

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

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LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

September/October 2015 Volume XX Issue 5

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Date: September 26, 2015

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Sepulveda Gardens
16633 Magnolia Blvd.
Encino, CA 91316

Program: Julie Frink, curator of the Avocado Variety Collection at the UC South Coast Research Center in Irvine. Julie will show grafting techniques, advise which are good avocado choices for our climates, and discuss individual attributes of different types of avocados.

Attention All Members: If your last name begins with N-Z please bring something for our September 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.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP:

Date: October 24, 2015

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Program: Tour of **Buon Gusto Olive Orchard**, Ventura (See directions below) The foundation of Buenaventura Olive Oil was born of fantastic Italian family cooks and the Buon Gusto "Good Taste" tradition. Nestled in a small micro-climate valley between Ojai and Ventura, the olives have the best of both worlds: the warmth of summer sun and the cooling ocean breeze. In the same spirit of the Italian family kitchen, trees are grown with extra care and hand harvest. The olives are pressed within hours of harvest, resulting in the highest quality certified extra virgin oils. **Mark Mooring** will show us the orchard and discuss their watering system, which include a lovely pond area next to the picnic area. He will talk about growing, harvesting and processing as well as have product for you to taste and the proper way to do that.

Directions are listed at the end of the newsletter.

Attention All Members: The field trip will include a **potluck** and we are asking all members attending to bring food for the event.

Save the Dates

November 28th - Sepulveda Gardens-Pomegranate presentation and tasting
Ed Valdivia - hopefully no thefts from hungry squirrels - will prevent us from having a good selection of fruit to sample

December 12th - Sepulveda Gardens - Holiday Party

Community Events

Pitahaya /Dragon Fruit Field Day

September 29, 2015

Fillmore, California

Read the last page of this newsletter for information and registration.

Words From Our Chairman



Dear Los Angeles Chapter members,

I sincerely hope this note finds you in good health and spirits. First the drought, now the heat, 100+ degree temperatures are turning once green landscaped areas brown. I think I lost two potted trees a persimmon (fuyu) and a carambola (star fruit). Other than that, all is well in the garden. We canned Italian stewed tomatoes and habanero (HOT) salsa. Red spider mites attacked my tomatoes with a vengeance so I ripped them out as soon as I harvested the tomatoes for canning. I do not spray insecticides on my garden. Better luck next year!

This month I really want to talk about everyone's involvement in the chapter. We, like most groups, have a good share of people that volunteer to do various things for the good of the membership (everyone volunteers we have no paid staff). Some join the Board of Directors, others contribute articles for the newsletter, some propagate plants for sales or raffles, some open their yards up for tours, and others send in cash donations. I'm thankful for all these members that help carry the load and make this chapter one of the finest in the entire organization. But, what about you? How are you involved? We want everyone to become actively involved. Sure, life is busy, we've got jobs to do, people to see, etc. but some in our chapter have never even opened up their yards for a tour. What's up with that? Do you think people are coming over to inspect your place? I've hosted two tours at my place in the last couple of years and I know several others that have done the same. ***So how about hosting at your place in***

2016? We will help out with water and paper goods if you decide to have a potluck after the tour. Everyone has something unique about their place and a story to tell about their own experiences good or bad. We also welcome your suggestions for nursery, garden centers, botanical park tours and/or speakers for the chapters meeting at Sepulveda Garden center. Please let's not just be spectators; there is much to do.

On a recent tour, a lady spoke to me about an idea she had. So I asked her if she would research it, find out pricing, availability etc. and report her findings. She agreed and I thought, "Yes! That's it, team effort!"

Best,

Jim

*PS: To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.
Audrey Hepburn*

LOOKING BACK

By Debbie Schopper
Member at Large

July Meeting

Our July meeting was held at the Sepulveda Garden Center in Encino. Our guest speaker, Toby Lebron, is the Western Distribution Manager with *Kellogg Garden Products* in Carson, CA. *Kellogg Garden Products* is a family owned company and has over 28 different garden fertilizers, soil amendments, and conditioners. Gardner and Bloome Organics line of Kellogg's products are all OMRI certified. A few of the G&B products are: Worm Gro, Farmyard Blend, Harvest Supreme, Raised Bed Potting Mix and Chicken Fertilizer. For a complete list of products and a look at the Kellogg website, please see: www.kelloggarden.com

There was a question and answer time following Toby's presentations. We held a plant auction, which included several bags of Kellogg products. A potluck luncheon followed.

