



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

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

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NOVEMBER MEETING

Date: November 24, 2012
Time: 10:00 A.M.
Place: Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316



Program: Jim and Debbie Schopper will be speaking about the 2012 Festival of Fruit held this year in Santa Rosa, Ca. The California Rare Fruit Growers partnered with Baker Creek Seed co. and the 2nd annual "Worlds Pure Food Fair" at The National Heirloom Exposition. Hopefully other CRFG members who attended will share what they did and saw.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!! If your last name begins with **A-M** please bring something for our **November tasting table**. **Please label whatever you bring.**

DECEMBER HOLIDAY MEETING

Date: Saturday, December 15, 2012
Time: 10 AM
Place: Sepulveda Garden Center,
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

Program: Our Festive Holiday Potluck! Remember this is a full meal, not just snacks. It is a chance to prepare your favorite dish. Please bring a dish that serves 8-- and it would be great if you would include the recipe. Bring food to share and wear colors of the Season! Once again we can look forward to **Marcia Melcombe** entertaining us with some wonderful music!.

Our member **Dr. Ivan Thomas** is donating exotic pomegranate trees to our Chapter to sell at a very low price. This is your chance to pick up pomegranate varieties that you will never find in the nurseries. Also, please bring your plants for the raffle. We will include a gift exchange, so if you wish to participate, wrap up something you think others would like; it does not have to be new, but in "gently used condition". Those that bring a gift will receive a raffle ticket at the door.



PLEASE DO NOT SHARE ANY CITRUS OR

CUTTINGS-psyllid infestation has been found in Ventura County.

Department of Agriculture has already begun spraying residential areas having citrus trees on their property.



WORDS FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear Members,

Dear Los Angeles Chapter members,

Thank God it's fall, the leaves are turning, falling and YES, the cooler weather is here. We had a scorcher of a summer, triple digit heat for what seemed like weeks on end.

I don't know about your garden but I had sun burnt tomatoes and bell peppers like never before. But, I always over plant. This year we canned thirty-five quarts of stewed tomatoes, thirty-one half-pints of salsa, dried several pounds of arbol chilies, cayenne chilies, sun dried tomatoes ("Principal Borghese" my favorite heirloom drying tomato), and planted way too much basil. Oh, and did I mention summer squash? I planted five types and acorn winter squash.

This fall I've decided to plant some snow peas, approx 200 plus plants. Years ago, an old friend, a retired flower farmer {94 years young} gave me some Japanese cucumber seeds three varieties and for each variety he gave me approximately 400 seeds. I said, "Tomi, I don't need that many seeds; my garden is only 20ft by 60ft." He then told me, "Yes, you do! Always plant more than you want and then thin them. This will insure a good harvest". This summer I was thankful for those words of wisdom, because I lost half of my tomatoes to heat and spider mites. So, don't be afraid to plant more than you want. I know that for some reason we don't like to pull up new plants; but, go ahead and do it keeping the most robust ones to insure a bountiful harvest.

Sowing seeds,
Jim Schopper

May I leave you with this thought:

"You reap what you sow"

When Apricot Met Plum...

In the Search for Perfect Fruit, Breeders Create Odd, New Hybrids

By [MELANIE GRAYCE WEST](#)

For 50 years, the Zaiger family has been striving for a perfect piece of fruit: juicy like a plum, but not as messy- sweeter, too, with a cherry snap.

The Zaigers own Zaiger's Inc. Genetics in Modesto, Calif., one of country's few commercial fruit breeders specializing in hybrid fruits. Next month, they will decide whether to grant any of the farmers who tasted their pluerry, named for its mix of plum and cherry, at a sampling last week the exclusive rights to grow the new fruit and sell it to supermarkets across the country.

How fruit producers are trying to breed a better fruit, such as mottled plums, plueries and peacherines. Melanie West explains on Lunch Break.

Hybrid fruit is a potentially lucrative, and delicious, market. Fruit growers are motivated by the lure of inventing a product that commands premium prices, from 50 cents to \$1 or more per pound than conventional fruit. The breeders are also aiming for fruit that will have a longer harvest period to be available to shoppers longer. And with the rise in cooking styles that celebrate the ingredients, American consumers are demonstrating a willingness to spend more on food and a desire to hear the stories behind their



produce.

Breeding hybrids is a painstaking and slow process, with a new fruit that makes it to market coming maybe once in 1,000 tries, fruit breeders and growers say. If successful, the Zaigers' genetic cross of plum and cherry would join the Pluot and Aprium—combinations of plum and apricot—in the firm's array of hybrid fruits available in produce aisles world-wide.

