OCTOBER 2023

Fruit Growers of SWFL

Published by Collier Fruit Growers

COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS

The Collier Fruit Growers' Meeting will be held
Monday, October 16th,
Starting at 7:00 pm.
The Greater Naples Fire/ Rescue Station
14575 Collier Blvd., 34119

Enter through the east side door of the Administration Building.
Bring tropical fruit or a fruit-based bake item for the tasting table.

The speaker at the October 16 membership meeting of the Collier Fruit Growers will be Josh Jamison, the primary grower and horticulturalist at Cody Cove Fruit Farm and Nursery in Babson Park, FL. He was the garden manager at the HEART Village in Lake Wales from 2013-2022, working as an educator and managing the diversified demonstration farm.

Cody Cove is a small family farm whose goal is to provide nutritious food to the community and promote sustainable agriculture through offering high quality plants and produce. Its focus is on collecting elite edible plant varieties from around the world and making them available to home gardeners, small farms and beyond.

Josh's presentation will be "Staple Crops for Florida." Most gardeners focus on growing fruits and vegetables. While delicious and nutritious, these items tend to be low in calories. Staple crops are foods that are high in carbohydrates, proteins, and fats that we need for energy and survival. The primary subject will be starchy root crops that we can grow in Florida, with some discussion of other relevant plants.

The Collier Fruit Growers is preparing to promote an ambitious agriculture educational program for Collier County Schools in conjunction with the 'Let's Grow' initiative at Naples Botanical Garden and the 'One Flower' nonprofit organization in Lee County, and various business sponsors for all students at the participating public and charter schools throughout Collier County. Please refer to the article entitled "Educational Initiative for Collier County Schools" on Page 4 of the newsletter for current activities of this initiative.

Please volunteer your time for numerous activities, such as posting educational materials on the website, preparing course outlines, or helping with grant applications, at:
collierfruitgrowersinc@gmail.com
Or consider donating to this initiative program through PayPal™ by clicking on the "donate" button:

Donate

the Bonita Springs tropical fruit club

The Meetings of the Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club will held On Saturdays,
October 14th & 28th at 4:30 pm.
Bonita Springs Fire Control & Rescue District Station
27701 Bonita Grande Drive, 34135
Both events will be "potluck" events, bring a dish or dessert

CFG Educational Initiative

Re-establishing the agricultural program at the Everglades City School: Michael Cartamil, CFG VP, reports that the rehabilitation of the existing vegetable garden is under way. Cleaning of the existing aquaponic tanks and related mechanical equipment is nearly complete. Possible future plans include a food forest and an animal husbandry program involving chickens and rabbits.

Sabel Palm Elementary School: The school principal has stated that parents along with several teachers have inquired about establishing a vegetable garden at the school. CFG has been requested to make a presentation.

'Let's Grow' workshop – Saturday, September 30:
Several Collier Fruit Growers members, along with educators from Lee and Collier Counties, participated in the 'Let's Grow' workshop sponsored by the Naples Botanical Garden. A summary of the topics discussed at the workshop will be included in the November FGSWF newsletter.

CFG Suggested children's book selections:

- "Bee Fearless: Think Like a Kid," by Mikaila Ulmer; published August 18, 2020

When Mikaila Ulmer was four, she was stung by a bee--twice in one week. She was terrified of going outside, so her parents encouraged her to learn more about bees and not be afraid. Mikaila did not just learn what an important role bees play in our ecosystem, but she also learned that bees are endangered, and set out to save them. She started by selling cups of lemonade in front of her house and donating the small proceeds to organizations dedicated to bee conservation. She realized that the more lemonade sold, the more bees could be helped, and 'Me & the Bees Lemonade' was born. Now nationwide Mikaifa has had meetings with Fortune 500 CEOs, secured a deal on Shark Tank, and visited the White House. Mikalia's passion for bee conservation have taken her far.