The CRFG state organization presented Sylmar High School student Giselle Gutierrez with a CRFG High School Scholarship award.

Congratulations, Giselle!! She will be attending Chico University and majoring in Horticulture.

August Meeting

Chapter member, Serge Shammus, welcomed us to his extraordinary garden/home this month. It seemed every inch of property was alive with trees, herbs, vegetables, fruits and flowers. Many of the trees and plants come from Greece, Syria and Hawaii. We began our tour in Serge's backyard. We heard how the Cherimoya tree took four years before pollination took. And then Serge taught us first hand how to pollinate a Cherimoya.



Serge has an amazing archway 10 ft. x 30 ft. and 8 ft. high. This archway, once covered by invasive passion fruit, is now wrapped in grape vines from Greece, kiwi, loofahs, raspberries, hibiscus, and flowering and fruited varieties of pitahaya that are growing up the sides. Beyond the archway are fig trees from Greece, jujube, tomatoes, Surinam cherry, blueberries, all grown in pots. There are pistachio trees, an El Grande avocado, and date palms all grown from seed. Mulberry, banana, sugar cane, goji berry, bananas, star fruit, guava from Hawaii, oriental pear, donut peach, pomegranate, and many grafted trees including the cherimoya flourish under Serge's love of gardening.



He has also invented a system to water his potted plants while he is traveling. Possibly he may share this with the club at a meeting in the Sepulveda Garden Center. A few of the challenges he has had to overcome or work with are: the Granada Hills's winds and garden pests. You see, the great thing about a home tour is that you learn what a gardener has found that

works and doesn't. You hear his or her stories because we gardeners are passionate and love to share our knowledge. Oh, and what do you do with a leaking water feature/pond? Why you plant a rose garden in it for Martha (his wife who loves flowers). Dear Martha shared her talent of cooking with our club by baking us many delicious dishes for our potluck luncheon that followed our tour. Thank you Martha and Serge for sharing so very much with our chapter.



Highlighting Members


We want to thank all members who contributed to our luncheon table for the meeting and for the field trip to the Shammus home. If you tasted something for which you would like more information please contact me and I will post it in the newsletter. For example, there was a great **Red Velvet Cake** that somebody contributed. It has to be the moistest cake of that kind I have ever tasted. If it was purchased can we please have the name of the bakery? If it was homemade PLEASE share the recipe?

New Members

Welcome to our new members:

- Susan Groesbeck
- Jane Coogan Beer
- Marcia Holtz
- Jonathan Ausubel
 - Vicky Geaga
 - Stephan Powell
- Marilyn and Bob Adams
- Sam and Debbie Graham
 - Howard Hoos

Newlyweds Candace and Jack Rumenapp-Silva sent the following message of gratitude:

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the cake and genuine congratulations on our marriage. It made our day. 
Love, Candace and Jack

CRFG Festival of Fruits Edgar Valdivia

Each year we await the annual CRFG Festival of Fruit. This year over 400 people arrived in San Diego to attend the FOF, organized by the San Diego Chapter under the leadership of Tom del Hotel. Many people from foreign countries were also present. This is a once-a-year opportunity for all members from all the Chapters to get together and exchange ideas of what they are doing in their gardens.



FoF Entrance



Friday Night Reception

The Festival was divided into 3 events: **Speakers, Plant Sales** and **Raffles**. There were 12 speakers and each attendee could choose 4 lectures. I selected "Sapotes" given by Thomas Addison. He brought a variety of sapotes that he had grafted from the collection of Bob Chambers. I attended a talk on Pomegranates given by John Chader, who is the grandson of John Chader (who was a renowned breeder of pomegranates in California). Of course, I couldn't miss the lecture on Pitahayas, presented by Ramiro Lobo. He has been working very hard with the University on promoting the pitahaya to be commercial. Ben Pierce, was my 4th choice and he spoke on 'New Fruits that Can be Grown in California'. Really an eye opener, he mentioned fruits that I never realized could be grown in California.

