



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

May, 2008

CRFG, Redwood Empire Chapter Annual Business Meeting March 8, 2008

By Mike Roa

The CRFG Redwood Empire Chapter held its annual Chair David Ulmer welcomed the group to our business meeting at 11:30 at the Luther Burbank Farm. As usual, people brought a variety of wonderful foods to share, and we all enjoyed eating and visiting until our chairman, David Ulmer, called the meeting to order.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Mike Roa reported that our financial status is good. We have almost \$3200 in an investment account (American Century Investments), which has been earning about \$140 per year in interest. When recently arrived funds are deposited, our checking account will have over \$9000 in it.

Anticipated expenses include rental of the Vet's building for next year's scion exchange and insurance costs to be sent to the national organization as well as various small out-of-pocket expenses of committee chairs and officers.

We discussed various ideas such as donating to the state organization, donating to schoolgarden programs, donation to the Burbank Farm, using some to pay fees to participate in events such as the Gravenstein Apple Fair or other appropriate venues. The conversation will be continued at future meetings and events.

Biomangers Report: Keith Borglum reported that all of the young trees that he has been taking care of have been sold and the money forwarded to Treasurer Mike Roa for deposit.

David Ulmer reported that we have a variety of young trees that were grafted last summer that will be ready to sell at this year's summer plant sale. Also, we have additional root stock that needs to be grafted, including making some Gravenstein trees using scions from old apple trees at Fort Ross.

Events Coordinator: Kalia Kliban offered to continue as Events Coordinator if she can get some assistance. Carlo Bottini offered to help her.

We continued our discussion of possible events, with ideas including participation in community events (which would require members to step up to staff a booth), doing the summer plant sale at the Santa Rosa Farmers Market rather than the Sebastopol Flea Market, a workshop on orchard bees, and other possible events.

Saturday, July 26 was tentatively selected as a date to take plants to the Santa Rosa Farmer's Market. (Mark your calendar!)

The 2009 scion exchange will be Saturday, Jan. 24. (Mark your calendar again!)

Sonoma State University and Gold Ridge Farm:

Phil Pieri reported that the students and staff at Sonoma State University seem to be doing a good job of caring for the small orchard on the campus. The trees in the apple fence at the Gold Ridge Farm seem to be doing well, for the most part, and the folks from the farm are helping with their care.

Newsletter: Linda Robertson and Michael Kurland were not present, but have indicated that they are willing to continue doing the newsletter unless someone else would like to take it over.

We also discussed that we need to provide them with more articles with which to produce the newsletter.

Secretary: Gary Goodenough as not present. Mike Roa offered to take notes of this meeting and indicated willingness to serve as secretary if elected.

List Serve: Randy Mitchell was not present. Mike Roa reported that Randy is willing to continue as List Serve coordinator.

Library: Benjamin Schmid was not present, but had asked for someone else to take over as librarian. Mike Roa indicated that he (Mike) is willing to serve as librarian.

Chapter Web Site: Keith Borglum is willing to continue to manage our web site.

Business:

Mike Roa reported that the Chapter Directory is on his computer and could be made available to members at any time. We discussed whether we should actually put it out there given that members can get questions answered by using the list serve and people may change their minds about having their contact information "out there." It was decided that Mike Roa would use the list serve to give people the chance to opt out of inclusion in the directory and then forward the directory to Keith for addition to the chapter web site.

Mike Roa suggested a couple of changes in our Chapter Bylaws. The intent is to have the next year's officers in place before the January scion exchange so that we can provide people with accurate contact information and information on the coming year's events.

The proposed changes were:

- a. to hold the annual chapter Business Meeting between November 1 and December 15 of each year.
- b. Terms of office to begin on January 1, following the annual Business Meeting.

Both proposed changes passed unanimously.

Mike Roa brought up the idea of having business cards made so that when we meet people who are interested in the club it is easy to give them contact information. Kalia suggested using the pre-made paper stock that is available so that we don't need to have large quantities made. It was agreed that Mike Roa would make some and bring them to the next event.

Election of officers:

Chapter Chair and Treasurer:

Both Phil and Mike Lee offered to serve as Chapter Chair. Mike Lee also indicated a willingness to serve as Treasurer. After some heated back room wheeling and dealing, it was unanimously agreed that Phil Pieri would be our 2008 Chapter Chair and Mike Lee would serve as our Treasurer.

Secretary:

Mike Roa was elected to serve as Secretary.

