

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

September 2009

Volume XII Issue 5

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

LA CHAPTER STEPS UP FOR 2010 FESTIVAL

2009 Chapter Officers & Committees

Chairman:
Bill Brandt
805 492-3864 chairman@CRFG-la.org

Treasurer:
K. Payton
818 222-7556 treasurer@CRFG-la.org

Newsletter Editor:
Pat Valdivia
805-584-6244 editor@CRFG-la.org

Program Chairman:
Lynn Maxson
805 527-3912 program@CRFG-la.org

Publicity:
Shelley Smith
818 363-5247 publicity@CRFG-la.org

Historian:
Emory Walton
805 497-8835 historian@CRFG-la.org

Special Events:
Richard Watts
805 484-3584 events@CRFG-la.org

Hospitality Chairman:
Anita Drapkin
818 888-8630
membership@CRFG-la.org

Food Coordinator:
Chris Warren
818 362-8537 food@CRFG-la.org

Plant Sales:
David Payton
818 222-7556 plants@CRFG-la.org

Secretary/Hostess:
Edith Watts
805 484-3584 hospitality@CRFG-la.org

Development Fund:
Bob Vieth
805 495-9789

Date: Saturday September 12, 2009

Time: 10 am

Place: 1091 Carmel Dr. Simi Valley, CA 93065 805 584-6244 pat_erati@yahoo.com

Purpose: To plan the Festival of Fruit for 2010

Pot Luck lunch (bring your salads, desserts, etc)

Well, by now you've all heard – our Los Angeles Chapter will be hosting the Festival of Fruit in 2010. It will be the “Year of the Pitahaya/Dragon Fruit”. In order to make this an outstanding festival we need **ALL OF YOU** to help plan the event. So, the first meeting will be at the home of **Ed and Pat Valdivia**. Come with **all of your ideas** and your sleeves rolled up and ready to work. We will brainstorm, set up committees and pool all your thoughts. **PLEASE phone or email if you plan to attend.**

September Meeting

Date: Saturday, September 26, 2009

Time: 10:00 A.M.

**Place: Sepulveda Garden Center
16622 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA. 91316**

Program: - Tom del Hotel--A nurseryman for 35 years, Tom is a California certified nurseryman and holds four advanced certifications from the California Association of Nursery and Garden Centers. In addition, he is a Certified Arborist, a Certified Pesticide Applicator and a member of the International Plant Propagators Society.

Tom is a part-time horticulture instructor in the Landscape and Nursery Department at Southwestern College and works full-time at The Home Depot in Lemon Grove as a sales associate and as the district trainer for the garden department. Tom also owns and operates his part-time business, Fantasia Gardens, from his home in Lemon Grove, CA. Fantasia Gardens is a nursery which specializes in fruiting and edible plants. Services of fruit tree pruning and orchard and landscape consultations are offered.

Tom's specialty is in fruiting plants for warm winter climates such as Southern California. Tom has been a member of the California Rare Fruit Growers for 25 years and is a past president of the San Diego chapter. Tom was the manager of Pacific Tree Farms for more than ten years.

There is no doubt that with such an incredible background Tom will certainly make our meeting an outstanding experience.

Those whose last name begin with **N-Z** please bring something for our tasting table to the September Meeting. Remember, we always like to sample those great fruits you are growing. So bring some to brag about!

October Meeting

Date: Saturday, October 17, 2009 **PLEASE NOTE THE DATE**

Time: 10 am

Place: Jerry Schwartz' home:

We will be visiting **Jerry's 'Kingdom of the Squirrels'**. He has a collection of over 250 densely populated fruit. Among the collection are 60 citrus, 9 pitanga, pomegranates, stone fruit, mulberry, chico, black and white sapote, loquat, gogi berry, guamuchil, chali-chali and many more.

For directions email pat_erati@yahoo.com



White Fig

By Alfredo Chiri

White Fig Moraceae

Var. Blanche donated by: CRFG and planted in 1983
(r.f.-07)

Common name: Higo blanco, Italian honey fig,
Lattarula, White marseille

The fig tree is believed to be indigenous to Western Asia and distributed throughout the Mediterranean area. The fig tree grows best in dryer, warm, temperate climates. Rain during fruit development and ripening can cause fruits to split. In wetter, cooler areas the fig will also grow. Dormant trees are hardy to 12° F, but plants in active growth can be damaged at 30° F. Chilling requirements for the fig are less than 300 hours.

