

Southwest Florida Tropical Fruit News

—covering Naples and Bonita Springs, FL

April 2009

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Collier Fruit Growers

www.collierfruit.org

The next meeting is Monday, April 20th. This month's program will feature Richard Campbell, Curator of Tropical Fruit, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. The topic: For the Love of Mangos.

The club meets on the third Monday of the month at 7pm for socializing and enjoying the tasting table, 7:30pm for the program.

Meetings are held at the Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway (corner of Sunshine Blvd.), Naples.

Fruit for the tasting table. Please cut up fruit to make it easier to sample.

Membership and change of address. Yearly membership is \$25; renewals before February 1, \$15. Send checks and change of address information to CFG, c/o Mary Fehr, 137 Debron Dr., Naples FL 34112.

Next month's speaker. Har Mahdeem, horticulturist and aquatic manager at Sundy House in Delray Beach, will be talking about rollinias and pawpaws.

Upcoming dates. Field trip in June to sample lychees at Going Bananas Nursery in Homestead. July 13th, ice cream social and mango festival.

Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club

The next meeting is Tuesday, April 14th. A panel of club experts—Crafton Clift, Pat Johnson, Frank DeNardis, Tom Betts—will answer questions.

Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month except July and August.

Meetings begin at 7pm with a brief business discussion; the program runs from 7:30 till 8:30pm; socializing and refreshments until 9pm.

Meetings are held at the First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs (from Old 41, turn east on Crockett and left on Shriver).

Bimonthly workshop. This discussion group meets April 28 at 7pm. The board of directors meets at 6pm.

Fruit for the tasting table. Please cut up fruit to make it easier to sample.

Membership. Dues are \$15. Send checks to Tom Betts, 25071 Pennyroyal Lane, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Upcoming dates. Yard tour at Frank DeNardis's June 6; see page 5 for details. Mango festival, June 9th.

Fruit calendar

April 14. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club monthly meeting. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 992-4664.

April 20. Collier Fruit Growers monthly meeting. 7pm. Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples. 643-7275.

April 28. BSTFC discussion group. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, Bonita Springs. 992-4664.

June 6. Yard tour at Frank DeNardis's. 9am-noon. 108 Viking Way, Naples. For info, call 597-8359.

What's Ripe in April?

	cherry of the Rio Grande	muntingia
	coconut	papaya
	custard apple	peach
	guava	pineapple
avocado	grumichama	sapodilla
banana	jaboticaba	sapote, white
Barbados cherry	loquat	star apple
blackberry	miracle fruit	Surinam cherry
carambola	mulberry	tamarind

Over the picket fence....

A handful of loquats have an gentle sedative effect.—Dave Southall, Collier County Museum

Prune jackfruit when the humidity is high, allow one fruit per panicle, and raise up the skirt—Richard Campbell, Fairchild Botanic Garden

"Approach" grafting is joining two independently growing, self-sustaining plants. Join the branch of a plant in a pot to the branch of an existing tree.—Chris Rollins, Fruit and Spice Park

Papayas are native to Florida.—Dave Southall, Collier County Museum

There are cursed trees such as Bailey's Marvel; it's mischievous and unpredictable.—Richard Campbell



Collier Fruit Growers

Collier Fruit Growers is an active non-profit organization dedicated to introducing, propagating and

distributing the many rare tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world, as well as offering education in these areas and encouragement to extend their cultivation. CFG functions without regard to race, color or national origin.

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April in SW Florida

Club notes. The success of the tree sales shows that folks want to grow their own fruit more now than ever. The aluminum plant tags seemed to be much appreciated by the buyers. Thanks to all the club members who turned out to help. The Collier club also thanks Randy Riner for coming so far to help and to Gordon Skrede, the muscadine/blackberry guy, who donated Brazos blackberry plants.

The March 25th field trip to Homestead was great. Madeline Bohannon did a lot of work and it's much appreciated. We visited with Richard Campbell's at Williams Grove and toured the new and improved Fruit and Spice Park. Madeline is planning another field trip—this time for the Collier Club—to Homestead in June in time for the lychee harvest. Details to come.

