



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

January 2010

THE 2010 SCION EXCHANGE

RECRFG's 2010 scion exchange will take place on Saturday, January 23, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Veteran's Hall, 282 High Street, Sebastopol. The doors will open for CRFG members only at 9:00, and the general public will be admitted at 10. As in years past, we'll have grafting demonstrations and training, a pruning demonstration, refreshments, and a raffle. It's a great time to get out and look for that plum or fig (or peach or apple or grape or kiwi or cherry or exotic) you've always wanted to grow, touch base with other chapter members, renew your membership, show off your favorite cookie recipe, and maybe win a prize. General admission is \$5.00.

As always, volunteers are needed. We could really use some more grafters, but we also need people who can help with setting up, take admissions and membership applications, work at the raffle table, help with refreshments, or bring food. If you would like to help out, contact Phil Pieri at phil_pieri_2001@yahoo.com.

This year, to make the exchange a bit greener, we're asking our members to bring their own coffee cups. (If you forget, though, we'll have them available.) See you there!
— Linda Robertson

ANNUAL MEETING

The chapter's annual meeting was held at Goldridge Farm on December 5. At this year's meeting, we experienced a constitutional crisis. The bylaws do not allow officers to serve for more than two years, and Phil Pieri had termed out as president of the chapter, but no one else expressed an interest in being nominated. So Phil agreed to be acting president until someone else is elected or we can amend the bylaws. The members present agreed by consensus vote to elect Phil acting president.

No one expressed interest in either the treasurer's or the secretary's spots, so Mike Roa and Linda Robertson were also reelected by consensus. Linda will also continue as newsletter editor unless someone else would like to take it over.

We need people willing to serve as officers for the chapter. If anyone is interested in serving as a chapter officer, either this year or next, please contact Phil and let him know.

Treasurer's report: Because treasurer Mike Roa couldn't be at the meeting, chapter president Phil Pieri gave the treasurer's report. The bottom line news was good: we

ended the year with a balance of \$14,758.16, \$1,837.57 more than last year. The Festival of Fruit essentially broke even; our expenses exceeded revenues by \$116.31, but we have some supplies left over. The solar dehydrator workshop ended up costing \$494.71 more than we brought in from sale of the dryers.

Newsletter: Newsletter editor Linda Robertson asked for contributions: articles, notes, whatever, about events or anything else that might interest the members. We also agreed to print the library catalogue in the next newsletter.

Biomanager's report: David Ulmer, our biomanager, reported that most of our grafted trees sold at the summer plant sale. We have six peach trees left that need budding.

David has ordered rootstocks for the scion exchange and should be able to get them in time without the trouble we had last year. He hasn't been able to find a source for persimmon rootstocks, though. They can't be shipped to California from out of state, and he hasn't been able to find a nursery in California that sells them. If anyone knows of a California nursery with persimmon rootstocks to sell, please let him know. We can grow rootstocks from seeds, but they take 2-3 years to reach graftable size. Nevertheless, we may try planting them, so



The members go to work on the Goldridge Farm apple fence after the annual meeting.

we ask members to save persimmon seeds and bring them to a meeting.

Fred Paget reported that he has heard that lemon guava repels the bugs that carry the new deadly citrus virus. He has a plant and can bring seeds to the scion exchange.

Terry Harrison reported that Keith Borglum has asked

for more Fort Ross Gravenstein scions because there has been so much demand for the trees.

Report on Burbank Farm: Phil reported that we've been helping maintain the Goldridge orchard

2010 Scion Exchange: We discussed arrangements for the scion exchange, to be held on January 23 this year, at the Veteran's Hall in Sebastopol.

New business: Terry Harrison suggested we collaborate with the Community Alliance of Family Farmers (CAFF), North Coast Chapter, to do a fall fruit tasting that would be open to the public. We could raise money by charging an admission fee. CAFF's events chair is Wendy Krupnick.

