COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2019

Daniel Blank will again be our speaker at the January 15th Meeting. Daniel uses organic methods on his twenty-acre 12 Seasons Farm in Olga, south of the Caloosahatchee River. Danny is the former farm manger at ECHO in North Fort Meyers. He has an advance college degree in Sustainable Agriculture and has taught at Warner College and FGCU. Danny will give us a review of citrus varieties and history as well as an update of how the battle to save citrus is going. Statewide the annual crop totals continue to drop due to diseases such as *citrus greening*.

State and Federal governments are spending money to find a cure, but no silver bullet has been found. Farmers have found the effects of the disease show up early in the root system and have turned to soil development using composts and nutrient feedings. This has kept some still in the business going but is no cure. Big Agricultural research seems to be pushing a GMO variety which splices spinach genes into the citrus. This development is headed for production but may take years. Citrus growing has been a traditional favorite of the last century. The psyllid introduction has the future of citrus in question.

Meeting: TUESDAY, January 15th.

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

BURDS' NEST OF INFORMATION THIS and THAT FOR JANUARY

MANGOS Mangos are blooming! Now is the time to fertilize with 0-0-22. It is available from Helena Fertilizer Company in Immokalee. [Make sure that the potassium fertilizer is in the form of Potassium Dioxide (K2O). Apply micro-nutrients plus iron in either granular or foliar spray form.] Using a – e.g. - citrus fertilizer 6-4-6 sends a message to the mango tree to grow which would mean leaves and not fruit. Hold off watering until you see the first fruit set, then **water once a week (20 minutes). If it is** a **young tree, then water 2 - 3 times a week for only 20 minutes. Also fertilize lightly every other month with a good citrus fertilizer.**

Hang bottles containing a small amount of old fish or meat and water in the mango trees to attract the blow flies which pollinate the flowers.

COLD PROTECTION Be prepared and **NEVER USE PLASTIC TO PROTECT FROM THE COLD.** After a strong 'noreaster,' **check for salt** on the leaves, especially on **Lychees, Jaboticabas** and **Jak Fruit.** A short time with the garden hose will remove that salt residue.

PRUNING It's TIME to prune GRAPES, PEACHES, NECTARINES, and FIGS. Each has a very particular way to be pruned. Check reliable information on how it should be done.

A point to remember: Most of these trees will lose their leaves in the wintertime, so don't be dismayed. Avocado trees also will lose all their leaves either before the flowers come OR after the flowers come, depending on the variety

RECIPE OF THE MONTH:

In conjunction with the article on persimmons beginning on page 3 of this publication, I thought a recipe using this luscious fruit would be appropriate. This recipe uses persimmons to make a simple cookie into something special. - Roberta Taylor

recipe:

Persimmon Oatmeal Cookies

1 cup shortening
¾ cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 cup persimmon pulp
1 cup flour
1 cup oatmeal
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
1 cup chopped walnuts
½ cup raisins

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. If the batter seems too wet, add a little flour.
Drop the batter by the spoonful on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F. for 12 to 15 minutes to make the cookies uniform in shape, press down on the top slightly with a fork to flatten them before baking.
To make persimmon pulp, remove the stems, slice the persimmons in half and scoop out any seeds. Place the seeded fruit into a blender and puree. Sieve the puree over a bowl and press through for a smooth consistency. Make sure the skin has been well blended. It is often the best part, but large pieces can be unpleasant.
Recipe originally printed in Heirloom Gardener, Fall 2018, by Jay T. Stratton.

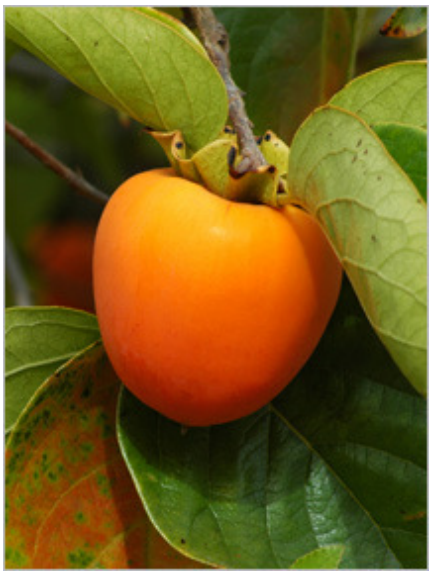
Persimmons (*Diospyros*)

Diospyros comes from the ancient Greek words "*dios" and "pyros,"* combined meaning "divine fruit" or "fruit of the gods." The word persimmon is derived from an Algonquian language of the eastern United Sates, meaning "dry fruit." Many persimmons require male and female trees to produce fruit, but some trees contain both male and female flowers. *Diospyros* is in the ***Ebenaceae*** family, and many species bear fruit which is inedible to humans.

