees fill the jungle. Among the trees are over 60 varieties of citrus, 11 varieties of persimmons, 20 pomegranates, 7 loquats, over 20 stone fruits, cherries, 8 pitanga, grumichama, fruiting jaboticaba, babaco, chi, kia apple, figs, pineapple, tropical and strawberry guava, cherry of the Rio Grande, pitaya, pitahaya, grapes, passion fruit and many more. All are densely planted.

When arriving at the jungle pass the cow and stop at the pig.

Attention: All Members If your last name begins with N-Z please bring something for our May table. Since we are usually eating around noon, and even though we love all those sweet treats, please also consider a dish more appropriate for a lunchtime meal.

Save the Date

July 26th – Field Trip Sepulveda Gardens – Albert Chang

August 23rd – Field Trip – La Verne Nursery

September - TBD

October 25th – Field Trip – Buon Gusto Orchard

November – TBD

December 13th – Annual Holiday Party

Words From Our Chairman

Culture in the Garden

By Catherine Diaz

Here you go!



Dear Los Angeles Chapter Members,
Hope this finds all of you in health and peace as we get over these extremely hot days with temperatures in

the high nineties. Keep checking your plants and trees and give them extra water as needed. Last week our chapter toured the home and beautiful gardens of Charles Portney. For the last many years, Charles has donated hundreds, even thousands of seedlings and propagated plants to not only our chapter but other chapters as well. And along with these plants he has always included detailed descriptions. I have been impressed every year by how many plants Charles has brought and freely given us, and imagined what his propagation area must look like. I imagined a huge nursery like propagation area. I was surprised to find a rather small but well organized area (see page 3). I thought I/we could all do something like this. So I started planting "El Bumpo" Cherimoya seeds, organized some fig, grape and pomegranate cutting with the intent to bring them to our chapter meetings as donations. What if we all began to follow the lead and example that Charles has given us? Everyone would benefit, members and soon to be members. I mean we would have more plant material than we need, enough for friends and neighbors and other garden clubs. By the way, if you were not able to visit Charles' garden you missed a beautiful one. It was well planned, mulched, trimmed, clean, BEAUTIFUL! I have never seen so many fruiting blueberries in one yard.

Best,

Jim Schopper

"He who shares the joy in what he's grown spreads joy abroad and doubles his own" Author unknown.

Culture and life styles centered around trees and plants can be found throughout time and across space. There is a lot learn.

During the visit to Charles Portney's garden he touched on the value of etrog within the Jewish culture. I wanted to know more so I asked my neighbor Scott, who fancies himself an expert on all things... well, on all things. Though he is not a gardener he loaned me a book to help explain the significance of the etrog.

The following summarizes what I learned from the book, *The Complete Book of Jewish Observance* by Leo Trepp, as well as other sources. There are four vegetative elements used in the harvest celebration of Sukkot. Each part has significant physical attributes and symbiotic representations.

Etrog - (*Fruit from a citron tree*) The etrog must be grown from seed; it can't be grafted. The fruit must be unblemished, yellow and smooth. The pistil cannot be broken off and it must have a stem. "Etrog has both smell and taste... perfume and nourishment"; it represents human qualities as "persons endowed with kindness and courtesy (smell) and wisdom (taste)".

Lulav - Must be a ripe green, closed frond from a date tree and "must be "straight and strong". The date palm is "rich in nourishment, produces fruit without smell." *Human qualities*: "the date, may lack courtesy (no smell) but are rich in wisdom (taste)".

Hadass - Boughs with leaves from the myrtle tree are cut with "three leaves at each knob of the stem"; "the myrtle exudes a sweet scent but has no nutritional value"; human qualities: "the myrtle may be filled with kindness (smell) but lack wisdom (no taste)".

Aravah - Branches with leaves from the willow tree. "The willow has neither scent nor nourishment but is necessary for human satisfaction"; Human qualities: "many will have no distinction like the willow."

The symbiotic relationship of the four elements is: "*no human is expendable and no one should be slighted as it effects the whole.*"

A final reminder... This is just my understanding of what I read but I find it interesting that so many different cultures regard vegetation in different ways. Next time: *The Three Sisters in Mayan agriculture.*

LOOKING BACK

By Debbie Schopper, Member at Large

March Meeting

Our March meeting was held at the Sepulveda Garden Center. Our speakers were Ivan Thomas and Ed Valdivia. Both Ivan and Ed are members of our chapter and both are speakers and educators. Their topic was, "The Pomegranate". Ed gave a lecture with a power point presentation. Ivan spoke of the new Russian varieties that he had procured from UC Davis years ago. These pomegranate varieties are no longer available from UC Davis; however, our chapter is now possessor of approximately 65 + varieties of pomegranates, thanks to Ivan's generous donations. Many of these new varieties of pomegranates were a part of our silent auction. Our members have been asked to carefully label these varieties and report their growth activity and share information and fruit to the club.

