



COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2018

Dr. Matthew (Matt) Snow was born in Miami and has been interested in plants since a very young age. He started with orchids and built his first shade house at age 13. Since 1992, he has been a Redlands, Florida commercial farmer of Avocados, Lychee, Longan, Jakfruit, Mangos, and Dragonfruit. He also manages an organic blueberry farm in North Carolina. He has given numerous presentations and has written several articles about tropical fruits and their culture, grafting, orchids, and cold protection. He is the current President of the Rare Fruit Council International, Miami Chapter. Matt also happens to be a Clinical Cardiologist!

Matt will be speaking on the cultivation and pollination of Dragonfruit at the April 17th CFG Meeting. He will have cuttings of various Dragonfruit varieties, including America Beauty, Dark Star, Haley's Comet, Physical Graffiti Vietnamese Jaina, Zamorano, Rixford, Red Jaina, Harpua, Pepino Duice, Red Selenicereus, and Yellow Hylocereus, for purchase at the Meeting. The cuttings will be available at \$5 each.



**The tasting table starts at 7:00 pm.
Meeting starts at 7:30 pm.
at the Tree of Life Church, Life Center, 2132 Shadowlawn Drive.**

BURDS' THIS and THAT FOR

AVOCADOS

Florida avocados are delicious - with the correct care and nutrition - same fertilizer as for citrus, eg. 10-2-10 or 8-2-8 or 6-4-6, 3 times a year, YET a frequent request is "where can I buy a Hass avocado tree"? - This meaty sweet fruit tree grows well in Mexico, not in south Florida - the main reason being it doesn't get cold enough - long enough! There is a Florida Hass variety - it is good, but, not a consistent bearer.

PRUNING AVOCADOS

Now through mid-May is the best time to prune avocado trees.

Once planted, all young fruit trees should be 'manicured' to encourage the limbs to branch outwards rather than straight up.

Seedling (not grafted) mature avocado trees will always want to grow straight up. They should be topped each year to encourage them to branch out. There are some wonderful 'seedling' avocados, so, go ahead and plant a seed! It can take anywhere from 6 to 20 years for it to bear the first crop.... Do it anyway! You might have a winner!

Once the flowers have set fruit (many trees lose their leaves at this time), selectively prune to shape the tree. The remaining avocados will be larger, and the new growth helps to feed the remaining fruit!

Too much fruit weakens the tree, so the next year or two it may not fruit at all or even have died back.

Fruit growers disagree on our next hint, so you choose!

If you trim branches bigger than one and half inches the cut/wound should be sealed with pruning paint or latex paint.

If an avocado tree is severely pruned, the new growth can attract the ambrosia beetle which causes Laurel Wilt and certain death for the tree.

Why apply pruning paint? If not applied, cracks will occur, bugs will set up home, and the limb could rot back to the trunk.

Remember to cleanse your tools before and after pruning each tree. We think that using rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide to clean your tools are the best.

The Florida avocado season can be from July through March, depending on the variety.

PS: Avocado trees do not like standing water - even wet ground. It is best to plant them high and not near possible flooding ground.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH:

This delicious recipe was shared by the CFG Vice-President, Bonnie Hawkins, at a lecture on coconuts at the Naples Botanical Garden. Bonnie used fresh shredded coconut, but you could also use packaged unsweetened shredded coconut. If you have a favorite recipe using tropical fruit that you would like to share, please email it to Roberta Taylor at rtaylorrm@comcast.net. Enjoy!

recipe:

COCONUT MACAROONS

Makes: About 2 dozen
Time: About 45 minutes,
plus time to chill

1 cup sugar
3 cups shredded unsweetened coconut
3 egg whites, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
Pinch of salt

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well with a rubber spatula or your hands.

2. Use a non-stick baking sheet or line a baking sheet with parchment paper. To make pyramids, wet your hands and scoop out a rounded tablespoon of the mixture into the palm of one hand. Using your other hand, press it gently on both sides of the mixture, bringing the macaroon to a point. Continue pressing with your thumb and forefinger on both sides until you have an even shape. For cubes, start as you would for the pyramids, then gently press equally on all sides, turning the macaroon to square off each side. You can use a butter knife to gently smooth the sides of the pyramids or cubes, if you like. For balls, roll the mixture between your palms gently until round.

3. Place each macaroon about an inch apart on the baking sheet. Bake until light brown, about 15 minutes. Remove from the baking sheet and cool on a rack for at least 30 minutes before eating. These keep well in a covered container for up to 3 days.