Cultural notes. Spring has arrived and temps are headed up. We've gotten some rain, hit and miss, but should expect dry weather to continue. In my garden, I'm weeding, mulching, and fertilizing.

When applying fertilizer, it's critical to water first then apply fertilizer and water again. Apply a 6-6-6 or something close to it half way in from the drip line out to beyond the drip line.

With spring has come the bluebirds. I am thrilled to report that a pair of bluebirds are nesting in one of my birdhouses. Up until now my dozen or so homemade birdhouses have stood empty.

Bring your questions to club meetings or check with the University of Florida's Collier Extension at 353-2872 or Lee at 461-7505.—*Linda Coyner, horticulturist and freelance writer*

Vegetables to plant in April

Beans	Cabbage	Endive	Parsnips
Beets	Cantaloupe	Kale	Peas, English
Broccoli	Carrots	Kohlrabi	Radish
Brussels sprouts	Collards	Lettuce	Rutabaga
	Corn	Mustard	Spinach
	Cucumber	Okra	Squash
	Dill	Onions	Tomatoes
	Eggplant	Parsley	Turnips

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Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club

The purpose is to introduce and distribute the many rare and tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world; to inform, educate and advise members and the public in the selection of these valuable tree crops, so as to encourage their cultivation. Where possible, the organization will produce a basis for researching and producing new cultivars and hybrids.

Making your own black gold: A compost Q & A

Compost is key to a successful garden. Brian Housewert, an urban homesteader who is working toward sustainability on his family's 1/3 acre parcel in the middle of Golden Gate City, Naples, wants to spread the word. He teaches organic gardening classes, is vice president of the Collier Fruit Growers, and will be speaking on vegetable gardening at a future Bonita club meeting. Thanks to Tim Deaton for posing the questions.

Q. Are any special tools required?

A. Composting does not require any tools whatsoever, but a pitchfork might help with turning your compost.

Q. Is bigger better? i.e. should I get my neighbors tossing stuff in my pile?

A. Bigger is not always better, but somewhere in between is nice for me, I have many piles throughout my yard that vary in size and shape, this makes it easy to get to some nice black stuff where ever I am working.

Q. How often does the stuff need to be turned?

A. Composting is just the transformation of organic material into soil, it will turn to soil eventually even if never touched, however if you want to speed up the process, turning once a week is not unheard of.

Q. Is there a way I can get this started and put it on "auto-pilot"?

A. Yes, pile it up and leave it be—let it rot and allow the earth-workers do the work.

Q. Are you aware of any danger in compost?

A. No dangers in composting whatsoever.

Q. What do I do if I either get too much for my own use or decide that I no longer want to compost?

A. I have never heard of anyone having this problem, however if you wish to remove the pile for whatever reason you could move the finished soil to the garden beds and bag the rest for neighbors and friends who will gladly take it.

Q. Do I have to worry about flies/gnats/mosquitoes/ snakes/raccoons/possums/ rabbits/illegal aliens being attracted to the pile and becoming a nuisance?

A. Our "waste" is always some other creatures delicacy. I allow for any and all to take part in this natural process. The time it would take to keep these creatures out is simply not worth what they remove.

Q. Can I put too much of anything in the pile (citrus, mango, papaya, palm, pine)?

A. Certain things should not be introduced in high amounts to your pile, anything woody, or protein based (such as meats) should be avoided, palm will take a very long time to break down and should also be avoided.

Q. Will it hurt the pile if I use grass clippings or other stuff that has had chemical fertilizer on it?

A. The "earth-workers" can break down almost anything, I would however stay away from anything that had been sprayed recently with any herbicides or pesticides.

Q. What about weeds from the yard? Seaweed? Flowers? Aloe?

A. The more the merrier! I throw it all in!

Q. Where should the pile be? Direct sun, wet spot in the yard, etc.

A. My piles do fine just about anywhere, preferably though partial shade is best, this will help keep the pile from drying out.

Q. How do I know how big of a pile I should make?

A. You will be surprised at how quickly the pile breaks down, if you are doing some major pruning and garden work, the pile can get quite large, however it will not stay that way for very long. Let it rot!

Q. What should I avoid putting in the compost pile (other than the obvious plastic, lead, steel, explosives)? Should I avoid papaya seeds and moringa because they will grow fast?

