



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

January, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events this winter include the scion exchanges for all the chapters. The date for the spring grafting clinic has not yet been set; an announcement will be e-mailed to chapter members when we have the date and place.

Our scion exchange will be held on January 26, 2013, in a new location, the Santa Rosa Veteran's Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, across the street from the county fairgrounds. Doors open at 9 a.m. for CRFG members and 10:00 for non-members, and the festivities end at 1 p.m. The event is free for chapter members; non-members pay a \$5.00 entrance fee. In addition to free scion wood, we sell apple, pear, peach and cherry rootstocks and offer grafting for a small fee. Other vendors will be there selling bare-root trees, garden and beekeeping supplies, books, etc. We will also have lectures and demonstrations of grafting and pruning techniques and seed saving. Bring plastic bags for scions and masking tape and Sharpies for labeling your finds.

Other scion exchanges:

— Golden Gate Chapter: Saturday, January 19, 2013: Ed Roberts Campus, 3075 Adeline Street, Berkeley (next to the Ashby BART station), 12 noon to 3 p.m.. Golden Gate is asking for a \$4 entry donation, all scions and cuttings are free. Events-grafting demos, sales of fruit tree rootstocks and various plants and citrus fruit and grafting supplies and a silent auction and a plant drawing. Community groups are welcomed to share their information at a table .

— Sacramento Chapter: Sunday, January 20, 2013: Extension Offices, Sacramento. For additional information, contact Drew Bohan at 916-607-7214 or sacramento@crfg.org

— Mendocino Permaculture Winter Abundance Workshop: Saturday, February 2, 2013. Includes talks about gardening and orchard management, free scion wood and a seed exchange, and sales of rootstocks and bare root trees. Mendocino County Fairgrounds, Boonville.

[Cont. On p. 3]

BUSINESS MEETING, DECEMBER 1, 2012

On December 1, 2012, the chapter held its year-end business meeting and election of officers at the DeLoach winery in Santa Rosa.

Outgoing chair Linda Robertson summarized the chapter's work and events in 2012, which included not only the annual scion exchange, plant sale, grafting clinics, and apple tasting, but also setting up informational tables and displays of locally grown fruit at the Gravenstein Apple Fair and the second Heirloom Exposition and participation in putting on this Year's Festival of Fruit.

Outgoing treasurer Michael Kurland reported that as of December 1 the chapter had just over \$19,000 in its checking account.

Biomanager David Ulmer reported on the trees we have grafted for sale and rootstock purchases for the 2013 scion exchange. We have been unable to get pear rootstock this year. We have about a half dozen grafted trees left from our very successful summer sale and sales of trees on Craigslist.

Mike Roa reported for the grants and scholarships committee that in 2012 we donated \$400 to the county science fair and science Olympiad: \$200 in prizes for students and a \$200 donation to the fair. We gave \$100 to Sonoma State's entomology department and \$200 to the Heirloom Exposition. A \$500 scholarship for Santa Rosa J.C. went unclaimed this year because of a lack of qualified applicants.

All our officers had "termed out" under the bylaws, and we elected a new slate. A couple of positions will be shared by two people, to help with the work. Our new chapter chairs are Maile Pieri and Ed Maybrun

[Cont. On p.2]

MEMORIAL

Idell Weydemeyer's husband, David Meredith, passed away unexpectedly on December 11. He was a man of many talents and interests and was active in a host of good causes. He had recently retired after thirty years as a professor at SFSU.

A memorial will be held on Sunday, January 20, from 1:00 to 4:00, at the Ed Roberts Campus of U.C. Berkeley, 3075 Adeline Street, Berkeley, CA.

[Bus. Meeting cont.]

. Secretary is Elizabeth Newton, and Mike Roa and David Ulmer will be the treasurers. In offices not subject to term limits, David Ulmer will continue as biomanager, assisted by Keith Borglum. Linda Robertson and Michael Kurland will continue as editors of the newsletter, joined by Pat Gentry.

Phil Pieri kindly agreed to coordinate the scion exchange again this year, and we discussed planning and recruited volunteers from the members present.

We also discussed other volunteer work the chapter has been doing or has been asked to do.

– The espaliered fence at the Gold Ridge Farm: Phil Pieri will do this, and we will keep in touch with Tony and the Gold Ridge people about other possible things we can do to help.

– Volunteers needed to help in Fort Ross orchard: Linda Robertson will contact Susan Rudy, who is in charge of the orchard there, about either arranging a visit for members or giving a talk to the chapter about the fort and its needs.

– The Sonoma State orchard: Phil Pieri has been going there periodically to maintain it and give talks about fruit tree grafting and maintenance.

– Making posters and displays for chapter booths and event tables: Keith Borglum will work on this, and Maile will create photo enlargements showing plant disease photos. Allan Bernstein can supply expertise in creating computer files of posters.