In Bee Fearless, part memoir, part business guide, Mikaila - now fifteen (2020) - shares her personal journey and special brand of mindful entrepreneurship. It offers helpful tips and guidance for young readers interested in pursuing their own ventures, instilling in them the beelief that they can bee fearless and achieve their dreams too.

Available from Kindle $6.99; Audiobook 0 cents; paperback $8.99; hardback $12.65, retail.

- "Permaculture Gardening for the Absolute Beginner," by Losie Bechham, published by the 'All We Need Publishing Company,' August 15, 2023.

Follow nature's map to grow your own organic food with confidence and transform any backyard into a thriving ecosystem. A great primer for middle school children and above.

Available on Amazon eBook for 99 cents; 'Kindle Unlimited' 0 cents; paperback copy is $15.99, retail.

Come out and support the Collier Fruit Growers fall tree sale, to be held in conjunction with the UF/IFAS Collier Extension, 14700 Immokalee Road, North Naples, 34120. A discussion on fruit tree propagation, together with a grafting demonstration with be held in the flower garden at noon both Saturday & Sunday, October 28-29th. Adults $5.00, children under 12 free

Spicy Critter Fritters

Is the season of ghosts and goblins, but not the 'faint of heart.'
It is hard not to love a fritter … this spicy fritter made with fresh corn and cricket flour will 'melt your heart.' Here's a great comfort food to get you out of your comfort zone.
Course: Appetizer, Main Dish, Snack
Insect ingredients: Cricket Flour and lightly toasted weevils
Makes about: 10-12 patties.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup cricket flour
- 2 beaten large eggs
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 cups fresh corn kernels
- 2 thinly sliced scallion
- 1/2 finely chopped seeded jalapeño
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup light sour cream
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- 1/3 cup chopped chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
- 1 tablespoon lightly toasted weevils

Instructions:

1. Finely dice fresh corn kernels; mix with the scallion, and jalapeño. Pulse in food 4-5 times.
2. In a large bowl, combine corn-veggie mixture with eggs, cricket flour, grated Parmesan, and kosher salt. Press the mixture into a fine mesh strainer to remove excess liquid.
3. Mix sour cream, lime juice, & chipotle peppers. Refrigerate dip & fritter mix for about ½ hr.
4. Working in batches, cook heaping tablespoonfuls of batter until golden brown, about 4 minutes per side; season fritters with a pinch of salt.
5. Serve with sour cream and sprinkle with weevils.

Note: Regular flour can be substituted for cricket flour and the slightly toasted weevils can be omitted.

Chocolate Espresso Banana Bread with Cricket Flours by Cricket Flour Team / Cricket Flour Blog, Recipes

The full recipe takes about 10 minutes to prepare, 50 minutes to bake.

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups cricket flour
- 3-4 very ripe bananas
- 1/3 cup melted butter.
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 pinch sea salt
- 1/2 cup coconut sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 shot of espresso.
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder.

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a mixing bowl, add together the bananas and melted butter and mix together until fully combined.
3. Next add in the baking soda, salt, brown sugar, coconut sugar and egg well beaten.
4. Once combined mix in the vanilla extract, room temperature espresso shot, cocoa, and Cricket Flour.
5. Using a slightly greased 4in x 8in pan, add in the final mixture and set on the middle rack of the oven. Bake for 50 minutes.

Tropical Soils: Dr. Hugh Popenoe
University of Florida, 1975
By Crafton Clift

One of the greatest human beings I have ever met was Dr. Hugh Popenoe, Professor at the University of Florida. His reputation radiated from all the foreign (tropical) agriculture students. He was the son of Wilson Popenoe who was born in Kansas but worked with the United Fruit Company at the time bananas had become a cheap, delicious, indispensable, everyday commodity in every supermarket in the US and Canada. The bananas got moko (snot) disease [Ralstonia solanacearum] and appeared to be doomed.

