

# SW FLORIDA TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS

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## CLUB NEWS

### COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS

[WWW.COLLIERFRUIT.ORG](http://WWW.COLLIERFRUIT.ORG)

The next meeting is Monday, February 15th. The program will feature Richard Campbell, Senior Curator of Tropical Fruit Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Center for Tropical Plant Conservation. His subject: For the Love of Mangos. Richard is a longtime friend of CFG and the rock star of the fruit-club speaking circuit. This is one meeting you do not want to miss.

The February meeting will be held at the Tree of Life Church, 2131 Shadowlawn Dr., Naples. See page 3 for directions.

**Membership and change of address.** Family membership is \$25; renewals before February 1, \$15. Commercial membership, \$100, which includes a business-card ad in each 10 issues of the newsletter (a year's worth). Send checks and change of address information to CFG, c/o Mary Fehr, 137 Debron Dr., Naples FL 34112.

**Upcoming date.** February 27, tree sale at Freedom Park, Naples.

### BONITA SPRINGS TROPICAL FRUIT CLUB

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 9th. The program will feature Steve Cucura, manager of Treehouse Nursery on Pine Island. Steve will be talking about fruit trees that can take some cold and those that fruit while snowbirds are here.

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).

The board of directors meets monthly before the regular meeting. NOTE: This is a change from the past when it met before the workshop.

**Bimonthly workshop.** The next discussion group is February 23 at 7pm.

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

**Upcoming date.** March 6th, tree sale at Riverside Park, Bonita Springs.

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## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

**February 9. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club** monthly meeting. 7pm. First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 992-4664. The board meets at 6pm.

**February 18. Your Backyard Citrus.** Master Gardener's Annual Garden Workshop series. 10am. \$7. Unity of Naples Church, 2000 Unity Way, Naples. 353-4244.

**February 15. Collier Fruit Growers** monthly meeting. 7pm. NOTE: Different location—Tree of Life Church, 2131 Shadowlawn Dr., Naples.

609-2919. See page 3 for detailed directions.

**February 23. Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club workshop. 7pm.** First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Ave., Bonita Springs. 992-4664.

**February 27 CFG's spring tree sale.** Freedom Park, 1515 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples. 9am to 2pm. 601-2919.

**February 27. Home vegetable gardening class.** Lee County Extension Office, 3406 Palm Beach Blvd., Ft. Myers. \$8. 239-533-7514.

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## A FARMER'S MARKET WITH A DIFFERENCE

There are many farmer's markets in our area but this one is different. All vendor fees benefit the children in our area through the Growing Connection of Southwest Florida and Collier County Parks and Recreation Scholarship Fund.

The Growing Connection is an international outreach program operated under the United Nations. This program is based around the Earthbox system, a scientifically based gardening program that provides school children with a hands-on experiential learning experience while partnering

them with schools from other countries. Children learn about horticulture and health while eating the food they grow.

The *Market in the Park* is held at Freedom Park, 1515 Golden Gate Parkway, every Friday from 3-7pm. For more information please contact Nancy Olson, Exhibit Hall at 252-4060 or Cynthia Piper at 438-5682.

Stop by and sample homemade tortillas, breads, organic and traditional produce and browse candles, soaps, native plants, fresh flowers, and much more.



### COLLIER FRUIT GROWERS

Collier Fruit Growers is an active nonprofit 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.

#### Officers

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#### At-large Directors

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## CFG: NEW LOCATION FOR FEBRUARY MEETING

The Golden Gate Community Center closes for the holidays that fall on the January and February meeting dates. Those meetings will be held at Tree of Life Church, 2131 Shadowlawn Dr., Naples. Here are directions from the Golden Gate Community Center. It's about a 6-mile drive.