Those persimmon species grown for their soft edible fruit, are as follows:

American persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*): Native to eastern United States, producing berry size fruit. Considered resistant to standing water during the wet season.

Asian persimmon or Japanese persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*): With over 2000 known cultivars, it is the most commercially important persimmon which has been cultivated for thousands of years. Susceptible to damage from high winds and standing water. Unripened fruit is astringent, and high in tannin content. The ripe fruit contains a thick, pulpy jelly within a waxy thin-skinned shell.



Date-plum or lotus persimmon (*Diospyros lotus*): Often referred to as "nature's candy," in English its name is derived from its tasting like both plums and dates.

Black sapote, chocolate pudding fruit, or chocolate persimmon (*Diospyros digyna*): Native to Mexico, has green skin and light-colored flesh that turns dark brown to black when ripe.

Indian persimmon (*Diospyros peregrine*): Native to West Bengal, has green skin which turn yellow when ripe. Fruit is relatively small with an unpleasant taste and is used primarily for folk medicine.

Texas persimmon (*Diospyros texana*): Native to Oklahoma, Texas and northwestern Mexico, bears freshy, subglobose berries which become edible when they turn dark purple or black.

Velvet-apple, Mabolo, or *skizi* (*Diospyros blancoi*, *Diospyros discolor*): Native to the Philippines and China, fruit turns bright pink when ripe.

Before ripening, persimmons usually have a "chalky" or bitter taste. It is important to remember that until the entire fruit has softened to a jelly-like texture, it is not ripe, no matter the fruit's deceivingly appealing exterior. Persimmons ripen in late fall and can remain on the tree into winter.

Persimmons are grown more commonly in northern Florida but can also be grown in the interior of southern portions of the state. There are generally two types of persimmon fruit: astringent and non-astringent.

The heart-shaped Hachiya is a common variety of astringent persimmon, which was used as a food sweetener in Japan before the introduction of sugar cane. Astringent persimmons contain very high levels of soluble tannins and are unpalatable if eaten before completely softened, though the sweet, delicate flavor of fully ripened persimmons of varieties that are astringent when unripe is particularly relished. The astringency of tannins is removed in various ways. Examples include ripening by exposure to light for several days and wrapping the fruit in paper (probably because this increases the ethylene concentration of the surrounding air). Ethylene ripening can be increased in reliability and evenness, and the process can be greatly accelerated by adding ethylene gas to the atmosphere in which the fruit is stored. For domestic purposes, the most convenient and effective process is to store the ripening persimmons in a clean, dry container together with other varieties of fruit that give off particularly large quantities of ethylene while they are ripening; apples and related fruits such as pears are effective, as are bananas and several others. Other chemicals are used commercially in artificially ripening persimmons or delaying their ripening. Examples include alcohol and carbon dioxide, which change tannin into the insoluble form.
Such 'bletting' processes sometimes are jump-started by exposing the fruit to cold or frost. The resultant cell damage stimulates the release of ethylene, which promotes cellular wall breakdown.

Astringent varieties of persimmons also can be prepared for commercial purposes by drying. Tanenashi fruit will occasionally contain a seed or two, which can be planted and will yield a larger, more vertical tree than when merely grafted onto the *D. virginiana* rootstock most commonly used in the U.S. Such seedling trees may produce fruit that bears more seeds, usually 6 to 8 per fruit, and the fruit itself may vary slightly from the parent tree. Seedlings are said to be more susceptible to root nematodes.

The non-astringent persimmon is squat like a tomato and is most commonly sold as *fuyu*. Non -astringent persimmons are not actually free of tannins, as the term suggests, but rather are far less astringent before ripening and lose more of their tannic quality sooner. Non-astringent persimmons may be consumed when still very firm and remain edible when very soft.
Common varieties of Asian persimmons grown in Florida are:
Astringent - Tanenashi, Saijo, Triumph, Hachiya and Winterset
Non-astringent – Fuyu, Hana Fuyu, Jiro and Izu

There is a third type, less commonly available, the pollination-variant non-astringent persimmons. When fully pollinated, the flesh of these fruit is brown inside—known as *goma* in Japan—and the fruit can be eaten when firm. These varieties are highly sought after. Tsurunoko, sold as "chocolate persimmon" for its dark brown flesh, Maru, sold as "cinnamon persimmon" for its spicy flavor, and Hyakume, sold as "brown sugar", are the three best known varieties.