Powdery Mildew, Pests and Other Gardening Challenges by Deana Bess, M.Ed, FCHP

In April last year, I published an article about powdery mildew that was inspired by some issues members of the Collier Fruit Growers were having with mangos. Of course, as all gardeners know, nature has a continuous way of teaching us and when I was asked to share my thoughts again this year, I realized I had learned more from the lessons nature has offered me! In general, I look at my role as a gardener in an apprenticeship way, where I am the apprentice and nature is the teacher offering me the opportunity to learn about prevention and looking towards the roots of issues rather than just what's on the surface!

Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that shows itself as a white or gray growth on the surface of leaves and flowers. I find it occurs during cool but humid weather more often than any other time in our climate but interestingly enough, in other climates the fungus is known to prefer dry, drought-like conditions (Rateaver, 1993). I have read that simply spraying the plant down with water can help but I have not seen success trying that simple solution here in Naples. Now I understand more about why spraying water hasn't worked for me!

Choosing varieties of plants that thrive in our climate is the smartest decision one could make! Most of the plants I have seen with powdery mildew problems are not native to our climate and attempting to bend nature to my will by growing less tolerable plants has proven time consuming and frustrating. During the ten years I've lived in Naples, our climate tends to be quite unpredictable anyway! While environment is an important factor, I believe we experience a wide variety of pests and disease based on plant health, selection, and soil quality. What impacts the health of a plant is much to be debated but in general, I find success in looking to the soil.

Any time we see pests and disease, that plant is under stress for sure because nature's method is to eradicate the weaker species. Healthy plants require their own individual balance of water, sunlight, air, and nutrients. According to the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association, the ideal soil structure is 45% minerals, 5% organic matter, 25% air, and 25% water. So let's take a look at each of these essential elements:

- **Water:** So far in my experience with my own plants and helping others with theirs, the easiest and most common issue tends to be water. Whether there is too much, too little, or poor-quality water (chemicals, alkalinity, etc.), water problems can quickly create stress on a plant. Water impacts how the plant absorbs nutrients and when there is too much water, not enough air is available to the roots. When water is lacking, the photosynthesis process is disrupted, and the plant cannot make energy.
- **Sunlight (impacting the plant's ability to produce energy):** I can recall several examples where plant problems were resolved by choosing the right amount of sunlight for each plant; a relatively easy resolution if sunlight is either too much or too little. There are plenty of references to consult about hours of sunlight needed for each species. One of the blogs I read about powdery mildew suggested it thrives in cloudy conditions, but I haven't found a scientific reference supporting that.

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- **Air:** In my experience, soil structure is an important component for improvement of plant health; FNGLA's ideal soil structure seems to be the best standard so far. In grade school science class, I remember our teacher showing us how to look at soil structure using a quart jar filled with soil and water; we shook up the jar and waited 24 hours for it to settle. The layers were clear, and we could see each level of sand (minerals), organic matter, and water (the air being replaced by water). While I'm sure that isn't a perfect method, and some may find it a bit inadequate, I believe it's simple enough to give us a good idea of the soil profile. I also tend to see specific weeds growing in areas where aeration is a problem in soil; nutsedge, foxtail, thistle, dogfennel, bindweed, nightshades, and peppergrass are common weeds I see that are primary indicators of soil lacking air (McCaman, 2013); our sandy soil tends to compact easily and adding organic matter and improving the soil biology helps reduce soil compaction. The heavy rains we experience during summer months can easily cause the soil to become anaerobic which is why aeration is so important. I also see wide-spread problems with the way plants are propagated and grown regarding burying the root flare. Some trees I purchase from growers have root flares buried so deep, I almost have to bare root the tree before I plant it. Dr. Garret writes extensively about this topic in his book, "The Organic Manual" and you can also read more about it on his web site (www.dirtdoctor.com). The trees I have planted correctly or exposed the root flare after the fact tend to be healthier than those that have a buried root flare.
- **Nutrients:** Powdery Mildew is caused by an imbalance of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin C available to the plant according to Dr. Arden Andersen in his book, *The Anatomy of Life & Energy* (2014). The calcium and phosphorus are commonly understood, not so much with Vitamin C. The presence of the mildew indicates there is a problem with the plant's ability to produce Vitamin C, a substance that reduces plant stress. While I've not yet found anything concrete, it is my thought at this time that improving vitamin C involves a balanced soil microbiology. I come to this conclusion through several sources I have studied including Dr. Ingham's Soil Food Web information (2006), Lowenfel's *Teaming with Microbes* book (2010), Dr. Andersen's work, the teachings of Dr. Howard Garrett (known as The Dirt Doctor), and numerous scientific articles such as the Horticultural and Food Research Institute Laing and Bulley's (2007) article about what controls vitamin C levels in plants. I would simply add elements to the soil that improve the soil biology; a simple first step would be a good compost tea application containing plenty of molasses. Dr. Garrett said on a recent podcast that adding garlic tea to his Garrett Juice recipe showed excellent results. You can find more information about the recipes in *The Organic Manual* (Garrett, 2016) or on his web site (www.dirtdoctor.com).

