



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

January 2011

POMEGRANATE AND PERSIMMON TASTING AT WOLFSKILL

We early adopters are always sad when something we like gets discovered – when the great little burrito place you found gets reviewed in the Sunday paper and you can't go there any more for the lines of people, or mobs of Philistines invade your favorite little winery. It's great for them, we hope, but no fun for us.

Wolfskill's pomegranate and persimmon tasting has, somehow, met this fate.

Four years ago or so, when I went to taste pomegranates there for the first time, the event was well-attended, but mostly by people from local chapters of CRFG. Over the years since then, it has grown more and more popular. Two years ago, the crowd of people filled the room where the fruit was laid out for tasting, making it difficult even to get to the tables.

I didn't make it to the tasting last year, but various people, including the Wolfskill staff, said that during the tour of the orchard afterward, a few people raided the trees of large amounts of fruit, and a couple of trees were killed by people damaging them to pull pomegranates from them.

This year, the room where the tasting was held was even more mobbed, and the orchard tour was called off. Staff members were assigned to patrol the grounds and stop people from even casually picking the grapes or olives that grow near the parking area. It's truly sad that a few thoughtless people have diminished the event for all of us. *[Cont'd on p.2]*



A Wolfskill pomegranate tree

PLEASE COME TO THE RECRFG CHAPTER MEETING

The Redwood Empire CRFG's annual chapter meeting has been rescheduled to Saturday, January 22, at 10:00 a.m., at Sonoma State University, as attendance at the November 27 meeting was too low to make up a quorum.

We need members to attend, to vote on bylaws and volunteer as chapter officers. Our president, Phil Pieri, and secretary, Linda Robertson, are termed out, and are not permitted under the

bylaws to serve another term. Phil stayed on for an extra year in 2010 because no one stepped forward to run for chapter president.

We need active members willing to help with the work of maintaining the chapter and planning events. So please come to the meeting, volunteer if you can, and if you can't, at least come and vote.

Date and place of the meeting: Saturday, January 22, 2011, 10:00 a.m., in the EDC room of Sonoma State University. A map and directions are available at

http://www.sonoma.edu/university/images/ssuca mp_6_09.pdf.

Parking is in Lot A (the others are reserved.)

Newsletter Editor: Linda Robertson
Gadabout: Michael Kurland

[*pomegranates Cont'd*]

I didn't manage to get a data sheet for the pomegranates or to write down more than a few names of those I tasted: Parfianka, Desertni, Sakerdoze, Utah Sweet, Fleischman's. The persimmons on display this year were non-astringent Fuyu-types, except for one small one that may have been an American variety. The standouts for me were Matsumoto Wase Fuyu and Izu.

I left the event fairly early, regretting that I wouldn't get to walk through the orchard among the wonderful reds and golds of the pomegranates, and feeling that I'd seen the end of an era.

Orchard Mason Bee Workshop

With honeybees in peril from colony collapse and bumblebees threatened by an imported fungal disease, native bees are getting more attention as alternative pollinators. Orchard mason bees are one of the best, and Steve Erhmann's knowledge of them is encyclopedic.

On November 7, Steve held a workshop about orchard mason bees at his home in Sebastopol. He told about the habits of mason bees and the time of year in which they are useful as pollinators – basically from about mid-March through May. He explained that you can buy mason bees and bee houses or try to attract wild bees to an existing bee house and showed how to make a bee house out of a wood block by drilling it with holes of the right size, and how to make paper liners for the tunnels, to make it easier to clean and re-use the block. And he discussed methods of tricking bees into emerging earlier and keeping bees in their cocoons in the refrigerator over the winter to ensure a supply in the spring.

With his talk, Steve set out a very helpful display of bee supplies and books about using them for pollination.

Some of the resources Steve cited are:

– The Home Orchard Society, based in Oregon, sells mason bees and supplies for keeping them. Order forms are available at <http://www.homeorchardsociety.org/masonbees/>.