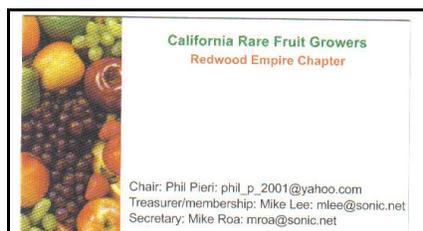
Chapter Business Card:

By Mike Roa

It is fairly common for a chapter member to run into someone who wants to know more about CRFG. At our March 8 chapter business meeting, we discussed having "business cards" made so that chapter members would be able to help people get in touch with chapter officers. So (drum roll, please)...we had some made!

The idea is that chapter members could have a couple of these cards in their wallet, purse, or car, and when someone wants more information, it will be easy to help them get in touch with the chapter officers or with the member.

If you would like some of these cards, contact Mike Roa, Chapter Secretary. Let him know how many you would like and he'll mail them to you. (Who knows...maybe they'll be collector's items some day?)



Chapter Library News

By Mike Roa

Over the last couple of years, we have acquired a variety of resources for our chapter library. Our Chapter Secretary, Mike Roa, is also serving as Chapter Librarian and will bring the collection to chapter functions. The books are available to chapter members for free, but we do require that a deposit covering the cost of the book be left. We currently own:

All About Citrus, by Klein *et al.*

Chez Panisse Fruit, by Waters

Cornucopia II, by Facciola

Fruit Facts, Volume I, from CRFG

Fruit Facts, Volume II, from CRFG

Fruits of Bali, by Eiseman

Fruits of Warm Climates, by Morton

The Home Orchard, by Ingles *et al.*

Jujube Primer and Source Book, by Meyer & Chambers

The World Was My Garden, by David Fairchild

Northern Pomona

In addition to the books listed above, we also have a CD on grafting, which includes sections on splice graft, bark graft, cleft graft, air layering, and clonal propagation.

Thanks to donations from Florence Strange and from CRFG, we have begun a collection of past issues of the CRFG magazine, now called *Fruit Gardener*. Our collection goes back to 1979, when it was simply called a *Newsletter*. If you have back issues that you would like to donate, please contact Mike Roa. We plan to keep two copies of each issue and make any extras available to members.

We have more than two copies of several issues, and chapter members are welcome to pick them up (first come first served) from Mike Roa or at chapter functions. We have extra copies of the following issues of *The Fruit Gardener*:

Vol. 14: 1982 Yearbook: several articles on Paw Paw

Vol. 19, #3 (Third Quarter, 1987): no particular focus, cover article on pepino

Vol. 20, #2 (Second Quarter, 1988): no particular focus, cover article on babaco, also article titled "Persimmons: What do we do with them?"

Vol. 23, #1 (February, 1991): articles on Ginkgo nuts and pome fruits

Vol. 23, #4 (August, 1991): articles on cherimoyas, unknown but good tasting citrus

Vol. 24, #2 (April, 1992): articles on tropicals, currants and other berries

Vol. 25, #1 (February, 1993): articles on neglected native fruits, wild Hawaiian fruit

Vol. 25, #2 (April, 1993): no particular focus, one article titled "Andy Mariani Shares His Methods"

Vol. 33, #1 (Jan/Feb., 2001): articles on worm castings, atemoya, guava

- Vol. 33, #3 (Jay/June, 2001): articles on guavas, cherimoya pollination, green sapote
- Vol. 33, #4 (July/Aug, 2001): articles on ornamental bananas, guavas, pineapples, potted figs
- Vol. 34, #3 (May/June, 2002): articles on blueberries, mangos, peaches
- Vol. 38, #2 (Mar./Apr., 2006): propagation box, pink lemons, indoor bananas

RECRFG's 2008 Apple Tasting

By Linda Robertson

Sonoma County has to be one of the best places ever to taste apples. Last October – October 13, to be exact – the chapter held its annual apple tasting at Kalia Kliban's house. The blind tasting, my second, featured thirty-one kinds of apples arranged in threes and fours on small, numbered plates around a couple of tables on the patio. All the apples came from members' trees; many were grown by David Ulmer. Armed with paring knives, we walked around the tables, tasting slices of each variety and picking our favorites.

Depending on the variety, apples can ripen as early as midsummer and as late as December. Some are regional and produce their best fruit in cold-winter areas, for example, or in the deep South. Flavors and textures have moved in and out of fashion over the centuries, and an apple that was widely grown a century ago may seem uninteresting to us now. And in the thousands of years that people have been growing and eating apples, we've cultivated varieties for more than just snacking, so different apples are valued for their usefulness in cooking, canning, and cider-making, and for disease-resistance and ability to hold up well when stored over the winter. Given all this variation, a tasting at one point in the long season can't help but fail to do justice to some of the candidates. My notes for the different varieties were filled with words like "starchy," "mushy," "underripe," and even "squeaky;" the Spitzenberg and Braeburn, two apples I like a lot, didn't even make it into my top five. Even so, in a back-to-back tasting, it was impressive how many different textures and flavors apples can have. No two varieties were alike in their combination of sweetness, tartness, crunchiness, and overall apple taste and smell.

