



# Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

July, 2012

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## FESTIVAL OF FRUIT, SEPTEMBER 10-13, AND NATIONAL HEIRLOOM EXPOSITION:

*By Linda Robertson*

This year's Festival of Fruit, hosted by the Golden Gate chapter of CRFG, will be held in conjunction with the National Heirloom Exposition, at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa from September 10<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup>. On Monday, September 10, the FOF will host a tour of the Luther Burbank Home and the Gold Ridge Farm, followed by a reception that afternoon at Phil Pieri's house. From September 11 -13, the FOF will have a booth at the Exposition and will feature speakers and demonstrations. RECRFG will also have a table, showcasing fruit grown by CRFG members in northern California.

Registration for the Festival of Fruit this year will be free, but people planning to go are urged to register, so the organizers will have an idea of how many to expect at the reception and the speaker programs.

For more information, and to register for the Festival, go to the FOF web site, [www.festivaloffruit.org](http://www.festivaloffruit.org).

Volunteers are needed for both the Festival and RECRFG's table at the Exposition. Some free passes to the Heirloom Exposition will be available for helpers. To volunteer for the Festival of Fruit, go to [www.festivaloffruit.org](http://www.festivaloffruit.org); the registration form includes information on volunteering. To volunteer for RECRFG, call or e-mail Phil Pieri ([phil\\_p\\_2001@yahoo.com](mailto:phil_p_2001@yahoo.com), (707) 795-6574) or Linda Robertson ([lrobertson09@gmail.com](mailto:lrobertson09@gmail.com), (707) 766-7102 (home) or (415) 385-8387 (cell).)



Fresh mulberries at Wolfskill

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July 14:

**Summer Budding clinic:** David Ulmer will demonstrate summer bud grafting of stone fruit at our annual summer budding clinic, Saturday, July 14, 2:00 to 3:30, at the Luther Burbank Gold Ridge Farm, 7781 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol. Other expert grafters from our chapter will be present to help people practice bud grafting. Bring rootstocks and scions you'd like help with, and food to share if you'd like.

### July 21:

**RECRFG Plant Sale:** Saturday, July 21, 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Santa Rosa Farmer's Market, Wells Fargo Center, 50 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa.

### July 22:

**Visit from CRFG Sacramento Chapter:** On Sunday, July 22, members of the Sacramento chapter will be in the area. They will tour the Luther Burbank Gold Ridge Farm, 7781 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, at 11 a.m. and David Ulmer's orchard, 7157 Camellia Lane, Sebastopol, at 1:00. RECRFG members are invited to join them.

### August 11 and 12:

**Gravenstein Apple Fair:** Ragle Ranch Park, Sebastopol, August 11 from 10 to 6 and August 12 from 10 to 5. RECRFG may have a booth there, so come by and visit (or volunteer to spend a couple of hours talking fruit facts with visitors.)

### September 10-13:

**Festival of Fruit, September 10-13, and National Heirloom Exposition, September 11-13:** See the facing article for details.

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## What We've Been Doing

We hosted two grafting events this quarter.

On May 6, our annual spring bark grafting clinic was held at David Ulmer's home in Sebastopol, with David demonstrating bark grafting persimmons.

On June 29, Dick Kirk hosted a citrus grafting party at his home in Glen Ellen. Dick had ordered a dozen different types of budwood from the Lindcove Preserve at UC Riverside. David Ulmer and Phil Pieri demonstrated t-bud, inverted t-bud and chip bud grafting and grafted Lindcove buds onto some of the trifoliolate rootstocks our chapter purchased last spring.

## CHAPTER BUSINESS MEETING

On April 22, members of the chapter met at Phil Pieri's house to discuss chapter business, particularly planning events for the summer and fall. As detailed on the first page, this year's Festival of Fruit will be held at the Santa Rosa County Fairgrounds, in conjunction with the National Heirloom Exposition, which runs from September 11 through 13. The Golden Gate chapter is organizing it, but since it's in our back yard, we will be working with them on organizing, setting up, staffing, etc.

On Monday, September 10, we will host a tour of the Luther Burbank Farm and Gardens and Gold Ridge Farm in the morning and a reception at Phil Pieri's in the afternoon. We agreed to pay the costs of the reception, which we estimate at about \$500 for food and supplies.

September 10 is also the day our table and the booth for the Festival of Fruit need to be set up for the start of The Heirloom Exposition on Tuesday.

We discussed getting passes for volunteers to host our table. Linda proposed buying passes for any person that volunteers. Mike Roa suggested we just buy a large number of passes as part of our donation to Baker Creek for the Exposition. Alternatively, we discussed reimbursing the cost of admission to the Expo for people who volunteer at the table, especially for folks with limited income. People would need to stay for a 3 hour shift to qualify. The peak hours, when we need the most volunteers are noon to 6 p.m.

FOF planning committee met on April 15 and planned to have another meeting in late June or early July. Geoff Wells will post an email when the date of the meeting is determined.

John Valenzuela is trying to get as much fruit to display as possible for the FOF. We also need fruit for our table. Anyone with contributions or sources for contributions should let Linda know.

Linda agreed to contact Barbara Heiman and her husband, who made up a lot of little baggies of dried fruit labeled with our logo and chapter contact information for our table at the Heirloom Expo in 2011. The dried fruit bags were extremely popular with passers-by and made a great way of getting the word out about us. She will see if they would be willing to make those up again this year; if so, we'll offer \$100 to cover their expenses.

We also discussed the venue for 2013 scion exchange.