Wilson Popenoe was sent to Asia to find another fruit to replace bananas. He brought back durians, rambutans, pulasans [Nephelium ramboutan], mangosteens and dozens of other fantastic fruits. We fruit hunters used to visit a couple of time a year at the Wilson Popenoe Botanic Garden in Tela, Honduras. Bananas from seed or corms only take a year. Nothing beats that.

Hugh grew up feeling at home in the Philippines or the Serengeti plains of Africa. When he traveled, he looked for the wisdom of agricultural practices that looked weird. He is the only person I have heard praise 'slash and burn' agriculture.

He had a slide of a goat pen over a pond where manure would make algae grow for tilapia. He showed us how bamboo poles placed 15 feet up attracted crow-sized fruit bats by day to fertilize a future garden plot after the bamboo was moved elsewhere. A photo of a dry plain in Somalia with a few scattered acacia [Acacia disambiguation] trees full of goats climbing on their branches to eat the tender leaves among the thorns. (See your cell phone!)

A little boy on the street in Manila selling mangos; three for a peso.
"How much if I buy them all?" asked Dr. Hugh.
"That will be a peso each."
"You should give me a better price if I buy more."
"But, Sir, if you can afford to buy all, you can afford to pay more."
And one day a slide of someone's "cycle of life" poster showing grasshopper eats grass, iguana eats grasshopper, iguana rots, and…
"What wrong with this poster?"
"Iguanas do not eat grasshoppers. Iguanas are vegetarians."

When Dr. Hugh Popenoe was teaching in Gainesville, he had a farm in Alachua near Dr. R. T. Dunstan, who crossed muscadines with table grapes and American chestnuts with Chinese chestnuts trees. Dr. Dunstan said, "One day Hugh cut the corner too sharply, fell off the tractor and the disc ran over his legs. He crawled five miles for help."

The way he comes bouncing into class every day so full of energy, I would never have guessed that!
Graduate credit was given for this course in the soils department. Why not sociology, or anthropology, or religion? What is this star dust called soil?

When I got to my job site in Wiwili, Nicaragua, there was a small, tilled piece of earth. I fell to my knees and took a double hand full of soil. I smelled it. I pinched it to see how it held together. I let it sift between my fingers. Fungi, bacteria, nematodes – good and bad species. Hundreds of unidentified species. So alive and soon to be alive.

The blood and tears and sweat of farmers before me. The first ear of corn of the season that saved a child from starving. Where did I get this awe and reverence for soil.

Soil: The Narrow Boundary Between the Living and the Dead

Soil is misunderstood by so many people who think of it as dirt whose primary purpose is to secure plants to the ground. Soil is so much more. It is responsible for the foundation of life and decomposition and resurrection of the dead.

Soil is a microcosm of both inanimate minerals and living organisms. The soil's fertility mostly originates in rocks. Rocks contain potassium, calcium, phosphorus, and most of the other minerals that plants require to build tissue and fuel their metabolic functions. To convert rocks to food, plant roots and soil organisms secrete mild acids and enzymes that release atoms of nutrients from rock particles. In a sense, plants and soil microbes breakdown rocks with caustic substances to harvest the life-supporting minerals. If one is able to create 'healthy' soil in their garden, the rampant soil life will coax enough minerals from the rock for most of the plants' needs. With our natural sandy conditions, most of the minerals disperse and leach away quickly.

The formation of soil, rich in humus, is paramount to sustaining an adequate quantity of living organisms necessary to recycle organic matter while harvesting the required nutrients. A teaspoon of good rich soil may contain on average a billion bacteria, a million fungi, and ten thousand amoebae (often called an amoeboid). As dry leaves drop to the ground, they are moistened by the morning dew. The leaves are rinsed free of polyphenols, and the bacteria, which has lain dormant on the surface of the leaves, begins to bloom and secreting enzymes start the compost process, releasing nutrients and readying the organic matter's return to life. This is quickly followed by airborne fungus which is joined by thousands of other species of bacteria, fungi, algae, and microbes to further decompose all organic matter. Certain soil bacteria secrete gums, waxes, and gels which assist the division of fungal cells into long fingers of hyphae, causing the soil to bind together, protecting it from drying out and increasing water retention.

