



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

October 2005

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Festival of Fruit "The Year of the Apple"

By Phil Pieri

Its 4:00 AM, Friday morning in Petaluma and my eyes pop open. I nudge the wife, "Come on, get up! We have a 9 o'clock tour of the U.C. Santa Cruz arboretum at the Festival of Fruit."

All I get is, "Oh, my gawd! Do you know what time it is.?"

We finally get on the road about 5:00, hit the freeway, cross the Golden Gate Bridge and down Highway 1 to breakfast in Half Moon Bay. From there it's just a short jaunt to Santa Cruz. We arrive at the convention center parking lot just in time to load three people into the back seat for a short carpool to the U.C.Santa Cruz campus. The fruiting plant section of the arboretum sits on a man-made ridge that was once an earth dam, so you can imagine the earth is about 90% rock, not the best for growing. They have built a low concrete block wall along the top of the ridge to act as a heat collector and planted both sides with some interesting plants. I was especially interested in the collection of

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Waiting for Durians

By Mike Lee

The village had grown over the years so that that it now even had a modest "tienda" at the soccer field. The little store had drawn a light Sunday crowd to watch T.V. powered by a car battery. I gathered up my bag of rice and matches, said my good-byes and started on the path back to the farm ...

It had been 18 years ago when we bought the 14 acre parcel in this Guatemalan village. It was what we could afford at the time; it had no road or electricity and you had to wade across the river. What it did have was deep soils, a steeply dropping creek, and a tropical climate. Our idea was to plant rambutan, a South East Asian fruit, a relative of the lychee. While we prepared the nursery for hundreds of rambutan seedlings and air-layers, we also cast about gathering specimens of other unusual fruits.

One of the trees we definitely wanted to get started was Durian. About the size of a cantelope, it's armed with vicious spikes much like a medieval mace. It's also notorious for its smell. It's a uniquely, recognizable smell. For me, it's a strong, sweet, oniony (others say like sweaty socks) smell. The seeds came from fruit in neighboring Honduras, courtesy of an abandoned United Fruit Co. research center. Villagers there would gather just outside the dripline of the tall Durian trees and wait for the fruit to fall during the night.

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"The smell had wafted over from 20 yards away."



Festival of Fruit cont'd

citrus, some as yet unnamed. They are hoping that someone will come along, recognize it, and tell them what it is. Our next stop is a private home on a corner lot on top of a hill. They are all organic, even making their own worm soil, and have planted every corner of the property, even out to the curbs on the street. They also keep bees to aid in pollination.

Back at the convention center the lectures were beginning, and covered everything from plant cultivation, cooking with fruit, to the war on gophers. There were people there from all over the country; we met a couple that came all the way from Maryland. Roger Meyer hosted a couple of fruit tastings, one each day. At one tasting, the line was so long it went halfway down the block! The 2005 Festival of fruit was a great success. I will be looking forward to next year. ☀

Waiting for Durians cont'd

Our durian trees had struggled over the years. Their major predators had been leaf-cutter ants that wore paths through the weeds. Carrying hunks of leaves over their heads, they looked like a parade of sail boats. Tanglefoot, in the end, proved to be a savior. They grew and grew, till you couldn't see the tops. Still they never flowered. Even had they flowered there was some doubt whether the requisite bat pollinators would be there to do the work. So when my farm partner (from Minnesota) sent me photos of fruit in the trees, I couldn't resist flying down to see.

... Walking back, by the time, I got to the farm, it was quite dark. And as I walked along the fence line, my nose prickled with that unmistakable, sharp, sweet, onion-cheese scent. The smell had wafted over from 20 yards away. Not willing to battle the gazillions of mosquitos lying in wait under the trees, we waited until the next morning to look for the fruit. And there in the grass, were the first 3 yellow-skinned DURIANS! Splitting open on their own, the flesh around the seeds had a rich, sweetness more like a food or perhaps a hearty dessert. As we savored the fruit, we couldn't help thinking that they tasted that much better after an 18 year wait. ☀

Dave Wilson Special Order Fruit Tree Program

Our treasurer, Mike Roa has arranged with the Urban Tree Farm to put together a special order to buy direct from Dave Wilson Nursery. This is an opportunity to obtain varieties that would not necessarily be available among local nurseries.

To see varieties go online to: www.davewilson.com/br40/softprogram.html

Our chapter would need to order a minimum of 25 trees together to participate in this program. For more information call Mike Roa at 829-5867. ☀

Next event: Potluck/Garden Tour in Sebastopol

Our next event will be Sunday, October 9 at 12:00 PM. This will be a lunch potluck at Djubaya's house in Sebastopol. Besides bringing food to share, bring your homegrown fruit for tasting. Afterwards, Djubaya will give us a tour of his plantings at his Catchtail Gardens. He has a gorgeous web site at www.catchtail.com that shows his interest in permaculture and building.

This will be our chapter's last scheduled event of the year. Come and enjoy fellow fruit fanatics as we enjoy the onset of Autumn!

Here's how to get there:

5757 McFarlane Road (off Hessel Road)
Sebastopol.



Arbor at Catchtail Gardens

From the North

Hwy 101 south to the Hwy 12 exit. In Santa Rosa Head West (Right) on Hwy 12 toward Sebastopol. Turn left on Llano Road. Go to the end of Llano and turn right on Hwy. 116 ½ mile + to Hessel road turn left. then to McFarlane Road turn right. 3/4 Mile big red house on left

From South (Bay Area)

Hwy. 101 North
Hwy. 116 West (not East!!)
2nd Hessel road (the Second turn... Do not turn at Hessel/Blank...
Turn Left onto Hessel Road then to McFarlane Road Turn right. 3/4 Mile big red house on left

Cider Press Training

By Gary Goodenough

On August 13th about a dozen people attended this year's Cider press training led by Gregory Flick at his house. The Redwood Empire Chapter owns a beautiful hand-made, wooden cider press for the use of members. Attendance at the training and \$5 is required to be able to borrow the press.

We pressed a small batch of apples into delicious juice. Gregory taught us how to use the press properly and safely. We also learned the importance of cleaning and thoroughly drying the wooden press after use.

Everyone attending went home with a delicious bottle of apple juice and the same number of fingers they came with. In addition, Phil Pieri went home with a bag of apple mash for his cows, which they also enjoyed.

Phil is the new person in charge of the press and can be contacted at 795-6574 regarding scheduling its use. ☀



Gregory showing cider press use

Contributing to the newsletter

After throwing this newsletter together on the fly, I'm kind of getting the idea of how it's done. Essentially, I wait until my back is against the wall and then I get on the phone to beg other members to write about a trip they've taken, a recent garden tour they've attended, or anything remotely related to fruit.

To spare further last-minute begging, I'd like to formally ask in advance for contributions of just about anything you think our chapter members would like to see. If you have a recipe, an experience growing a particular fruit, a review of a book, some pest management tips, or useful propagation methods, these are all topics we'd like to read about.

You can email me at mlee@sonic.net or mail it to:

Mike Lee, P.O. Box 187, Forestville CA 95436 ☀



Jujube fruit

Growing Jujube, Ziziphus jujuba

A highly adaptable tree, jujubes can be grown successfully wherever there's good, summer heat and well-drained soils. They are extremely drought tolerant and have been used extensively in Western China to battle desertification. The most common varieties are Li and Lang and are recommended for cross pollination. The fruit, when fresh, is slightly tart and sweet with a taste reminiscent of a green apple. However, when dried, the fruit becomes smoother, sweeter and the taste and texture is very much like a date. The fruit can be left to dry on the tree and gathered in September and October. ☀

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