We approved a number of donations for 2013:

– Santa Rosa J.C. scholarship: \$500 to a qualified applicant

– Sonoma State entomology department: \$500

– Sonoma County schools science fair and science Olympiad: \$400 donation to support the fair, and \$400 in prizes

– One-time donation to CRG for printing costs for producing all-color issues of the *Fruit Gardener*.

We discussed buying a smaller apple press for members who have smaller quantities of apples to press or can't transport the large press. Linda Robertson will research what's available.

Randy Mitchell, who has for a while maintained and monitored the listserv, has wanted to pass that job along to someone else. Mike Roa agreed to contact Randy and get a tutorial on running the listserv.

After the meeting a winery staff person gave a talk about the biodynamic farming methods used at the winery, and the winery offered two of their biodynamic wines for us to taste, followed by a tour of the kitchen garden.

NOTES FROM THE FESTIVAL OF FRUIT

SUSAN RUDY ON THE HISTORY OF THE FORT ROSS ORCHARD

One of the speakers at the Festival of Fruit was Susan Rudy, who manages the historic orchard at Fort Ross State Park. Susan spoke about the history of the orchard, during and after the Russian occupation of the fort.

The orchard lies across Highway One from the fort, a little up Fort Ross Road. It was initially planted by the Russians who built and manned Fort Ross from 1814 to 1839. After the Russians sold the fort in 1839, it was maintained, added to, and replanted by a succession of ranchers in the nineteenth century and more recently by people working on restoring and preserving the orchard. There are still fruit trees in it, some obviously very old, and a certain amount of lore has grown around the origin of those trees and whether they were part of the original Russian orchard or were planted by later settlers.

Since beginning her work at Fort Ross, Susan has researched the history of the orchard and tried to determine the true origin of the trees still growing there. Her talk at the Festival of Fruit summarized what she has learned so far.

Susan began with by describing early orchard planting practices. Orchards in the early 19th century and before were randomly planted from seedlings. Not much attention was paid to acquiring particular varieties; trees were not grouped by fruit type; and the trees were not planted in a grid, like a modern orchard, nor were they pruned by anything like modern methods. An 18th century orchard would have looked something like a forest of fruit trees. By the middle of the 19th century trees were more often bought by variety; orchards were more often planted in the form of grids, and trees of the same fruit were planted together. Trees were pruned more than in earlier orchards, but still allowed to grow tall.

The first tree planted at Fort Ross was a peach, in 1814. In 1817 the Russians planted grape vines brought from Peru. By 1833 the orchard contained about 400 trees and 700 vines.

After the sale of the fort to John Sutter in 1841 the Russian orchard was a source of material for pioneers establishing new orchards in northern California. Cyrus Alexander, for whom the Alexander Valley is named, collected peach pits, sprouts, and apples from the Russian orchard for planting on his land.

William Benitz, one of the 19th century owners of the Fort Ross lands after Sutter, expanded the Russian orchard and then planted another orchard next to it, with 1500 apples of 42 varieties, including Baldwin, Spitzenbergs, Newtown Pippins, and lady apples.

A later owner, George Call, added more trees to both the Russian and Benitz orchards, but the varieties he planted are not recorded. The orchard on that site was a commercial orchard, and Call planted a second, family orchard he called the plum orchard. Trees still exist in that second orchard and produce small plums.

The 1906 earthquake badly damaged not only the fort buildings, but also the Russian orchard, which was right on the fault line. The quake changed the topography of the site; the slope of the property is steeper today than before the quake.

Of the trees planted by the Russians, Susan has been able to confirm only two that still remain. The Russians planted a row of eight wild black cherry trees along one edge of the orchard. They are a type of cherry possibly used to flavor liquor. Early drawings and later photographs of the orchard show the row of trees. At present only two of the eight are still living. Susan has been trying to get seeds to germinate but without success.

All the other fruit trees in the orchard are probably from the ranch era. Susan said that the story that the Gravenstein apple trees there were from the Russian orchard is most likely not true and that the Gravenstein tree traditionally believed to be one planted by the Russians is actually younger and probably planted by one of the nineteenth century ranchers.

Susan has been involved in ongoing work with the park to restore the orchard and preserve its heirloom trees. Volunteers are always needed to help. If you are interested in helping out at the orchard, contact Susan at susan@stillwatercove.net.

APPLE TASTING

2012's fall's apple tasting was held on October 21, at the Luther Burbank Gold Ridge Farm. After a gray morning that seemed to threaten rain, the weather cooperated after all, and we had a fine afternoon for tasting apples outdoors under the farm's mountain ash trees. A staff member of the farm gave a tour (which I missed because I was cutting apples for the tasting), after which the 40 or so attendees sampled fruit and ranked them.