Microbes do not live long, only hours or days, before they are consumed by larger microbes and soil amimals, referred to as secondary decomposers. Larger predators, i.e., centipedes, ground beetles, pseudoscorpions, predatory mites, ants, and spiders, are known as tertiary decomposers. This becomes a complex soil ecology which interconnects the life and death of each species to many others.

The sugar and starches in the leaves quickly convert into energy, carbon dioxide, and more organisms. Harder to digest are celluloses and various types of proteins. Some soil organisms have special enzymes needed to break down polymers more slowly. A few fungi are known to break down certain polymers, known as lignins. In the process, which is not fully understood, microbes and other forces convert lignins and other leaf compounds into humus. Humus is primarily composed of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen combined in way that they are fairly stable. It will eventually decompose, but in healthy soil, freshly decomposing debris continually arrives faster than the 'old' humus is broken down.

Humus exceeds in holding nutrients. Humus contains a bristling array of negatively charged oxygen atoms with a host of positively charged elements, including potassium, calcium, magnesium, ammonium (a nitrogen compound), copper, zinc, manganese, and others. At the neutral pH of about 7.0, humus is able to absorb and store enormous quantities of positively charged nutrients.

Most plants are composed primarily of carbon which is consumed by the soil organisms during decomposition. Other elements, such as nitrogen, calcium, phosphorus, etc. are reincorporated into solid matter. Most of the carbon is dissipated into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide (CO_2). By the time the decomposition process is complete, little remains but inorganic compounds, such as phosphate, nitrate, sulfate, and other chemicals that are recognizable plant fertilizers. Plant roots occupy only a tiny fraction of the soil, so most minerals never make direct contact with the roots. The minerals (nutrients) are absorbed by humus or consumed by soil organisms which would otherwise leach away. [Please note that the mycelium of oyster mushrooms is known to contribute to the extraction of nutrients from humus and redirecting them to the plant roots.]

Possible Cause for the Exceptional Hot Summer in 2023

It is very easy to attribute the hot, dry summer to "Climate Change," caused by human greed and the introduction of hydrocarbons into the world's atmosphere as proclaimed by the news and social media. Was it the El Nino vs. the La Nina weather cycle? Or was it just the cyclical nature of our weather patterns, or was there more at play? Winters in the northeastern United States can be relatively mild with only rain for one or two consecutive years, then fiercely cold other years with sixty or more inches of snow. The earth has been changing for millions of years. As the North, South American, and European continents separated the sea level lowered, Florida was formed, and it will continue to change.

Let us consider another possible cause. Yellowstone is one of the world's biggest volcanic systems. It sits above one of Earth's "hotspots" — areas in the mantle where hot plumes rise and form volcanoes on the crust above. It has produced three caldera-forming eruptions in the past 3 million years: the Huckleberry Ridge Tuff eruption, 2.1 million years ago; the Mesa Falls eruption, 1.3 million years ago; and the Lava Creek eruption, 631,000 years ago. Many scientists theorize that this has led to the extinction of dinosaurs. The U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) has provided new geological evidence that "the formation of Yellowstone Caldera was much more complex than previously thought." A caldera is a large crater that forms after the collapse of a volcano following an eruption. Now there is growing concern that another Yellowstone super-volcano eruption is overdue, the results of which would be extremely devastating.

We need to look at recent history and consider the 'the year without a summer' in the northern hemisphere following the eruption of the Krakatoa volcano in May of 1883, which was 10,000 times greater than each of the two atom bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. By the beginning of July temperatures in eastern United States were below freezing, it started snowing in August.