"We want real sugar fruit. We want you to have to go to the dentist," says Dan Spain, vice president of sales and marketing at Kingsburg Orchards of Kingsburg, Calif., one of the big growers of specialty hybrid fruit.

Mr. Spain says Kingsburg has identified fruits that appeal to specific age groups and palates. For example, after visiting stores and talking with produce managers, Mr. Spain found children favor a Pluot that is a little sour with a green skin. People in their 30s prefer something with layers of fruit flavors and a mottled color. Older people like a milder, traditional-tasting fruit, with not-too-tart red or black skin.

To cross fruit varieties, Glen Bradford of Bradford Farms in Le Grand, Calif., chooses a female parent, or "mother" tree, and brings the male component, the pollen, directly to it.

For peach and nectarine "mother" plants, workers remove the petals and pollen-producing anthers of every flower, leaving only the pistil. Workers then touch each pistil, by hand, with pollen taken from the "father" tree, such as a different peach or nectarine. "There might be 500 pistils on the tree that we left, and we come and touch each of those, like a bee would accidentally touch them," says Mr. Bradford.

To pollinate most plum trees, bees are released into a covering wood and plastic structure, along with pollen-bearing bouquets from other plum or apricot trees. The resulting fruit from a mother tree is planted and the seedling produced is the new mixed variety, technically called an "interspecific" fruit. It will take another three to four years before that seedling matures and begins to bear fruit. The new variety must grow easily and produce ample quantities of attractive and hardy fruit that is easy to ship and store. Also critical is the fruit's so-called brix, or sugar level.

Mr. Bradford estimates that he creates 20,000 hybrid seedlings annually with an overhead cost of about \$600,000 to \$700,000 a year. "It's very tedious," says Mr. Bradford, adding it takes an average of 10 years from the time a fruit is crossed to its appearance in a grocery store.

Breeders of hybrid fruits have largely dodged criticism faced by big makers of genetically modified plants in part because their old-fashioned methods take place in the field, not in a lab, mimicking how plants naturally evolve.

Hybrid fruits make up a tiny portion of the \$21.5 billion in U.S. farm cash receipts recorded last year. Just 4,332 acres of Pluots were planted nationwide, compared with 109,319 acres of plums and prunes, according to the most recent census by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2007.

The gamble to develop new fruits can be more of a "cash drain than an income-maker," says Leith Gardner, a family member who helps operate Zaiger's. She says when her father, Floyd Zaiger, started breeding fruit trees half a century ago, he promised his wife, Betty, the royalties of his first fruit invention.

She got a check for \$250 some 12 years later. It cost millions of dollars and decades just to develop their varieties of Pluot, known generically as a plumcot.

Past successes like the Aprium or a new kind of canning peach keep the business rolling, Ms. Gardner says. After watching her fruit-grower customers eat more than one bite at the recent tasting, she says the pluerry has special promise. "If they eat it down to the

pit, you know it was a real winner," she says. The only concern farmers raised was that it might be a little too small and end up more of a novelty than a commercial blockbuster, she says.

Developers of exotic fruit crosses also try to ensure consistent quality. Someone buying a bad peach, for instance, will likely accept it as just a bad peach, and will probably buy peaches again. It can be tougher with an exotic cross: A bad one can turn shoppers off to new varieties altogether, say fruit growers and buyers.

Wegmans Food Markets, the mid-Atlantic region supermarket chain, typically stocks two kinds of plumcots and one variety of Aprium.

Since the fruits "are a little bit mysterious," limiting the selection to two or three hybrids at a time makes it easier for shoppers, says Art DiCesare, who buys fruit for Wegmans. The hybrids have been "well received" by customers and repeat sales have been strong, he says. Some universities also are working at creating hybrids, or improving more common varieties of fruit. Cornell University has developed two new apple breeds called NY 1 and NY 2 with an eye toward breeding more reliably productive trees, with fruit that ripen evenly and store well.

At the University of California, Davis, researchers developed a red walnut that some farmers are now growing as a niche product. Researchers at the University of Florida Institute of Agricultural Science have developed a seedless lemorlime—a lemon, orange and lime fruit that is still in the research phase.

It took 50 years to make the parents of the pluerry and at least a dozen years of crossing to make the pluerry itself, says Ms. Gardner. Cherries are slow to mature into a tree, and the vast variety of plum types makes finding the right one to mix a long, laborious process.

"No piece of fruit or tree is ever perfect," she says.