A. Proteins (meats) are avoided simply because they tend to draw undesirables, such as maggots and rats. Everything (seeds included) should be composted, and if you get some volunteers then transplant them or clip them back.

Q. What is the difference between compost and mulch?

A. Compost is rich earthy black soil full of living organisms. Mulch is chipped woody material that eventually if left to sit will rot into compost.

Q. Can I put mulch in the compost pile? Does it make any difference if it is pine mulch?

A. I always cover my pile with some sort of "brown" material. Mulch can qualify, however be advised that it can take some time to break down so the smaller the chips the better.

Q. When I am gone over the summer (or for six months or whatever), what do I need to do? Is there any way to prepare for being gone a long time?

A. Your pile will most likely not be a pile when you return; it will have "sunk" back into the earth. I say let it rot and do not worry.

Q. With all the rain in the summer will the compost pile get washed away?

A. Unless your pile is in a flood prone area, the pile will just "sink" back into the earth, not wash away.

Q. When it is really dry in the winter do I need to water the pile?

A. I like to spray mine from time to time in the winter with the hose, however if you are adding kitchen scraps and green material during this period there is usually enough liquid to keep the pile alive.

Q. When I get some good stuff, how much of it should I use? I don't want to waste it when I could be using other stuff?

A. Remember compost is our way of recreating the forest floor, when you dig into a mature forest top soil layer, there is anywhere from 3 inches to 2 feet of nice organic material. There is no danger of over-use.

Q. Would it be safe to say that a compost pile is a low-cost, effective method that will help me eliminate kitchen and yard waste, provide a nutritional, organic base for both potted and in-ground plants, and help maintain a healthy moisture level during extended dry periods?

A. Not only is compost a low-cost way of keeping good "fertilizer" out of the landfill, but your garden yields will increase, thanks to all the "life" you've restored to the earth. Biodiversity is key in any ecosystem. If you "Let it Rot"—then the need for chemical fertilizer is greatly reduced, and you and your neighbors' health is being protected. There are too many positive things to list on why everyone should compost. Start a pile and LET IT ROT!

Yard tour June 6th

Frank and Mary DeNardis are opening their garden to club members on Saturday, June 6th, from 9am to noon. It's their way of celebrating what looks like the most amazing mango season ever.

Frank's trees are covered with bloom spikes and small fruits. It's a sight to behold.

He lives in the Palm River section of north Naples close to Immokolee Rd. The address is 108 Viking Rd. If you need more information, call him at 597-8359.

Sharing the harvest

Naples Harvest was started by good Samaritans at the North Naples Methodist Church to help backyard growers share their bounty with local food banks and shelters. Often our fruit trees and vegetable gardens are over abundant and yield many times what we can eat. At the same time we have people in our community going hungry. Why waste it?

Don Splain and Mike Edwards created Naples Harvest last year. The organization coordinates the collection and delivery of excess fruit and produce. Homeowners can pick their own surplus and take it to the church or Naples Harvest volunteers will come and pick it for those who need assistance, leaving whatever the homeowners want and taking the surplus.

Members of Collier Fruit Growers also deliver, on an informal basis, their excess fruit to St. Matthew's House and the Shelter for Abused Women and Children of Collier County. Fruit Growers President John Puig estimates he's delivered about 3,000 pounds in his five years on the group's board, and he knows there are others who deliver their fruit as well.

You can get more information about Naples Harvest at 593-7600 or online at naplesharvest.com.

Collier Fruit Growers www.collierfruit.org
Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club
c/o Linda Coyner
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Naples FL 34117

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Got Questions about Growing Tropical Fruit? We're got Answers

Check out our website www.collierfruit.org

Our clubs have a lot of experienced backyard and professional growers. Bring your fruity questions to the next meeting or have them posted in the newsletter (fruitnflowers@gmail.com). You can also call the Collier Extension Service plant clinic at 353-2872, M/W/F 9am-noon and 1-4pm. The Lee County Extension horticulture desk can be reached during those hours at 461-7504.

Don't overlook online resources about tropical fruits. For instance, you can access the full text of Julia Morton's [Fruit of Warm Climates](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/Warm_Climates) at www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/index.html.