Welcome Micah Bishop as Our Newest Board Member

Dr. Micah Bishop is a local veterinarian in the area that provides mobile diagnostics to clinics. His interest in plants started in Texas where he grew up near the family farm. Annually, he and the family planted a couple of acres of veggies by hand, as well as taking care of peach, plums, pecans, figs, and apricot trees. Eventually he did several 'study abroad' programs in the West Indies and Costa Rica. He spent that time learning about tropical plants and eating as many tasty fruits as possible. When he returned to Texas, he started mostly in orchids. Micah was a student judge in the American Orchid Society before moving to Florida. After renting their home for a few years and growing tropical fruit species in pots, he and his wife Aubrey were able to purchase a property in East Naples. They are in the process of putting in a food forest, numerous tropical fruit, heliconias, and ornamental warm weather and tropical flowering trees. Please welcome Micah to CFG!

Apple Mango

In reading 'Into the Florida Wilderness, A Journey with Doctors Mary and Louis Olds' [(1)] who settled on Marco Island ca. 1905, there are references to Turpentine, Sandersha, and Mulgoba and Haden mangoes being grown on Marco Island prior to 1920. These old varieties are generally accepted as the bases of most cultivars now grown in South Florida. In a letter from their daughter Orida Olds, dated October 26, 1920, reference is made to a "big apple mango tree," of unknown origin or variety. Crafton Clift provided the following short tale which may lend some light on the so-called Apple mango:

"Five or six years ago, I was on a trip to Guyana. It's a long story of how I came to be seen with this seamstress, but the seamstress had a couple of medical students that she was making some clothes for. And while they were there, I was reading National Geographic and there was a picture from Uganda of a big basket of some kind of fruit that looked like big white sapotes. And I never saw white sapotes in Africa although I haven't been to many places in Africa. They were ugly, they didn't have pretty yellow or red colors like you might expect for some fruits. But they were big, like the biggest apple you ever saw and I was trying to figure out what they were. It just happened that one of those medical students who was waiting to get her dress fitted was from Uganda and she said, "they're mangos. That's what mangos look like in Uganda." No color, but just big, they were sort of a grayish green I guess kind of like the color of a white sapote."

Information from other sources:

The Apple mango cultivar originated from the Kenya coastline, probably around the Malindi area. It could have easily been imported to the Caribbean West Indies and from there to South Florida. The fruits are medium to large, almost round in shape and have a yellow or orange to red color when ripe. The average length measures 3.5-inches and 4.5-inches in width, and the weight is 0.6 -1.3-pounds. The skin is usually smooth and thin, and the juicy sour yellow flesh is of excellent flavor and of melting texture virtually free from fiber. This type of Mango is mono-embryonic, but trees propagated by seed are very heterogeneous in fruit shape, color and quality. The trees are large, vigorous and of pyriform growth habit, and the fruit yields are medium.

Advantages:

Free from fibers
Small/medium seed size
Early cultivar of excellent fruit quality

[1]Taken from the Olds family's private collection; Compiled by Elizabeth McDonald Perdichizzi.

A Bit of History: William Hamilton (1745 – 1813)

William Hamilton was a contemporary and friend of William Bartram, but little is known about him as he was not a published author as John and William Bartram. [Both John and William Bartram wrote many books, including the ones about their trips to the Southern States including Northern Florida.]

In 1766, on his 21st birthday, William Hamilton inherited approximately 300 acres of land and a modest house on the west bank of the Schuylkill River near Philadelphia (about 1.2 miles east of the Bartram homestead in the area, which is now known as 'University City') . In 1787 William enlarged the house in the Georgian-style then known as 'Bush-Hill Mansion.' In his life time William increased his land holdings to almost 600 acres, which today encompasses much of 'University City' in West Philadelphia. It became to be known at the time as the preeminent English-style gardens in America. Subsequent heirs sold off much of the land, the Mansion and 37 acres, known as 'The Woodlands' remains. In ca. 1840 the 'Woodlands Cemetery' was created which encompasses most of the land. The mansion and its immediate environs remain. Now one would think this is the end of the story, but not quite.

William Hamilton was a well-known and active botanist at his time. Merriweather Lewis, upon his return from 'The Corps of Discovery' to the Pacific Northwest Territory in 1806, even entrusted seeds and flora specimens, collected during his extended trip, to William Hamilton. In the early 1990's the foundation of William Hamilton's 140-foot long greenhouse was uncovered in archeological excavations on the property. About that same time Thomas Long discovered 250 old paper seed packets between the second-floor ceiling rafters in the attic of the mansion. These seed packets, covered by a thick layer of dust, were severely deteriorated and partially eaten by rodents. The written identification on each packet was only partial legible and by the common scientific names of the sixteenth century. By 2007 Joel Fry, the current curator of 'Bartram's Garden,' was able to decipher the modern scientific names on all 250 seed packets. They included two varieties of Guava, which would require growing in the greenhouse due to the climate in the mid-Atlantic region of North America. Physical evidence has suggested that guava was not part of the normal diet or regularly imported in this region.[1] One can only wonder what other warm-weather fruit trees Hamilton may have considered growing in his greenhouse.