Sabrina at Parks and Recreation told Linda that the Sebastopol Veterans building is being turned over to the Sebastopol Arts council, who will be renovating the building in a way that will not work for us for the scion exchange. She suggested looking into the Santa Rosa Veterans building. The rent for the use of the big auditorium, a smaller room for speakers, and the catering kitchen, is about \$1300. David Ulmer said RECRFG held scion exchanges in that building before moving to Sebastopol, and it was a workable space.

Geoff suggested that it would be good to have all events in one larger room except the teaching demonstrations; the Santa Rosa building will work for this, too.

It may be possible that the new Farmer's Market space may also be one we can use for the scion exchange. Linda will see how long Parks and Recreation can hold the room for us while we explore this.

We discussed whether to charge vendors for tables. Proposals were to allow an 8 ft table for free, and that non profits should get a free table. We could also as an alternative form of payment request a donation for the raffle from any vendor that is selling product.

We discussed the Gravenstein Apple Fair. Someone reported that the fair may be changing somewhat. We discussed whether to have a table there and perhaps sell some Fort Ross Gravenstein trees. We can make the decision once we know more information.

Another event we discussed was Insectapalooza, an science education event held at Sonoma State on the last Saturday of October. Frederique Lavoipierre invited us to participate in 2011, and Linda set up a table there with some information about orchard mason bees. This year's theme is water. Linda is looking for people with artistic skills to help with displays and for another volunteer or two to staff the table.

Cottage Garden Growers is interested in having us put on an event at their nursery. We could do a talk, demonstration or apple tasting. Tony Bryhan will contact them.

Burbank Garden Experimental Farm: Tony reported that he has been volunteering and attending meetings of the people in charge of Gold Ridge Farm. He would like to infuse some energy into improving the grounds. He mentioned there is a bit of bureaucracy and he is not sure who makes the decisions. There is also some dynamics in the decision making process that appear illogical and unsustainable. Tony brought up the idea of sponsoring a tree to get community input. Kieth suggested purchasing and donating trees to the farm. We could also purchase rootstock. Mike suggested we do grafting events at the farm, possibly the budding workshop in mid summer.

Sonoma State's orchard is not in the best of shape. We discussed whether chapter members should do some work tidying up. Phil will talk to Federique to see if we need to do any work or replace any trees. We discussed offering a \$500 stipend to sponsor a student to maintain the orchard

We discussed the apple tasting this fall. Proposals were made to hold it at the Gold Ridge Farm or possibly Cottage Gardens.

Our treasurer Michael Kurland reported that we have \$19,960 in the bank. The scion exchange made \$5,374 less the cost of the building rental.

## A SIMPLER WAY OF SAVING TOMATO SEEDS

*Linda Robertson*

In last fall's newsletter, I described a process for saving tomato seeds that I'd learned from someone at the Heirloom Festival. Fred Paget responded to the listserv with a less complicated method. Since tomato season is getting underway, I thought it would be useful to publish Fred's method in this issue of the newsletter. Here it is:

"I just spread the tomato seeds on a paper napkin and let it dry for a couple of days. Then bag it up in a small coin envelope and keep it dry until planting time.

"I keep my seeds in a tin can with a canister of silica gell in it and tomato seeds kept this way will keep about 10 years. I bake the silica gell in a toaster oven every year at 250 F to regenerate it and it is good just about for a lifetime.

"When it is time to plant I just snip the seeds apart with scissors and plant in a segmented flat. Leave the paper on. It always works."

I tried Fred's method last fall with some cherry tomato seeds, and planted them this spring; it worked for me, too.



## GIRDLING FRUIT TREES

*Linda Robertson*

The chapter listserv is a constant source of new and interesting information. Last April, Bob Silzle asked for information about girdling fruit trees to produce larger fruit. I had never heard of the technique, nor had most of the rest of the listserv, but Henry Savage responded with several links to explanations of the process on the Internet.

I had always thought of girdling as a life-threatening injury inflicted by deer, rabbits, or stray lawnmowers – basically, one of the last things you wanted to see on your trees. But in the right hands and carefully controlled, it's a useful agricultural technique that produces bigger fruit, and, amazingly, does it without killing the tree.

First of all, you don't girdle the whole tree, but just the branches on which you want to enlarge the fruit. The girdling consists of a careful cut made around the branch only as deep as the cambium layer. Done right, this will cut through the phloem, largely stopping the flow of nutrients downward from the leaves on that branch, without damaging the xylem, the channels deeper inside the tree through which nutrients are carried up from the roots of the tree to the leaves and fruit. When it works, the result is that the girdled branches, stuffed with extra nutrients, produce bigger, fatter, earlier fruit. And the branch doesn't die and can be girdled year after year.

In California, according to the literature, girdling is usually practiced on table grapes and early peaches and nectarines. For largely unknown reasons it works with some varieties, and doesn't with others. Over time, or if done poorly, it can be debilitating to the girdled branches.

The technique is apparently centuries old. Bob Silzle asked about it after seeing the results of accidental girdling on a plum tree. So like grafting, it may be a technique based on something observant farmers saw happen in nature. To me, it has an almost Victorian flavor; I imagine gardeners on noble estates, working in hothouses and at south-facing walls to grow the earliest, most perfect peaches and grapes for some lord's extravagant dinner parties.

Coming back to the present, though, Henry Savage's response to Bob's question included the following links to further reading about girdling:

<http://ucanr.org/sites/fruitreport/Girdling/>

<http://westernfarmpress.com/remove-all-phloem-tissue-when-girdling-table-grape-quality>

<http://www.farmerfred.com/grapes.htm>

[www.ent.uga.edu/peach/peachhbkcultural/girdling.pdf](http://www.ent.uga.edu/peach/peachhbkcultural/girdling.pdf)

<http://www.aces.edu/dept/peaches/peachgirdle.html>