Most people don't spend the time and money for a soil test and prefer guessing; this was my routine method until I realized how much time and money I was spending. Now I'm not saying we can't look at the plant conditions to make educated choices but to accurately diagnose an ongoing issue, testing is a critical component in my experience. Additionally, the soil tests where the results indicated the nutrients in the soil without their availability to plants were leading me down the wrong path and certainly not producing the results I expected. Last year, I discovered information about the Reams soil testing that uses a combination of methods taking into consideration nutrient availability, soil structure, and soil microbiology (Andersen, 2007). So far, I'm very pleased with the results and customizing amendments based on facts rather than my former and expensive guessing methods.

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In the case where guessing is the preferred method, and since it's typical that we have enough calcium in the soil here but it's just not available, I wanted to share some ideas:

- Try adding some Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate at 1 cup per 100 square feet) to the soil and watering that in. We commonly see a lack of magnesium availability in our soil; magnesium helps the calcium become available in plants just like it does in our bodies.

- Improve the soil! A healthy soil microbiology will encourage nutrient availability so adding quality compost (finished compost) and carbohydrates like dry and liquid molasses would improve the soil biology and thus the plants ability to absorb nutrients. I think many organic gardeners tend towards the idea that there can never be too much compost, but I find it important to remember that balance is more important and keeping to around 5% organic matter in the soil profile is essential. In my opinion and experience, unfinished composts and cool manures with shavings may be beneficial over long periods of time but in the short term, simply cause more problems because while that carbon material is breaking down, nutrients like nitrogen are used and needed by the biology but taken away from the plant which can lead to deficiency. If unfinished compost, mulch, or manures are applied, I think adding a good nitrogen source, like cottonseed meal, along with other soil building materials can help mitigate the nitrogen problem.

- I find compost routinely high in phosphorus and potassium and since there has not been a soil test but we know an imbalance exists from the presence of powdery mildew, I would add zeolite in an effort to bring the balance back. You can read more about zeolite in Dr. Garrett's articles in the reference section of this paper. I buy zeolite at Sutherlands General Store in the form of horse stall freshener called Sweet PDZ in which the single ingredient is Premium Grade Clinoptilolite, which is another name for zeolite.

- I would also add dry or liquid molasses to this area to feed the soil biology and likely improve the plant's ability to produce Vitamin C as a protectant against the mildew and other stressors. On a side note, since I started adding molasses to my routines around the garden, I see fewer fire ants, almost none as a matter of fact; you can read more about this topic on Howard Garrett's web site (www.dirtdoctor.com). I didn't believe it when I first heard it either but so far, it's been working for me!

- Spray the whole plant and soil with liquid seaweed at a rate of 1 ounce per gallon of water. Seaweed contains bio-stimulants that help reduce plant stress (Arioli, Mattner, and Winberg, 2015).

- Add calcium. While calcium presence may be shown in our soil, its availability to plants in an absorbable form is often low. Thus, it would make sense to apply calcium in the form of gypsum because carbonized calcium and limestone tended to increase alkalinity where gypsum did not in my experience. I used to apply bone meal, but after I started soil testing, I found that bone meal is not available to the plant quickly like the gypsum. The areas where I have added the gypsum are showing great improvement. It is recommended for citrus soil to have about 3000 parts per million (ppm) calcium and mine is up to 2940 ppm.

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Sprays of baking soda and sulfur, biologicals (like bacteria), garlic tea, 3% hydrogen peroxide, and corn meal tea are simply temporary, and I think beneficial to help the plant while working on nutrients; in the long run, choosing the right plants and addressing the soil biology and nutrients will reduce cost and labor and have potential to eliminate powdery mildew.

I always try to remember that spraying something to remedy a problem may keep sick plants alive, but it can also kill beneficial microbes and lead to a variety of unintended consequences. I personally don't want to eat from sick plants and would rather learn to hear nature's message and provide what is needed.

I hope you have found these ideas interesting and helpful; your constructive thoughts and comments are welcome!