– Harmony Farms: bees and bees supplies can be ordered through them.

– The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: on-line resources about native bees, including its report, "Alternative Pollinators: Native Bees," available online at

<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/nativebee.html>.

– *Managing Alternative Pollinators*, a publication of the Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Service and Sustainable Agriculture and Resource Education, available in hard copy or online at <http://www.sare.org/publications/pollinators/pollinators.pdf>

– *How to Manage the Blue Orchard Bee*, by Jordi Bosch and William Kemp

– *Pollination with Mason Bees*, by Dr. Margaret Dogterom

– *The Orchard Mason Bee*, by Brian L. Griffin

APPLE TASTING

On October 16, Jean Wheeler hosted the chapter's apple tasting at Main Street Trees in Napa. The central feature of the annual event is a blind tasting of apples; this year, members contributed over forty varieties. As usual, it was an interesting snapshot of the middle of apple season and a lesson in how differently fruit develops from year to year. Many of the same varieties of apples are set out for sampling each year, but the winners and losers change unpredictably from one apple season to the next. The unusually cool summer in 2010 produced another crop of surprises.

At the tasting, participants rated the apples on a scale from 1 to 10. David Ulmer compiled the individual ratings into two categories of scores: high (ratings from 7 to 10) and low (ratings from 1 to 3). David's chart, on the next page, shows the number of high and low scores each variety received.

This year's winner was Empire with 21 high ratings and no lows. Other winners – those with over 20 high ratings – were Golden Russet, Hudson's Golden Gem, Newtown Pippin, and Honeycrisp.

Last year's winners were quite different: Fortune and Hawaii tied for first, and Fuji and Ambrosia for second. Hoople's Antique Gold and Golden Delicious tied for third place, and Empire came in fourth.

REDWOOD EMPIRE APPLE TASTING 10/16/2010

Winners and losers are highlighted. Some not ripe, others too ripe. Empire wins. It had no low votes. High score is number of people ranking variety 7 to 10 out of 10 while low score ranked variety 0 to 3.

	High Score	Low Score
OLD AND ANTIQUE		
API ETOILE-(STAR LADY)	1	14
ARKANSAS BLACK	4	11
ASHMEAD'S KERNEL	11	8
BLACK TWIG	2	23
BRAMLEY'S SEEDLING	6	12
CALVILLE BLANC D'HIVER	11	8
CLAYGATE PEARMAN	12	7
GOLDEN DELICIOUS	14	4
GOLDEN RUSSET	21	5
HUDSON'S GOLDEN GEM	20	6
KING DAVID	12	6
NEWTOWN PIPPIN		
(ALBEMARLE PIPPIN)	20	3
NORTHERN SPY	4	10
RED BERLEPSCH	9	6
RED DELICIOUS		
(FROM A VERY OLD TREE)	9	3
RHODE ISLAND GREENING	10	6
ROXBURY RUSSET	10	3
SHOCKLEY	1	13
SIERRA BEAUTY	9	7
SMOKEHOUSE	4	16
SPITZENBURG	15	1
WHITE WINTER PEARMAN	15	2
WINTER BANANA	4	12
MODERN (NY RELEASES)		
EMPIRE	21	0
SPIGOLD	16	5
FORTUNE	15	4
MODERN (AOMORI JAPAN)		
HOKUTO	2	22
SHIZUKA	12	10
FUJI	13	3
MODERN (OTHER)		
CINNAMON SPICE	10	7
CONNELL RED	8	5
GALA (late harvest- Oct. 4)	8	15
HAWAII	8	9
HOOPLE'S ANTIQUE GOLD		
(Sport of Golden Delicious)	14	3
KIDD'S ORANGE RED	13	5
MAIGOLD	12	3
MELROSE	8	11
HONEYCRISP	20	5
SPLENDOR	12	9
TYDEMAN'S LATE ORANGE	17	5
Albert Etter Apples:		
PINK PEARL	1	16
WALTANA	9	12