"There are always things that Mother Nature is doing that needs to be improved upon."

Write to Melanie Grayce West at

melanie.west@wsj.com

(This article appeared in the Wall Street Journal on September 7, 2011)

My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view.

LOOKING BACK! SEPTEMBER MEETING



Fascinated members gather around **David Saraf** as he points out the queen bee. At our September meeting, **David** reminded us that both domestic honeybees and wild bees such as bumblebees and mason bees are in decline, in some cases alarmingly so. Bees are important to agriculture and natural habitats because they pollinate flowers, allowing plants to seed and fruit. These are some of the things we can do to help the bees in our region:

Agriculture chemicals are dangerous to wildlife, including bees. Pesticides are especially damaging. Reduce the use of chemicals in your own homes and garden

Include flowering plants for bees in your garden. Some good choices are honeysuckle, marigolds and thistles. Of course flowering fruit trees also provide nectar for the bees. Thank you, **David**, for impressing upon us our role in protecting this very important insect.

OCTOBER MEETING

This month, our chapter was invited to the home of **Tony and Monica Stewart**. As we walked out the back doors of their home onto the patio area, our eyes were in for a treat: Citrus trees, (including blood orange, tangelo, navel orange, meyer lemon, and pink lemonade, to name a few); potted Australian finger lime, key lime, a very large 4-in-one pluot tree, guavas, mexicola grande, avocado, nectaplums, pomegranate, cherimoya, limequat, pitahaya, and on and on! Nearly every tree and planting has a story related to it, such as the “Silverlake banana freebees”.

A beautiful “puzzle” pathway leads to the terraced trees. The first of several levels is edged in a vegetable

garden. In the very center of the terraced yard, is a large patio which offers a view of the Santa Clarita Valley. Around this patio is Tony’s hydroponics’ tube garden which circulates water from 6am to 11pm daily. Had we been there in the evening we would have seen the lighting that Tony has installed on his trees and patio. With over 40 trees and 50 plants, the Stewarts inspired us with their beauty and the plan of their back yard.



We enjoyed a potluck lunch after the tour and **Monica** served her “Chicken Chili” (recipe below) and cornbread. No one left empty handed. We all received a jar of Monica’s pluot jam (delicious!). Thank you, **Tony** and **Monica** for a delightful day.

Monica Stewart's White Bean Chicken Chili

Ingredients:

1 - Roasted chicken- skinned, boned and shredded (you can also dice fresh chicken breast and sauté it with the onion instead of using a roasted chicken)
1 – large brown onion diced
cumin- about 2 teaspoons or to taste.
1 - bunch cilantro roughly chopped. (Reserve about 2 tablespoons for garnish)
grated low fat mozzarella or low fat jack for garnish
white corn tortilla chips (optional)
4 - 16 oz cans fat free chicken stock or broth
1 - Large can white hominy
2 - 16 cans white beans or navy beans
1 - 16 oz cans garbanzo beans
1 - 16 oz can cannellini or white kidney beans
1 - 16 oz can great northern beans
(You can substitute any kind of white beans you can find. Mix and match to your own taste.)

6 Fresh Anaheim chilies roasted, peeled and diced (you can substitute canned diced mild green chilies if you want to save time)

1-Fresh poblano chile, roasted, peeled and diced. (you can use canned or just leave out)

12 – Tomatillos- Peel the paper skin off and wash. Slice horizontally and lay skin side down in a shallow baking dish sprayed with cooking spray. Roast for about 10 minutes in a 400 degree oven 3 – 4 inches from the broiler element, Turn over and roast skin side up until the skins get a little charred.

One head of garlic, leave the skins on. Place in tin foil and close it up. (Roast in the same oven just on the rack for about 18 – 20 minutes. (As long as it takes for the tomatillos)

When cool, peel the garlic and pour all the tomatillos and juice along with the garlic into a blender or use an immersion blender whatever you have will work.

(You can substitute a can of Green Enchilada sauce if you want to save time)

Prep time- about 45 minutes:

Open all beans and dump into a colander to rinse and drain .

In a large stockpot sauté diced onion in 1 tsp of olive oil until onion is translucent.

Add chicken and cumin mixing well.

Add chicken stock and bring to a boil.

Add hominy

Add Garbanzos

Add all the rest of the beans

Add chiles- canned or fresh roasted

Add Tomatillo sauce or green enchilada sauce

Add chopped cilantro

Simmer for 30-40 minutes. It will thicken up.

Garnish with cilantro, cheese, and chips

For Vegetarian Chili- Use Vegetable broth and exclude the chicken.