After the meeting and lunch, a group of volunteers pruned and tied the apple fence along the back of the Goldridge Farm orchard.
— Linda Robertson

THE FESTIVAL OF FRUIT

What a fun and exciting weekend at the Festival of Fruit in Santa Rosa! Time, experience, knowledge and (of course) fruit samples, were freely shared. Everyone with which this writer came in contact was kind, patient and generous. One could not help but go away inspired to keep planting, experimenting, and sharing! For me, part of the fun was witnessing all the passion for growing fruit.

The first time I witnessed this type of passion, and the depth of feeling that a person can have for their connection to plant life, was in a horticulture class while attending the Santa Rosa Junior College. Dave Fazzio was answering a question about why he became a nursery professional and how much money one can make in the industry. Dave could barely complete his thoughts about the why of it (as we all know it was not for the money) because he was obviously holding back tears.

There were poignant moments like this during the Festival of Fruit this weekend. The first such moment that I noticed was expressed towards the end of the Friday night round table discussion about growing apples. After enjoying the delicious fruit wines generously shared by the winemaker Joe Real, the attendees settled in. We all listened to such topics as different ways of managing codling moth, such as wrapping corrugated cardboard around the trunk and taping it in place to catch the overwintering larvae that like to hang out in the crevices (check every two weeks or so and then remove and burn the cardboard along with the little critters); the benefits of using the white spray of Surround was discussed (the adult female moth does not recognize the tree as a fruit tree and moves on); the use of diatomaceous earth around the base of the tree to kill apple borers. Then the panel was asked their thoughts about the future of apple farming in California. On the one hand, the present and future of apple farming looks bleak and there was a moment when one of the panel members was a bit overcome with the sadness of the future outlook. I'm sure we all understood. On the

other hand, it was heartwarming to see some of the very young people (who had unusually attentive and curious eyes) in attendance throughout this conference, giving one hope that the future may not be as bleak as it appears to be!

The Saturday night key note address by Michael Phillips was an opportunity for the apple farmer to share not only photos of his bucolic farm in northern New Hampshire but also to express his feelings about apple trees and farming in general. Michael may have gone out on a limb (pardon me) detailing the ceremony he and his farming community participate in each year of reverently dancing around the apple tree but for at least one of my new found male friends at the festival Michael made a connection. While saying our goodbyes this friend said, "Boy, I feel bad about my apple trees; I haven't appreciated them enough. When I get home I'm going to give [the trees] a hug and try to make it up to them!"

— Mary Frost

FALL EVENTS

The fall gave us quite a few interesting events in addition to the Festival of Fruit.

Fig and Grape Tasting at Wolfskill:

In September, the staff at the National Clonal Germplasm Repository at Wolfskill hosted its annual fig and grape tasting and tour of the facility. Staff members talked about the basics of figs and grapes and about their ongoing research into grape varieties; and several varieties each of figs and grapes were set out for us to taste and compare.

Half of Wolfskill's collection are grapes, about 3,000 accessions of wine grapes, table grapes, wild varieties and hybrids.

This is the third tasting I've been to, and each year the staff presents a different selection of grapes for sampling. This year, we tasted Dattier, a century-old European table grape; Flame seedless, the red seedless grape ubiquitous in supermarkets; Fantasy seedless, a recent hybrid; Muscat Angel, a seeded muscat hybrid very resistant to disease; Carolina Black Rose, a scuppernong grape from the South; Suavis, an old Italian variety with a great Muscat flavor; and Pride, a tropical relative of North American native grapes. The figs we tasted were Calimyrna, Brown Turkey, Violette de Bordeaux, Panachee, and King.

Afterward, we were invited to walk among the rows of grapevines and sample whatever was ripe, and to tour the fig orchards and taste whatever we could reach. The morning ended with a perennial favorite of attendees: grilled figs on skewers of rosemary twigs, with goat cheese and prosciutto

RECRFG Annual Apple Tasting: On October 17, the chapter held its annual apple tasting. This year the event was hosted by Joe and Sue Henley. David Ulmer provided about 40 varieties of apples identified by number, and everyone tasted them and picked those they liked most and least.