The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano erupted in 2015 and again in 2022. The dome of the 2014 volcano rose hundreds of feet above sea level, and merged two exiting uninhabited islands, five miles apart, into one larger inland. The January 2022 eruption was of shorter duration but was more powerful than the Krakatoa volcano. The 2022 eruption blew the dome apart sending it back below sea level along with portions of the pre-existing islands. The 2022 volcanic eruption in Tonga caused the fastest-ever underwater flow ever recorded. The volcano also ejected a large

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The delayed effect of the Tonga volcano last year has caused an ozone hole over Antarctica to open weeks earlier than usual. The hole in the ozone layer – the portion of the stratosphere that protects our planet from the Sun's ultraviolet rays – has been gradually healing over the past few decades thanks to the 1987 Montreal Protocol's phase-out of ozone-destroying chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Still, this layer thins every September to form an 'ozone hole' above the South Pole. In recent years, the hole has started to open in mid-to-late August, when spring begins in the southern hemisphere. The increasing sunlight also drives the ozone-destroying activity of the remaining CFCs in the atmosphere. It then closes in November or early December. This year, the ozone hole has started to open several weeks earlier at the beginning of August. By August 10, it had already grown to over 1.2 million square miles in size. According to #CopernicusAtmosphere data, the 2023 ozone hole started to form earlier than in 2021 and 2022. Chris Lucas at the Australian Bureau of Meteorology attributed this early opening to the eruption of the 'Tonga' volcano. The consensus is that the opening of the 'ozone hole' itself has a minor cooling effect, but that was greatly countered by the large amounts of carbon dioxide and methane gases released by the volcano that has trapped heat in the lower levels of the atmosphere, thus resulting a temporary increase of 2.7°F (1.5C) in the surface atmosphere temperatures. Humans have negatively impacted the environment, but natural variations and extreme uncontrolled events have a much greater effect on the climate. Yes, we should use common sense remedies to minimize our impact, but change is inevitable.

Nation Goes for Dominance of World's Stinkiest Fruit

Farmers in China grow durian, which some say smells like gym socks

BY SHA HUA

Chinese farmer Wei Fuyou clearly remembers the moment four years ago when he first watched a video clip showing that durian, a pungent fruit with a smell reminiscent of gym socks, could be grown on the tropical island of Hainan, where he lives.

"That means I can grow them, too!" he recalls yelping.

Wei promptly cut down some of his betel nut palms and planted 400 durian trees in their place.

Never mind his own initial disgust with durians, a spiky fruit native to Southeast Asia, whose yellow flesh some have likened to "vomit-flavored custard." The excitement was driven by Wei's 1.4 billion countrymen, many of whom are crazy for the stinky delicacy. The fruit has become so beloved in China that it consumed $4.2 billion worth of durians last year, about four times the value from 2018. To get its fix, however, China relies almost exclusively—for now—on *Please turn to page A6*

Making scents

Southeast Asia, where conditions are perfect for the fickle fruit.

Now, Wei is part of China's quest to become more self-reliant in durian production. As Beijing has done with other critical technologies it hopes to master, such as semiconductors and quantum computing, Wei and other Chinese are racing to unlock the secrets of durian cultivation. It is a chal-lenging quest.

While the durian fruit is hard and sturdy on the outside, the tree itself is extremely sensitive to cold and dryness. Only the very southernmost parts of China—like Hainan island—have the tropical climate suitable to grow durian.

Even then, success is far from assured. Only a combination of patience and technique can coax the durian from its spiky shell.

That's where Gerald Miow comes in.

Wei Fuyou on his farm where he planted 400 durian trees; below, Gerald Miow gives advice. FROM TOP: WEI FUYOU; MG FORMULA SENDIRIAN BERHAD

Wei has already taken some of Miow's advice, for instance replacing his iron scaffolding with nonrusting alternatives.

But not everyone behind Hainan's durian-growing aspirations has been as receptive to Miow's recommendations. Some local farmers have dismissed his advice, he says.

Back home in Malaysia, some have accused Miow of betraying his country by sharing the dark arts of durian cultivation to potential competitors.

Miow is a 62-year-old fertilizer entrepreneur in Malaysia, and author of a 200-page treatise on the durian.