April Meeting

This month we were treated to two field trip/meetings. The first was a Tree Symposium at Sylmar High School conducted by Steve List, horticulture teacher and CRFG member. Tom Spellman of the Dave Wilson Nurseries was the speaker of this event. Tom speaks to the backyard gardener and fruit tree grower sharing planting ideas and how to multiply your fruit tree varieties through grafting. A potluck luncheon and raffle followed. Everyone left with fruit trees and vegetable plants and, of course, a tour of the grounds.

Charles Portney's yard. What an exciting experience to see the beauty that Charles has created and to think, "How can I incorporate some of these planting ideas into my yard?"

Trees number over 200 and include pluots, fig, many guava varieties, surnam cherry, white

sapote, oro blanco grapefruit, persimmon, mulberry, avocado, pink lemonade, carob, mango, Morro blood orange, and the list goes on. Have you

thought of making a

guava fence? Charles has one; it is beautiful!

And vegetables are planted in a vegetable garden and also throughout the whole garden alongside trees, herbs and flowers. Blueberries are planted in pots on the patio along with many seedlings. And while you are feasting your

eyes on this garden, Charles is teaching you about the benefits of mulching, how he deals with garden pests, and sharing planting stories. And then, there is the contribution of his talented daughter's art sculptures placed throughout the yard. These can be seen on her web site:

rebeccaportney.com



Babaco Papaya



Boric Acid as an Ant Pesticide

-Deborah Oisboid

At the Sylmar High School field trip, the question was asked how to control ants? Tom Spellman, of Dave Wilson Nurseries, recommended a simple mix of boric acid, sugar, and water and said the recipe can be found online. For those CRFG members who do not have access to the internet, here is information about this useful pesticide.



Boric acid is a common ingredient in several medications and eye washes, and can be found in almost any pharmacy. It works as a slow-acting poison in ants. Boric acid is mixed with their favorite food so the ants carry it back to their colony, which kills them where they nest.

There are many kinds of ants, so boric acid's effectiveness varies. It works best against house pests such as the Argentine, the Pharaoh, and the house ant. These species prefer sugary sweet food. Outdoor ants which prefer proteins aren't as receptive to boric acid baits.

What type of ant are you up against? Find out by putting small amounts of jelly, sugar water, and peanut butter where you see ant traffic. If they go for the jelly or sugar-water, use a sugar-based bait. If they prefer peanut butter, you need a protein-based poison. The mix is simply:

- 1 teaspoon boric acid
- 1 cup "food"

This makes a 2% strength bait. Sometimes a stronger mix works better, sometimes the ants won't touch it unless it is weaker. You may want to try different ratios of boric acid to "food" to see which is most effective on your insects. The bait can be stored in a sealed jar for a long time. Here are some recipes to try, once you've determined which type you need:

JELLY BASED ("solid" bait can be placed as lumps)
2 tablespoons mint jelly
¼ teaspoon boric acid

SUGAR BASED (soak on a cotton ball instead of leaving puddles)
¼ cup sugar
1 cup warm water
1 tablespoon boric acid

PROTEIN BASED (solid bait)
2 ounces peanut butter (4 tablespoons)
2 ounces honey (6 tablespoons)
¾ teaspoon boric acid

GARDEN SAFETY:

While boric acid is a plant nutrient, too much boron in the ground can be toxic to plants, so use with caution.

TOXICITY NOTE:

Pets and small children could become poisoned if they eat the bait traps, so place with care. Store the boric acid and any extra bait mixture where children and pets cannot get to it.

SETTING TRAPS:

Ants can crawl inside jars, so one way to avoid accidents is to place the bait inside a baby food jar with holes punched in the top for the ants to crawl in and out of. Another option is to fill a 2-inch length of drinking straw with bait. If you use sugar water, soak a cotton ball with the mix so it does not puddle.

The bait needs to be along the ant's regular travel path. To locate the best places, spread some jelly (or peanut butter) on masking tape and place several pieces in multiple locations. If you chose a good location ants will discover the treat(s) within a few hours. If not, try different locations. You will need multiple traps to get as many ants as possible. It may take as many as 20 or 30 traps to control the ant problem.

Replace the bait regularly with a fresh batch because ants won't be interested in jelly or peanut butter once it dries up. Continue putting out bait until you no longer see ants.

Sources:

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/homemade-ant-killer-boric-acid-74569.html>
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/antbait267.shtml>
<http://www.livingwithbugs.com/boric.html>
<http://www.food.com/recipe/get-rid-of-ants-ants-ants-203233>
<http://insects.about.com/od/HouseholdPests/a/How-To-Make-And-Use-Homemade-Ant-Baits.htm>

Question: What about fire ants?