The winners were a tie for first place between Fortune and Hawaii,. Ambrosia and Fuji tied for second

place, Hoople's Antique Gold and Golden Delicious for third, and Empire for fourth. Of the leaders only Ambrosia and Golden Delicious did not get any votes for the lowest ratings.



Chapter member John Valenzuela rates the samples during this year's pomegranate and persimmon tasting at Wolf skill

Inevitably, the tasting was a snapshot of a certain point in the apple season, and varieties at their peak in mid-October did better than earlier or later apples. In addition, as David pointed out, even single varieties are better some years than others. Shizuka, which was number one two years ago and in second place last year, had no high ratings and 5 low ratings in this year's tasting.

Late Apple Tasting at Main Street Trees: Jean and John Wheeler hosted a second apple tasting on November 20, at Main Street Trees, their nursery in Napa. The tasting featured over 40 varieties of apples and a showing of the segment on apples from *The Botany of Desire*, the documentary based on Michael Pollan's book of the same name. The tasters' favorites were generally different from those that had scored well at the CRFG tasting in a month earlier, and late-ripening apples were among the high scorers. The clear winner was Gold Rush, followed by Wickson, Honeycrisp, Ambrosia, Pinova, Arkansas Black, Crimson Gold, Pink Lady, Sierra Beauty, and Braeburn.

Pomegranate and Persimmon Tasting at Wolfskill: The fall harvest and tasting season ended with another annual event at Wolfskill, their pomegranate and persimmon tasting, hosted in cooperation with the Golden Gate chapter of CRFG. Wolfskill has an amazing number of pomegranates, including over a hundred from the eleven hundred varieties acquired by researcher Gregory Levin during his career studying pomegranates in Turkmenistan in the former Soviet Union. The tasting let visitors see and taste the surprising range of pomegranate flavors and textures, from sweet to almost wine-like, from hard-seeded fruit to arils you can chew up seeds and all. Like the fig tasting, this traditionally ends with a chance to tour Wolfskill's persimmon and pomegranate orchards and taste even more varieties.

If you're interested in attending any of these events this fall, announcements for these, and more, are

posted on the RECRFG members' listserv. To be added to the listserv, send a message to **Kalia Kliban**, at kalia@sbcglobal.net. — Linda Robertson

Persimmon Spice Cake

1/2 c Butter
 1 c Sugar
 3 Eggs
 1 c Persimmon pulp
 1 tsp Baking Soda
 2 1/2 c Flour
 1 tsp Salt
 1 tsp Cinnamon
 1/2 tsp Cloves
 1/2 c Chopped nuts
 1 c Raisins

Cream together butter and sugar. Add eggs one at a time, beat well after each. Mix baking soda and persimmon pulp and add to cake mixture.

Sift together dry ingredients and add gradually. Fold in nuts and raisins. Spoon into floured and greased 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 350F for 35-45 minutes. Based on a recipe by Randy Pollak. The cake is a little dry unless frosted.

When cool, frost with Cream Cheese Frosting:

Cream 4oz cream cheese with 1/4 cup butter. Add a tsp vanilla, then 2 cups powdered sugar. Whip until smooth.

Recipe contributed by Jana Ulmer

MY FESTIVAL OF FRUIT

The Festival of Fruit featured so many tours and lectures that everyone got the chance, in a way, to create their own festival.

Mine began with a tour of Wolfskill Ranch. Have I mentioned how much I love Wolfskill? Not in the last five minutes? Well, let me say it again: it's one of my favorite places, and I wouldn't have missed for anything the chance to pay another visit. We spent the morning learning from the researchers there about the amazing number and variety of grapes and fruit and nut trees collected on the 70 acres of the ranch. Among other things we heard a cautionary lecture on the current near-monoculture of almonds in California. Most commercial orchards grow only the same two varieties, which makes them vulnerable to losses if a disease comes along to which the trees aren't resistant. On the fun side, though, late peaches were in season, and we had time for one of my favorite activities, sampling one after another from among the rows of little trees.