We had about 50 varieties of apples and six of pears. The scoring method we use is pretty informal. Individually, we gave each fruit we tasted a score of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best. After we'd finished our tasting, we voted. David Ulmer called the name of each variety and asked for a show of hands, first from those who had rated it from 7 to 10, and then from those who rated it from 1 to 3. He counted the number of high and low votes and subtracted the low scores from the high to get a final score. (David's list of apples and pears and their scores is attached.)

Among the apples, this year's clear favorite was Braeburn, followed by Wickson, Liberty, and Arlet.

Any tasting of apples on a single date is only a snapshot of how the apples are doing at that time of year, in that particular year and place. In 2012, the lowest scoring included Elstar, Fuji, Mutsu, Splendour, and Tydeman's Late Orange, apples that have scored very well in other years. Tasters mentioned that this year those samples were either not ripe or overripe.

For the sake of comparison, here are some high scoring apples from recent years' tastings:

2011: Spartan, Liberty, Tydeman's Late Orange Baldwin, Fukunishiki, Gold Rush, Wickson.

2010: Empire, Golden Russet, Hudson's Golden Gem, Newtown Pippin, Honeycrisp.

2009: Fortune, Hawaii, Fuji, Ambrosia, Hoople's Antique Gold, Golden Delicious, Empire.

The same is true of pears. This year we sampled six varieties. Two, Belle Lucrative and Dana Hovey, scored very well, but we decided not even to vote on two, Beurre Clairgeau and Passe Crassane, a late variety, because they were clearly not ripe. In 2011, the first year we tasted pears, the high scorers were Red Comice and Beurre Hardy. Dana Hovey, one of this year's winners, scored second to last.

A complete chart of this years results starts on page 4.



[upcoming events cont.]

Other events of possible interest to members:

Cultural Re-Skilling Symposium: January 19, at the Arlene Francis Center, 99-6th Street, Santa Rosa. Featuring programs about seaweed ecology & nutrition, African instrument crafting, relationship design, hedge rows, essential oils, fermented edibles, cured meats, mushroom cultivation, storytelling, and much more. Hours 10:30 to 7 for daytime programs. Suggested donation: \$20.00, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

APPLE TASTING

	Tasting #		Low Score	High Score	Average Score	Notes
Api Etoile (Star Lady)	12		10	1	-9	not ripe
Arkansas Black	48		2	4	2	
Arlet	6		2	10	8	
Art's Apple	32		2	7	5	
Ashmeads Kernal	39		5	3	-2	
Beautiful Arcade	1		6	7	1	
Belle de Boskoop	35		4	5	1	
Braeburn	18		0	18	18	
Cameo	46	3		2	-1	
Connell Red	28		1	3	2	
Cox's Orange Pippen	17		4	6	2	
Elstar	26		10	3	-7	too ripe
Erwin Bauer	33		4	3	-1	
Fuji	41		7	1	-6	
Gold Rush	31		1	5	4	not ripe
Golden Delicious	2		1	6	5	
Golden Russet	8	4		4	0	
Grenadine	20		7	6	-1	not ripe
Grimes Golden	37		4	2	-2	
Hauer Pippin	9		4	0	-4	not ripe
Hawaii	14	8		3	-5	too ripe
Hokuto	15		3	2	-1	
Honeycrisp	42		4	0	-4	
Hoople's Antique Gold	10		3	6	3	
Jonagold	44		1	7	6	
Jonathan	50		6	2	-4	
Liberty	36	2		11	9	
Macoun	47		6	2	-4	
Melrose	19		5	1	-4	
Mutsu	45		6	0	-6	
Newton Pippin	51		0	7	7	
Northern spy	38		1	3	2	
Red Delicious	27		5	0	-5	
Red Gold	11		8	1	-7	too ripe
Red Rome	49		5	0	-5	
RubINETTE	22		2	5	3	
Sierra Beauty	4		4	6	2	
Spigold	13		4	4	0	
Spitzenburg	40		4	6	2	
Splendour	7		9	0	-9	not ripe
Sun Fuji	3		2	4	2	
Tydman's Late Orange	23		7	1	-6	

Waltana	25	3	7	4	not ripe
White Bellflower	16	3	0	-3	
White Winter Pearmain	21	0	5	5	
Wickson	34	1	12	11	
Winesap	5	7	2	-5	
Yates	29	5	1	-4	
Yellow Be llflower	43	3	3	0	
Katherine	24	4	3	-1	
Smokehouse	30	2	0	-2	

PEARS

Belle Lucrative	52	0	9	9	
Beurre Hardy	53	2	8	6	
Beurre Clairgeau	56	not ripe			
Dana Hovey	52	1	10	9	
Passe Crassane	57	not ripe			
White Doyenne	58	1	4	3	