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Tales from the Nursery**Crafton Clift & Larry Schokman at The Kampong 1-22-2015**

This is the story of the 'Oasis' Avocado as told to me by Crafton Clift. While working in Miami, I was looking for a long-leaf fern to plant in the central courtyard of the Mayfair in downtown Coconut Grove. I came across a ten-acre orchard nearby containing many Avocado trees owned by Annette Way, a retired aviatrix, a female pioneer like Amelia Earhart but who chose to be a 'free spirit' in her own way. The Avocados had not been fully harvested in years and had re-seeded themselves from the fallen fruit. The 'seedlings' were so large that I couldn't tell which were the 'original' trees and those that grow from seed. I quickly clipped scions from twelve of the trees which still had fruit on them in July. I successfully grafted scions from the twelve, calling them 'Way Late #1' through '#12' in memory of Annette.

Sometime later while working at The Kampong, I returned to the orchard only to find a large wrecking ball still suspended from a crane which had literally just leveled Annette's house. The orchard was in the process of being destroyed. Annette's personal papers and photos were blowing in the wind. Annette had recently passed away never receiving the respect owed to her. Instead, her son was only interested in subdividing the property and selling them as building lots.

Three grafted 'Way Late #12,' Avocado trees were planted at Dr. Eric Cohen's house, Echo in North Fort Myers, & The Kampong. Some years later #12 at The Kampong, died. On July 15th, I still remember the day, Larry Schokman and I went in searching for the 'original' #12 tree in the portion of Coconut Grove where I believed Annette's orchard had been. There were several million-dollar homes; one very architecturally pleasing house with plenty of glass had been built on what I believed was Annette's orchard. I was fascinated by the way I could see clear through many portions of the house. The occupant, an architect, identified himself as 'Oasis' (I'm not sure if it was his first or last name). The man which I believe was Egyptian was very cordial and invited us in. To the rear of the house was the original #12 tree of which I was able to take replacement scions. At the rear corner of the neatly manicured property stood a very large mature avocado tree with plenty of un-ripened elongated black fruit hanging on it. We were permitted to take scions from this previously undiscovered Avocado tree but as the lowest branches were some forty to fifty feet above the ground we needed to retrieve a ladder. We returned several hours later with a high-reach pruning pole, (you know the type, one that you need to pull on the cord) and an extension ladder. We set about collecting the desired materials by placing the ladder against the tree's trunk, but with no lower branches it was very unstable. I begged Larry not to attempt it, but he insisted on climbing up with the pruner in hand. [*Kids, never attempt this as it is very dangerous.*] I tried to hold the ladder steady the best I could, as Larry now on top of the ladder managed to free both hands to hold the pruning pole with one and pull the cord with the other hand bring one branch full of fruit to fall to the ground. We went away very happy knowing that we were successful in gathering the scions and that Larry was still alive. Most of my grafts took and I named the variety the 'Oasis' Avocado to honor the man from whom we had obtained the scions. One of these grafted trees still exists at The Kampong [*in the area designated J-2, just west of the Orchid House*]. Recently, I searched that portion of Coconut Grove again, hoping to reconnect with the architect named 'Oasis.' I found what I believed to be his house, but it had changed. The glass front door had been replaced with a solid wooden one. The exterior brick walls had all been painted white. It just wasn't as I remembered it. The front garden was not well kept. I knocked, but apparently no one was home, therefore I was unable to pay my respects to the architect I only knew as 'Oasis' or his Avocado tree. I wish I could find 'Oasis' again, and to introduce his 'Oasis' Avocado tree throughout the World.

Respectfully submitted,
Rodger Taylor, President
Collier Fruit Growers



NURSERY NEWS



March and April are the best months to graft Canistel trees. Scions of the 'Fairchild #2' will be made available by Crafton Clift during the next several Thursday Nursery Workshops at 8200 Immokalee Road in North Naples from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.



Dr. Alan Chambers at TREC in the Redlands is looking for anyone who has vanilla orchids flowering currently. The flowers are needed for research. If you have any and are willing to donate them to the cause, please contact Alan Chambers at: ac@ufl.edu.



Deana Bess has updated her thoroughly researched article entitled "Powdery Mildew, Pests and Other Gardening Challenges." A copy of Deana's article is attached to this newsletter on pages 3-6 and is also available under the CFG's website. Go to collierfruit.org and select the tab "Articles".

Laboratory Diagnostic Testing Resources:



Obtaining reliable Soil & Water Analyses or the Identification of Plant Diseases, Nematodes & Insects for gardeners can be a challenge. For those interested here is a list of possible resources:



Fix My Soil: Soil Analysis www.fixmysoil.com Check the website for pricing.



International AG Labs: Soil Analysis www.aglabs.com Check the website for pricing.



Kinetico: Water Analysis www.kinetico.com Click on "Schedule free water test" This site is geared to selling water softeners and other water treatment equipment, therefore the results may be unreliable or bias.