When we were finished tasting, we named our favorites, and our votes were tallied. There was a big scatter in votes for first place, and no clear winner: Hudson's Golden Gem, Hawaii, and Honeycrisp each got two votes. Looking at people's top five choices, there seemed to be a bit more agreement: Hudson's Golden Gem and Fuji were each in eight people's top fives (including mine); Liberty and Mutsu had five votes each; and "Ulmer's Unknown," a mystery apple from David Ulmer's orchard got six votes.

More Fall Fun: A Blind Tasting of Table Grapes

By Linda Robertson

On October 21, 2007, Michael and I drove up to Willits for a grape tasting at East Hill House.

Several of us arrived early, and while the tasting being set up behind the house, we got to walk through the garden in the front and whet our palates on grapes growing along the fences.

There were twenty-one varieties of grapes in the blind tasting, seeded and seedless, in all shades from pale green to black. As someone used to the three or four kinds of grapes available in supermarkets, I was surprised at the range of flavors and textures the grapes we tasted had. My favorites, for flavor, have always been muscat grapes and fox grapes, but I discovered that certain textures also appealed to me more than others. I liked grapes that had a certain crisp pop as I bit into them, and I was also partial to the slip-skin kinds.

We were asked to pick our five favorites: mine turned out to be Reliance, a red grape with a Concord-grape-like flavor; Mars, a black grape that also tasted like a Concord; Interlocken, a yellow, muscaty grape; Herbert, a grape I mistook for a Concord when I tasted it; and Jefferson, a seeded red grape with a great muscat flavor.

Michael and I were so taken with the grapes we tasted that we bought three little vines, creating another project for ourselves this spring, as we try to find a sunny place for them in our yard.

Pomegranates! Dozens of Them!

By Linda Robertson

How many times in your life do you get to taste twenty different kinds of pomegranates? I had no idea of the range of pomegranate varieties until I went to a comparative tasting at Wolfskill last November.

On three tables at the edge of the farm's pomegranate orchard, volunteers had set out big bowls of pomegranate seeds (I can only imagine how much work that must have been) and lots of little paper cups to scoop them into for tasting. The bowls of seeds were organized into categories: tart, low-acid, soft seeded and hard seeded. The varieties were identified by numbers and also by variety names, some of them fairly predictable (Purple Heart, Cranberry, Ink, Wonderful) and others exotically reflecting the pomegranate's origin in central Asia (Sakerdze, Al-sirinar, Desertnyi, Medovyi Vahsa, Myatadzhy, Parfianka). In addition, a local grower, Pars Produce, from Alamo, brought along several of another variety, Saveh, with really large red fruit and delicious sweet-tart juice.

I travelled down the line of bowls a couple of times, trying each variety at least once and choosing my

favorites. One thing I found: Wonderful, the variety of pomegranate almost universally sold in supermarkets (and the variety Pom uses in its pomegranate juice products) wasn't even nearly the most wonderful of the types on the tables. Several others, including the Saveh, had a better balance of sweet and tart and rich berry flavor, and were less astringent. Some of the soft-seeded varieties had seeds you can chew up and swallow, avoiding what I've always felt was one of the big inconveniences of eating pomegranates: spitting out the seeds once you've gotten the juice from them.

After the tasting came, in some ways, the best part of all: we were allowed to walk through the orchard and pick a few pomegranates to take home. The leaves on the little trees were just turning from green to yellow and the fruit hung like ornaments from their branches, their skins with a sheen like taffeta in the sunlight, in rich reds mixed with yellow, green and brown, and some fruit splitting open like miniature cornucopias, showing rows of jewel-like pink or red seeds inside. In most years, I may eat one pomegranate, if that, but I took home a half dozen, of different types, and happily devoured them, staining my tablecloths pink and chasing errant seeds across the floor for a couple of weeks afterward.



From the Internet: Advice by the ancient Roman author Pliny, for preserving pomegranates: "Pomegranates should be hardened by hot sea-water, then dried in the sun for three days and hung up in such a way as to be protected from the dew at night. When wanted for use they should be thoroughly washed in fresh water. Marcus Varro recommend keeping pomegranates in large jars of sand, and also, while they are unripe, covering them with earth in pots with the bottom broken out, but with all air excluded, and with their stalks smeared with pitch, since, kept in this way, they grow to an even larger size than they do on the tree."

If anyone wants to try these methods next fall and report the results, I'll write them up in a future newsletter.