Although the fig tree is generally thought of as a subtropical plant suited to the mild winters and heat of California, there are varieties that will bear fruit in the milder climates of the Northwest. If a freeze knocks down the plant, it sprouts again quickly.

The fig tree is a picturesque deciduous tree that will grow in height up to 50 feet in the wild, but typically is controlled to 10 to 15 feet tall. Figs grow as many-stemmed shrubs, reaching 10 feet in warm years. In warm climates the trees grow on one or several trunks and reach 20 to 25 feet, spreading wide.

Branches of the fig tree are thick and twisting and spreading wider than they are tall. Fig wood is weak and decays rapidly. The sap contains copious milky latex that can be irritating to human skin.

The fig tree leaves are bright green, single, alternate and large (to 12 inches in length) with 1 to 5 lobes, rough hairy on the upper surface and soft hairy on the underside.

Figs are not quite fruits. They are a collection of inside-out flowers with all the important parts accessible to the outside world through a hole at the base. The first crop, called the "breba crop," blooms on the new wood of the

previous season. The second crop, known as "main crop," appears on the new wood of the current season. When the tree is cut back, most of the first crop is lost.

The mature "fruit" has a tough peel, often cracking when ripe, exposing the pulp. The interior has a white inner rind containing a seed mass surrounded by jelly-like flesh. The seeds are numerous and generally hollow if they are sterile, but pollinated seeds give to dried figs the characteristic nutty taste.

Fig trees require full sun all day to produce palatable fruits. Young trees should be watered regularly until fully established. In dry western climates mature trees should be watered deeply at least once a week. Desert areas will require being watered more often.

The Blanche fig tree is known as a medium-to-large fig. The skin is yellowish green, and the flesh is white to amber, very sweet, with a lemon flavor. It has a light "breba crop." It likes cool-summer areas. It is a slow-growing, dense, and hardy tree.

Fig Aniseed Muffins

Makes 10 to 12 muffins in total

1 egg
1 cup milk
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 teaspoons anise extract
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoons aniseeds
1/2 cup chopped, dried figs
Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Grease muffin tins or line with paper cups.

In large mixing bowl, whisk together egg, milk, oil, and anise extract. In another bowl, combine flour, whole wheat flour, baking powder, salt, sugar, and aniseeds. Stir until evenly moistened. Stir in figs and spoon into muffin cups. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.



CRFG members along with Bill Grimes and Ron Couch cheer the hard work done by the Redwood Chapter.

GREAT JOB REDWOOD CHAPTER!

Just wanted you to know that the **CRFG Festival** hosted by the Redwood Chapter was a wonderful event! We had 3 days of great field trips where we could choose to visit plantations, private orchards of members, wineries, mushroom growing, etc. I was very impressed with the varieties of fruit growing in areas where the weather is very hot in summer and can be very cold in winter. The orchards were beautiful and lush with fruit.

Friday night reception was a wonderful chance to meet up with old friends and make new acquaintances as we tasted a large selection of stone fruit donated by Mariani in Santa Cruz, and sampled excellent wines made from exotic fruits (passion fruit, banana, pineapple, and pomegranate). These wines were made and donated by **Joe Real**.

Saturday was a day for much learning as we chose from about 22 speakers and different topics on an array of subjects ranging from olive oil tasting, beneficial insects, pomegranate growth, apple orchard and so on. **Joe Sabol** and **Bill Grimes** announced the winners of 4 scholarships and one of the students was present to accept her award. The annual photo Fruit Shoot contest was presented for display by **Emory Walton**. At noon **Dave Wilson**, as always, provided a wonderful sampling of the various stone fruits for everyone to taste. Los Angeles Chapter had a display and tasting of the pitahaya/dragon fruit. This was a great surprise and delight for those who had never seen or tasted this fruit. Among those sampling the pitahaya was our own

wonderful editor, **Ron Couch**. There was also an olive tasting. Sequoia Chapter brought apples, grapes and stone fruits to share.