IFAS Collier County Extension Service:

Diagnostic Testing: Soil Nutrients and pH, Water Analysis, Plant Diseases, Nematodes & Insects Prices and the required 'Application Forms' can be obtained on-line: <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/collierco/2017/11/03/collier-county-extension-garden-diagnostic-tests/> All samples are sent at Gainesville, FL for testing and evaluation.

WARNINGS



A new serious pest [Lychee Erinose Mite (LEM), *Aceria litchi*] to Lychee and Longan Trees was found in a 3-acre commercial lychee orchard on Pine Island in February 2018. Read more about this subject in the FU/IFAS blog at the link below.

<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/trec/2018/03/19/new-serious-pest-lychee-longan-trees-found-florida/>



Wash your homegrown strawberries and lettuce very carefully to remove small slugs and their slime trails. And, always use latex gloves to pick up snails. Also teach your kids not to eat slugs or snails on a dare; it could save their life. See link below for more good information:

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/03/dont-eat-slugs-snails-rat-lungworm-brain-parasite-health-science/>

April Calendar of Events

- Reoccurring every Thursday at Cornerstone Nursery and Grove – Volunteer and Grafting Workshop at 8200 Immokalee Road 9:30 am to 1:30 pm.
- Tuesday 3 - Monthly Meeting: Caloosa Rare Fruit Exchange, 7:00 pm, Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Bldg., 2166 Virginia Ave., Fort Myers
- Saturday 7 - **UF-IFAC Collier County, Citrus Lecture at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, 9:00 am-12:30pm, given by Dr. Mongi Zekri who will cover old and new citrus varieties, planting, fertilizing, and management of citrus greening, diseases and insects. Door prizes will be awarded, books, hand lenses, key chains and possibly young Eureka lemon & Persian (Tahiti) lime trees. Cost: \$10, free to Master Gardeners & Conservancy staff and volunteers. Register at: <http://citrusconservancyapril7.eventbrite.com>. The Conservancy is located at 1495 Smith Preserve Way, Naples 34102.**
- Saturday 7 - North Collier County Regional Park – Laboratory Classroom, 9:30 am–12:30 pm Backyard Chickens 101, given by Jessica Ryals, Cost: Adults \$25, children \$10, Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/backyard-chickens-101-tickets-42909043103> The Park is located at 15000 Livingston Road, Naples 34109.
- Tuesday 10 - Naples Botanical Garden Lecture, 10:00 am-noon: 'Tropical Vegetables,' given by Deana Bess: CFG members-no charge, NBG members \$15, non-members \$20.
- Tuesday • Tuesday 10 - Monthly Meeting: Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club, 6:45 PM Tasting Table, 7:15 pm Program: First United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs.
- Tuesday 17 - Monthly Meeting: Collier Fruit Growers, 7:00 PM Social, 7:30 PM Program: Tree of Life Church, Life Center, 2132 Shadowlawn Drive, Naples.
- Tuesday 24 - Tuesday 24 - Naples Botanical Garden Lecture and Workshop, 10:00 am-noon: 'Tropical Fruit 101: Annona and Bael Fruits,' given by Dr. Steve Brady, CFG Members-no charge, NBG members \$15, non-members \$20.
- Tuesday 24 - Monthly Workshop: Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club, 6:45 PM: First United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs.
- Saturday 7 & Sunday 8, Fruit Tree & Plant Sale from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, sponsored by the Rare Fruit and Vegetable Council of Broward County, 208 Research Farm, off Route 27, see the CFG Facebook page for details.



There's a **NEW** Collier Fruit Growers Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/CollierFruitGrowers/?ref=br_rs
CFG Members are encouraged to submit fruit related articles on the page. Your comments are also encouraged. Please LIKE and share our page with your friends. Be sure to LIKE our new page!

**Upcoming Meeting Dates: TUESDAYS,
May 15th, June 19th, and July 17th.**

The Collier Fruit Growers Inc. (CFG) is an active organization dedicated to inform, educate and advise its members as well as the public, as to the propagation of the many varieties of fruits that can be grown in Collier County. The CFG is also actively engaged in the distribution of the many commonly grown fruits, as well as the rare tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world. CFG encourages its members to extend their cultivation by providing a basis for researching and producing new cultivars and hybrids, whenever possible. CFG functions without regard to race, color or national origin.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

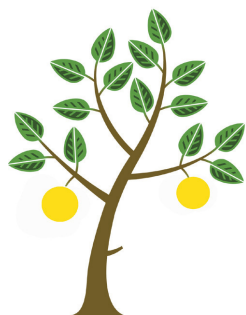
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