The Keynote speaker was Joseph Simcox (world traveler). He goes all over the world, collecting seeds and learning about products that we know nothing about, but that the indigenous people have been eating for centuries.

Emory Walton presented a state CRFG scholarship to two students:

The Frances Meyer Scholarship winner was Mr. Trinidad Ramos.

The Second Scholarship winner was Mr. Juan Villegas.

A very organized plant sale had much to offer. Thanks to the Master Gardeners, there were experts around to answer questions and help out.

As for the raffle, there were so many prizes that almost everyone that bought a ticket walked away a winner.



Fruit Shoot Winners

The meeting closed with a wonderful dinner. Next year the Festival of Fruit will be organized by the Central Coast Chapter and held in San Luis Obispo. So start planning now.

To see individual pictures of the **Fruit Shoot winners** use this link:

http://www.crfg.org/g2/main.php?g2_itemId=14108

A Cool Summer Treat Deborah Oisboid, Member

How do you like our lovely 100-degree summer days? Sure makes you thirsty. There's a drink from ancient Persia which is perfect for this time of year. It's delightfully refreshing, easy to make, and has health benefits as a bonus. But it's not an easy name to remember - until you've had it a few times. Then you'll remember the name Sekanjabin.

Sekanjabin (sometimes called sekanjubin or sekanjamin, among others) is a syrup originally made from honey and vinegar. There is evidence for its usage as far back as the 10th century, possibly earlier. The name sekanjabin is an Arabic transcription of the Persian term, "*sirka anjubin*", which literally means "honeyed vinegar". An Andalusian cookbook of the 13th century provided a description and multiple uses for the syrup.

Take a ratl of strong vinegar and mix it with two ratls of sugar, and cook all this until it takes the form of syrup. Drink an ûqiya of this with three of hot water when fasting: it is beneficial for fevers of jaundice, and calms jaundice and cuts the thirst, since sikanjabîn syrup is beneficial in phlegmatic fevers: make it with six ûqiyas of sour vinegar for a ratl of honey and it is admirable.

The ancient Greeks made **Oxymel**, which is similar: 4-5 parts honey to one part vinegar. The Anglo-Saxons had a version with honey, and even Americans make something similar called **Shrub**. Sekanjabin (the syrup) and its drink ("sharbat-e sekanjabin") are perfect for the summer. Possibly due to the high acidic content it keeps well at room temperature for a long time. It can be flavored any kind of fruits and/or vegetables. Almost all recipes today begin with ginger as part of the base. Mint is commonly added as well. Cucumber makes a cool drink, and strawberries make a bright syrup. Some prefer it sweeter, others like a strong sour tang. In the Middle East a plate of lettuce is often served with a bowl of the syrup for dipping. I happen to have a shrub full of black elderberries right now and thought they would be good for a vinegar syrup. They were



Ripe Elderberries

perfect! Refreshing to drink and fantastic drizzled on vanilla ice cream. The only drawback to elderberries is making sure there are **no leaves or stems** in the mix because they contain a **cyanin glycoside and can be toxic**. However as long as the (ripe) berries are cooked first they can be eaten.

Elderberry Sekanjabin:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar (or any vinegar that is NOT distilled)
- ¼ cup chopped or thinly sliced fresh peeled ginger root
- ¼ cup elderberries (no stems or leaves or any under ripe berries)

Combine everything and simmer for about 10 - 15 minutes. Allow to cool, and strain into a clean container. May be stored at room temperature.



Fresh sekanjabin water!

To drink, mix 1 part syrup with 3 - 5 parts water. Try it with sparkling

It takes a long time to pull off ALL the stems! No red or green berries allowed, either. Soak in water so any remaining stems float to the top and can be removed.



Stems and Berries

I almost forgot to take a photo of the ice cream

before it was all gone. Yum!