The evening dinner was held at a beautiful location called Shone Farms. A delicious meal was prepared and served to about 250 people. It was followed by a PowerPoint presentation by **Michael Phillips** who reminded us of our link and interdependence with nature. The last field trip was held on Sunday at the home of **Phil Pieri**, chairman of the Redwood Chapter, who opened up his orchard. Everybody who attended loved his place. We want to thank all the members of the Redwood Chapter who worked so hard to put together this wonderful event. I know I speak for everyone who attended that this was a Festival we will not forget! **WELL DONE REDWOOD CHAPTER!**



Phil proudly shows off his 'Garden of Eat'n'.

Under the Spell of the Spellman's Garden

As members leisurely toured **Phil Spellman's** Fruitland USA, during the August field trip, one could hear comments such as "I can't believe he's growing that!" "How can plants in such a small space do so well and look so healthy?" Not only did he provide a 7 page pamphlet mapping out and listing his plants, every tree was very clearly marked. What an organized backyard and proof that high density planting can be very successful! **Phil** also has a greenhouse with very exotic tropicals such as mangosteen, cambuco, chico sapote to name a few. His wife **Linda** prepared some delicious homemade cookies, a vegetable platter and lovely 'strawberry wrapped' lollipops. Thank you so much **Phil** and **Linda** for such a wonderful treat.



"Here is a photo of Edgar and Pat receiving the Paul Thomson award today, 8/29/09, at the Pitaya Festival," Harvey Correia.

FIFTH ANNUAL PITAHAYA FESTIVAL

On August 29th close to 200 enthusiastic pitahaya/dragon fruit lovers met in Irvine at the UC Research & Field Station to learn more about this exotic fruit. Organized by **Edgar Valdivia** and **Ramiro Lobo**, Farm Advisor at UC, the event turned out to be a very successful and exciting experience! There were excellent speakers who touched on ways to cultivate the pitahaya, as well as how to best market the fruit. The tour of the research field plots allowed guests to learn various trellis systems and ways to prune and graft. Giving each attendant 3 free cuttings only added to the exhilaration of the day. The highlight of the event was presenting the Paul Thomson Award to **Edgar Valdivia** for his outstanding contributions to the awareness and growth of the pitahaya here in the United States.

Your Yard NEEDS the Mushrooms (Excerpt from article written by Dr. Michael Kuo)

A mushroom is an integral part of your yard or garden's ecosystem. Its mycelium is probably doing one of two things, either of which is crucial to the health of your yard:

- **Saprobic mushrooms** help decompose dead organic material. Their mycelia chew up fallen leaves, dead blades of grass, woody debris, dead rootlets, and so on, returning this material to the soil. Imagine what would happen if nothing decomposed in your yard or garden: stuff would eventually pile up sky high! Yes, you can remove dead organic matter yourself--but your rake merely carries leaves away, rather than breaking them up into natural, soil-enhancing particles.

- **Mycorrhizal mushrooms** are involved in symbiotic relationships with plants and trees. The plant's rootlets are surrounded and protected by the mushroom's mycelium, which helps the plant absorb water and nutrients; in exchange, the fungus gets sugars and amino acids. *Most trees cannot survive without mycorrhizal partners* from the fungal world.

Dr Michael Kuo, the principal developer of MushroomExpert.Com, is an English teacher in Illinois and an amateur mycologist. He is the author of *Morels* (2005), and *100 Edible Mushrooms* (2007).

Haven't You Always Wondered?



Is it true that old-time farmers would sit bare-bottomed on the soil to determine when it was time to plant?

There are tales of gardeners using this method. If the soil was comfortable for the gardener or farmer, it would also be comfortable for the plants, they reasoned. Similarly, an old wives' tale in England held that turnips should be planted by naked gardeners. This may stem from the fact that turnips fail miserably when planted too early, so if it was warm enough to go naked, it was warm enough for turnips! For obvious reasons, we at *The Old Farmer's Almanac* will refrain from attesting to the efficacy of either of these methods.

(Question asked in "The Old Farmer's Almanac")