Refer to Youtube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hADKtCIyZk4 for more information.

(1) Roberta Z. Taylor, MA, "Seed Analysis in Historic Archaeology," 1981.

Ficus sycomorus

After hurricane Irma, Dr Stephen Brady, horticulturist on the Board at the Naples Botanical Garden, distributed branches from his damaged Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus)* Tree to various CFG members. Many of the 'cuttings' have been successfully rooted and are now prospering at various locations in Collier County. The sycamore fig has biblical significance as it is referenced seven times in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament.

According to botanists Daniel Zohary (1926 -2016) and Maria Hopf (1914–2008), the ancient Egyptians cultivated this species "almost exclusively."[Remains of *F. sycomorus* begin to appear in predynastic levels and in quantity from the start of the third millennium BC. It was the ancient Egyptian 'Tree of Life.' The tree was brought to Israel, apparently by Philistines during the Iron Age.

Although this species of fig requires the presence of the symbiotic wasp *Ceratosolen arabicus* to reproduce sexually, and this insect is extinct in Egypt, Zohay and Hopf had no doubt that Egypt was "the principal area of sycamore fig development." In tropical areas where the wasp is common, complex mini-ecosystems involving the wasp, nematodes, other parasitic wasps, and various larger predators have revolved around this fig's life cycle.

Celeste Figs

Brown Turkey Figs

Green Ischia

Figs

In Florida, figs generally do better in the northern portion of the state. In southern Florida, the setting of fruit on fig trees is erratic. There are four types of figs, but only common figs are recommended for Florida, as these trees do not require pollination for fruit production. Common figs are *parthenocarpic,* meaning the fruits form without fertilization. The remaining three—'Caprifigs,' 'Smyrna,' and 'San Pedro'—rely on a specific wasp for cross-pollination, a wasp not found in Florida. When choosing your common fig tree, look for cold-hardy cultivars adapted for the south. Three UF/IFAS recommended cultivars are 'Celeste' (or Sugar Fig), 'Brown Turkey', and 'Green Ischia'. Refer to IFAS/Edis document: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg214 for more information. Attempts will be made in 2019 to graft common varieties of figs onto the sycamore fig tree rootstocks, which is believed to lessen the affects from leave rust, alkaline soils and possibly that by nematodes and salty water, therefore hopefully increasing the harvest.

JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Thursday 3 **Trip: Florida Citrus Arboretum:** 7:00 AM sharp, CFG members with meeting at Cornerstone Nursery, 8200 Immokalee Road and carpool to the Arboretum in Winter Haven.
- Tuesday 8 Monthly Meeting: **Caloosa Rare Fruit Exchange**, 7:00 PM, Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Bldg., 2166 Virginia Ave., Fort Myers.
- Tuesday 8 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.
- Thursday 10, 17, 24 Weekly Workshops: **Thursdays year around**, 9:00 AM until at least 1:00 PM, **Cornerstone Nursery**, 8200 Immokalee Road, North Naples – Learn about fruit trees, volunteer in the nursery, or just come and listen to Crafton's stories.
- Tuesday 15 Monthly Meeting: **Collier Fruit Growers**, 7:00 PM Social, 7:30 PM Program: Tree of Life Church, Life Center, 2132 Shadowlawn Drive, Naples. The speaker will be Daniel Blank from Twelve Seasons Farm.
- Tuesday 22 Monthly Workshop: **Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club,** 6:45 PM: First United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs.
- Friday 25 to Sunday 27 **13th Annual Chocolate Festival**: 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM each day, Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden in Coconut Grove. Adult admission: $25, For more information link on: https://www.fairchildgarden.org/Events-Community-Outreach/Chocolate-Festival
- Thursday 31 **UF/IFAS Lecture: 'The Basics of Plant Propagation,'** 10:00 – 11:30 AM, with 'Ask the Master Gardener,' 8:30 - 9:45AM: Unity of Naples Church, 2000 Unity Way, Naples FL 34112, Brian Galligan and Chad Washburn, Naples Botanical Garden. Fee: $10 per Lecture at door, or preregister at: https://2019-garden-workshop-series.eventbrite.com for series.

Fruits which Ripen in January:

Ambarella, avocado (Choquette, Florida Hass, Lula, Monroe, Nishikawa, Ore Negro, Winter Mexican), black sapote, canistel, carambola, cattley guava, ceriman (monstera), custard apple, grapefruit, kumquat, lemon, lime, loquat, macadamia, mandarin, orange, papaya, pineapple, sapodilla, strawberry, tamarind, tomato.

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 Date: TUESDAY,
February 19th, March 19th, and April 16th

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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