1. Head west on Golden Gate Parkway
2. Turn left at Santa Barbara Boulevard
3. Turn right at Davis Blvd. Cross over Airport Pulling Road
4. Turn left at Shadowlawn Drive

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## JANUARY 22 FIELD TRIP A SUCCESS

Wow! This was one of the best field trips yet. The weather cooperated, giving us a breezy warm day at Fairchild Gardens. During the morning we had the leisure to wander about the gardens and check out what the Chocolate Festival had to offer. We sampled premium chocolates that a dozen or so chocolatiers in the garden house were selling. Outside vendors were selling tempting chocolate crepes, drinks, desserts—you name it. *Theobroma cacao* plants, the source of chocolate, were also available to buy. After lunch, member Crafton Clift, who used to work at Fairchild as a horticulturist, led a tour of the fruit trees at Fairchild.

Madeline Bohannon did all the work behind this trip, which is no small matter. Thanks go to her and Marie Deaton for keeping us happy with snacks and drinks.

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### Officers

<b>Tim Deaton</b> , President timdeaton@yahoo.com	992-4664
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## WHAT'S RIPE THIS MONTH

The cold has made citrus taste better, if that's any consolation. I still have meiwa kumquats and ponkan tangerines. Even though the papaya's leaves are all brown, the fruit seems okay.

Some lucky club members have avocados, carambolas, canistel, and yellow guavas.

Here's the official list:

avocado	papaya
banana	sapodilla
canistel	sapote, black
carambola	sapote, mamey
citrus	soursop
coconut	
guava	
macadamia nut	
miracle fruit	

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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, to encourage their cultivation. Where possible, the organization will produce a basis for researching and producing new cultivars and hybrids.

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## GOT COCONUT WATER?

Drinking coconut water has many benefits. It's naturally

- Low in carbs
- 99% fat free
- Low in sugars

Coconut water contains organic compounds possessing healthy growth promoting properties that have been known to help a host of things:

- Keep the body cool and at the proper temperature.
- Orally re-hydrate your body (it's an all natural isotonic beverage).
- Carry nutrients and oxygen to cells.
- Naturally replenish the body's fluids after exercising.
- Raise metabolism.
- Promote weight loss.
- Boost the immune system.
- Detoxify and fight viruses.
- Cleanse the digestive tract.
- Control diabetes.
- Aid the body in fighting viruses that cause the flu, herpes, and AIDS.
- Balance PH and reduce risk of cancer.
- Treat kidney and urethral stones.
- Boost poor circulation

The English name coconut, first mentioned in English print in 1555, comes from Spanish and Portuguese word coco, which means "monkey face."

Coconuts are the fruit of the coconut palm, botanically known as *Cocos nucifera*, with *nucifera* meaning "nut-bearing." The fruit-bearing palms are native to Malaysia, Polynesia and southern Asia, and are now also prolific in South America, India, the Pacific Islands, Hawaii and Florida. The light, fibrous husk allowed it to easily drift on the oceans to other areas to propagate.

The coconut itself has many food uses, including milk, meat, sugar and oil as well as functioning as its own dish and cup. The husk was also burned for fuel by natives, but today a seed fibre called coir is taken from the husk and used to make brushes, mats, fishnets, and rope. A very potent fermented toddy or drink is also made from the coconut palm's sap. Coconut oil, a saturated fat made from dried coconut meat, is used for commercial frying and in candies and margarines, as well as in non-edible products such as soaps and cosmetics.

Although it takes up to a year for coconuts to mature, the trees bloom up to thirteen times a year, so fruit is constantly forming yielding a continuous harvest year-round. An average harvest from one tree runs about 60 coconuts, with some trees yielding three times that amount. The coconut's name is a bit of a misnomer, since it is botanically classified as a drupe and not a nut. It is the largest seed known.

If you've ever opened a fresh coconut, you will have seen the thin, translucent, almost clear coconut juice or water that has a slight almond flavor. Contrary to popular belief, this is not the coconut milk. However, the water is consumed as a drink fresh from the coconut by many, and it can also be used in recipes.

"It's a natural isotonic drink, with the same level of electrolytic balance as we have in our blood. It's the fluid of life, so to speak." During the Pacific War of 1941-45, both sides in the conflict regularly used coconut water—siphoned directly from the nut—to give emergency plasma transfusions to wounded soldiers.