Article Sources:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekanjabin>
- http://mahjubah.com/article_1665_0.html
- <http://turmericsafron.blogspot.com/2010/02/sekanjabin-sweet-and-sour-ancient.html>
- <https://fleuryherald.wordpress.com/tag/sekanjabin/>
- <http://www.innatthecrossroads.com/2013/02/04/sekanjabin/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sambucus>

October Field Trip Directions

Directions: 101 Freeway to Ventura; 33 Freeway to Ojai (only goes that way) Canada Larga Exit - Right at the bottom of the off ramp - you now have 5.5 miles to go all on Canada Larga road. Just stay on it until you get to the house. Here are the details you need... At 3 miles there is a gate across the road. It is NOT locked. Open the chain. Go through and please close behind you. If you look to the right while you are opening the gate you will see a sign that displays 5055 - 2 miles; (That is our place) After the gate about a mile you will see a large horse facility on the right. Stay on Canada Larga (about 1 more mile to go). You will go over a cattle guard and on to the County gravel road for about 400 feet. You will come to the gate. It is controlled by an electronic keypad. The code is 4141. Punch in those numbers (purposefully) and it will open for you. It closes automatically. 3/4 mile to go. Road is fine for any car but a little rough in spots. When you see the orchard immediately look over the trees and you will see the house) and driveway is ahead. Follow the fence line.



University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Pitahaya/Dragon Fruit Field Day

Tuesday – September 29, 2015

MVP Farms – Off Highway 126, Fillmore, CA
3095 West Telegraph Road, Fillmore, CA 93015, and

Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center – Santa Paula, CA
14292 West Telegraph Road, Santa Paula, CA 93060

TENTATIVE PROGRAM:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 7:00 AM | Registration and Continental Breakfast at MVP Farms |
| 8:00 AM | Overview and Tour of Field Research Trials at MVP Farms (Varieties, Irrigation, Fertilization, and Trellis Systems) - Jose Fernandez De Soto & Ramiro Lobo, UC Cooperative Extension; Manuel Dubon, MVP Farms; and, Jose A. Gomez, AGQ Labs Inc. |
| 9:30 AM | BREAK & Relocate to Hansen Agricultural Research & Extension Center in Santa Paula |
| 10:00 AM | Pitahaya Production in Ventura County – A Research Update – Jose Fernandez de Soto, Operations Director - UC Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center |
| 10:20 AM | Pitahaya Establishment Costs and Market Considerations: Ramiro Lobo – Farm Advisor, UCCE San Diego County |
| 10:40 AM | Pitahaya Diseases: Prevention & Management Strategies – James Downer, Farm Advisor - UCCE Ventura County |
| 11:00 AM | Fertility Management for Pitahaya Production in California: Jose A. Gomez, Director of Agricultural Services - AGQ Labs Inc. |
| 11:20 AM | Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Insect Pest Management Alternatives for Pitahaya Production – Anna D Howell, Entomologist - UCCE Ventura County |
| 11:40 AM | Nematode Management for Pitahaya Production – Antoon Ploeg, Extension Nematologist - UC Riverside |
| 12:00 noon | LUNCH & Pitahaya Fruit/Ice Cream Tasting (included with registration) |
| 2:00 PM | ADJOURN!! |

REGISTRATION: \$20.00 per person if paid online by 9/25/15. The registration fee is \$25 after this date or at the door if space allows. The fee includes handout materials, continental breakfast, refreshments, lunch, pitahaya fruit/ice cream tasting, and 5 cuttings of pitahaya or dragon fruit. Please register in advance to help us plan for meals and handouts!!

Register online at <http://ucanr.edu/2015-pitahayafieldday-ventura>

ACCESSIBILITY: UC Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center is a Handicapped accessible facility. However, the field portion of this event involves walking on uneven terrain without any shade. Please contact Jose De Soto (760.996.4874 or jdesoto@ucanr.edu) or Ramiro Lobo (858.243.4608 or relobo@ucanr.edu) for any special accommodation you may need.

Program sponsored by the University of California Cooperative Extension offices in San Diego and Ventura Counties, in collaboration with MVP Farms and with financial support from the UC Hansen Agricultural Fund.

Pitahaya / Dragon Fruit Field Day
Registration Link:

<http://ucanr.edu/2015-pitahayafieldday-ventura>