On Friday, as a chapter member, I was also a volunteer, but that didn't keep me from having a great time. After the round-table discussion on apple growing and the CRFG board meeting, I helped serve Joe Real's

varied and wonderful selection of homemade fruit wines – with more sampling, of course. Participants in the wine tasting were asked to rate the wines and comment on them. It was a convivial evening, and a lot of the fun was getting other people’s reactions to the different wines and comparing favorites. There was a lovely citrus wine that almost everyone rated among the best, and I also particularly liked Joe’s pomegranate-merlot and an apple cinnamon dessert wine that tasted like apple pie in a glass.

Saturday was the big day, the festival itself. It began with the keynote speech, by Michael Phillips, author of *The Apple Grower*, about his ideas and techniques for holistic orcharding. After that, depending on our interests, we could hear talks about growing bananas in northern California, growing or curing olives, managing an orchard and marketing fruit, grapes for table and wine, citrus, loquats, berries – there was something for almost everyone. As a volunteer, again, assigned to introduce speakers and act as a timer, I sat in on a more in-depth lecture by Michael Phillips on apple growing; a lively how-to session by Don Landis on curing olives, with recipes; a talk about roots and soil by Robert Kourik, the author of *Roots Demystified*; and a discussion by Jeff Moersfelder of Wolfskill Ranch and writer Barbara Baer about the history of Wolfskill’s extraordinary collection of pomegranates.

Outside, between lectures, I tasted stone fruit brought by Dave Wilson nursery and browsed among the vendors’ stalls, where I bought a rooted cutting of a black Mission fig and copies of Robert Kourik’s books on roots and drip irrigation.

The festival ended Saturday evening on a beautiful (and bi-coastal) note. We ate dinner at Santa Rosa Junior College’s Shone Farm in a room with a panoramic view across an iconic California landscape of pasture, vineyards, and woodland, and then saw a slide show by Michael Phillips of his beautiful New England farm and orchard.

All in all, the festival was a great couple of days, both educational and fun. I came away with books and copious notes for my fantasy apple orchard and with recipes for curing the very real olives sitting in brine on my kitchen counter even now.

The November-December *Fruit Gardener* features a collage of photographs from the festival, which captures some of the cheerful atmosphere of the day.

— Linda Robertson

The Redwood Empire CRFG Library

Here is a list of the books currently available:

	<u>BOOK</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>
1	All About Citrus	Klein, M. et al.
2	Chez Panisse Fruit	Waters, Alice
3	Cornucopia II	Facciola, S.
4	Fruit Facts Volume One	CRFG – Fullerton
5	Fruit Facts Volume Two	CRFG – Fullerton
6	Fruits of Bali	Eiseman, F & M
7	Fruits of Warm Climates	Morton, J.
8	The Home Orchard	Ingles, Chuck. et al.
9	Jujube Primer & Source Bk	Meyer & Chambers
10	The World Was My Garden	Fairchild, David
11	The Northern Pomona	Hawthorne, L.
12	Expert Grafting C.D.	CRFG
13	Integrated Pest Mgmt. For Floriculture and Nurseries	U.C. Div of Ag & Natural Resources
14	The Paw Paw	Callaway, M.Brett
15	Avocado Packet	Misc.
16	Exotic Fruit Cookbook	Henderson, Sybil
17	Persimmon Culture in New Zealand	Kitagawa, H. and Glucina, Paul
18	Fruits of the Tropics	Sancho, E.
19	Fruits and Vegetables of the Caribbean	Bourne, M.J., Lennox, Seddon
20	Natural Pest Control	Lopez, Andrew
21	The Incredible Pomegranate	Ashton, Baer, Silverstein
22	The Apple Grower	Phillips, Michael
23	Roots Demystified	Kourik, Robert
24	Pollination for Apples: Bloom Periods	Home Orchard Society
25	Apple Fertility	Home Orchard Society
26	Lorette System of Pruning	Lorette, Louis

Linda Robertson is the custodian of the library. To arrange to borrow a book, contact her at: lindarobertson@mindspring.com, or (707) 766-7102.

Newsletter Staff
Copy Editor.....Linda Robertson
Layabout.....Michael Kurland

time flies like an arrow - fruit flies like a
banana.