Most coconut water is still consumed fresh in tropical coastal areas—once exposed to air, the liquid rapidly loses most of its organoleptic and nutritional characteristics, and begins to ferment.— excerpted from [www.knowledgebase-script.com](http://www.knowledgebase-script.com).

NOTE: If you don't have your own fresh supply of coconut water, don't despair. Morton Satin, Chief of AG's Agricultural Industries and Post-harvest Management Service, has developed a way of packaging that preserves flavor and nutrients for 10 days to 3 weeks. Even better is coconut water packed in aseptic packaging can last up to 12 months.

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## FEBRUARY IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

You vegetable gardeners have one more chance grow warm-season veggies. The recent cold wiped out most warm-season plants. Plant new tomato and pepper plants as soon as possible. Many garden centers still have a good supply.

Sow seed for beans and cucumber and resow seed for greens and lettuce to squeeze in a harvest before the heat arrives. Most collards, lettuce, mustard greens, kale, and arugula thrived in the cold, but reseeding them now ensures a continuous harvest.

Don't put the frost cloth away just yet. We're not out of the woods until March.

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## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FROST?

Your plants may look like skeletons, sport brown or dead leaves, or just look sunburned, but don't start hacking just yet. Wait a few weeks or so to give the plants time to seal off damaged tissue and prepare for new growth. Pruning too soon also signals plants to send out tender new growth that would be all the more vulnerable if frost returns.

All too often people try to help damaged plants recover by (over)watering, fertilizing them, or cutting them down immediately after the cold has damaged the plants, according to Jonathan Crane, fruit tree specialist at Tropical Research Educational Center and Collier's January speaker. That's counterproductive. The best advice is to be patient. Wait to do any pruning on fruit trees (and other woody landscape shrubs like hibiscus or firebush), until the danger of frost has passed, say March 1. Then the damage can be assessed and the plant pruned, if needed, to remove dead or damaged portions.

For banana plants, leave the dead leaves in place; they give the tree an extra layer of protection against more cold (if it comes). Wait until the cold weather is gone for good before you remove them. If your banana leaves are completely brown, the stem has died back; you will have to be cut it to the ground after March 1.

If your bananas have fruit and some green leaves, you can reduce the size of the bunch in the hopes the fruit will still ripen. Most fruit won't ripen once the temps drip below 50 degrees.

Don't panic if your mango and citrus

trees drop leaves or some fruit. Dropping leaves is actually a sign that the tree's systems are working properly. The reverse is true as well: Clinging brown leaves is not a good sign.

Some plants or trees will look like goners in the coming weeks, but don't be too quick to remove or replace them up. When the time comes, go for a severe trim, leaving a reasonable amount of material above the graft. You may be surprised: Some plants will come back from this original stalk; others might send new growth out through the roots.

Technically, we can get freezing temperatures from November 15th till March 1st. Wait it out and then get busy. When pruning, look for cold-injured wood by scraping a small section of bark. If the layer beneath the bark is discolored brown or black, it's damaged and should be cut away. New growth also will help direct where to prune; prune at least one inch above new buds. It's advisable to keep fruit trees 12 feet or so, according to Dr. Crane.

At the same time, give your entire landscape some fertilizer to support recovery.

If you need to rethink the cold hardiness of your trees, consider:

avocado	muscadine grape
citrus	nectarine
fig	peach
jaboticaba	pear
loquat	persimmon
macadamia	surinam cherry
mulberry	white sapote

For more information, see ECHO's Guide to Choosing Fruit Trees for Cold Tolerance at [www.echotech.org](http://www.echotech.org).

**GOT QUESTIONS ABOUT GROWING TROPICAL  
FRUIT? WE'VE GOT ANSWERS.**

Check out our website [www.collierfruit.org](http://www.collierfruit.org)

Our clubs have many experienced backyard and professional growers. Bring your fruity questions to the next meeting or have them posted in the newsletter ([fruitnflowers@gmail.com](mailto: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 239-533-7504.

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/index.html) at [www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/index.html](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/index.html).

**FEBRUARY 2010 FRUIT NEWS**  
**DUES ARE DUE. PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.**

Collier Fruit Growers [www.collierfruit.org](http://www.collierfruit.org)  
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