Over the decades, through painstaking trial and error, Miow says he has deciphered just the right mixes of fertilizers to deal with the worms, ants, bitter tastes, reluctant blossoms and slow growth that have hamstrung other would-be durian cultivators.

Early this year, Wei and other farmers in Hainan reached out to him, extending an invitation for the durian sage to visit, and hopefully share some of his secrets.

Miow obliged. China, he says, lacks "indigenous durian talent."

Over 10 days in April and May, Miow roamed Hainan's durian orchards, pruning shear in hand, dispensing advice and insights about ant attacks, air circulation and soil degradation. As he shared nuggets of durian wisdom, researchers and farmers peppered the guru with questions, diligently recording Miow's every word on their smart-phones.

Miow's opinions aren't always orthodox, and indeed sometimes clash with the recommendations of institutions such as the Hainan Academy of Agricultural Sciences' Tropical Fruit Research Institute.

Scientists there have been working on breeding new durian seeds that aren't just more cold-resistant but that will also produce dwarf versions of durian trees, which otherwise can grow up to 165 feet tall—a problem in typhoon- prone Hainan. Hainan durian farmers have also taken to erecting iron scaffolds around their trees.

Balderdash, says Miow. He maintains that no dwarf tree can produce the same delicious fruit as a regular durian tree. Iron, he adds, oxidizes, allowing zinc to seep into the soil and contaminate the durian.

China's durian fixation has been transformative for many farmers in Malaysia in recent years. Streets in Bentong Dis-trict, 10 miles northwest of Malaysia's capital, are lined with newly built freezing facilities and packing stations.

Others say Malaysia doesn't have much to worry about — for the time being. The first attempt by Chinese farmers to grow durian ended in failure when the first tree, planted in 1958, produced only a single durian fruit, according to state media reports.

As consumers' appetite for durian surged again recently, Chinese farmers have renewed bids at achieving what China's media has dubbed "durian freedom"—the ability to grow one's own durians at an affordable price. This year, the breakthrough finally came when Chinese farmers succeeded in breeding the country's first commercially-viable batch of homegrown durians.

Still, China is projected to harvest just 50 metric tons of its own durians this year— well short of the goal of 2,450 metric tons initially touted by state media, and just 0.005% of Chinese durian consumption last year.

"Once people like durians, they are addicted to them," says Dennis Lo, a Malaysian durian exporter who co-authored Miow's durian book and who founded a company called Durian Duke Group. (Its motto: "The AMAZING fruit— toward the AMAZING freedom.") He says even if Hainan were covered only with durian trees, it still wouldn't be enough to satisfy Chinese demand. Lo also believes Beijing would never shut its door to Southeast Asian durian producers, knowing the diplomatic value of leveraging China's domestic market to cement ties with its southern neighbors. "China has panda diplomacy and now they also have durian diplomacy,'" he says.

In recent years, durians have become a mainstay of diplomatic meetings between China and its Southeast Asian neighbors. In July 2022, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi raved over a durian cheesecake his Malaysian hosts served him, and declared China's intent to import more tropical fruit from Malaysia.

Wei, for his part, has come to love the taste of durian and says he hopes simply to offer Chinese customers more varieties of durians to choose from.

"We are just promoting durian love and growing the durian business pie for everyone," he says.

the Bonita Springs tropical fruit club

Feel free to join BSTFC on **our Facebook group**, where you can post pictures of your plants, ask advice, and find out about upcoming events!

https://www.facebook.com/groups/BSTFC/

Link to the **next meeting**: https://www.facebook.com/groups/BSTFC/events/
Meetup Link (events/meetings sync with the calendar on your phone!):

https://www.meetup.com/Bonita-Springs-Tropical-Fruit-Club/

Our **Website** (and newsletters with tons of info):
https://www.BonitaSpringsTropicalFruitClub.com/

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Collier Fruit Growers

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.

COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS
VISIT US AT:
www.collierfruit.org

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

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