

# Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 21, Issue 1

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

April 10, 2007 Meeting

## *Planning Committee:*

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Doug McLeod

Rick Matt

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David Parish

Victor Patterson

Bob Randall

Carey Simpson

## *Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting*

Our next meeting will be held on **April 10<sup>th</sup>**, at **7:00 PM**, and will feature a short program about pears for our area followed by an interactive grafting session. We will have 100 *Pyrus calleryana* rootstocks and some good quality pear scion wood available for you to practice on. Bring a grafting knife. We will have the other supplies.

### **Contact Us!**

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## **SWEET CHERRIES FOR HOUSTON?**

For many years, the late Dr. Leon Atlas evaluated cherry hybrids and bush cherries seeking, without success, a cultivar which would bear in our climate and produce a cherry of satisfactory size and quality. His final attempt was a Floyd Zaiger release, the Royal Ranier cherry, which he distributed to several of us for trial, but it also proved a failure. Thanks to Rick Matt, we are trying once again this year with some new sweet cherry releases.

The sweet cherry is *Prunus avium*, and usually not self-fertile (**Stella** and **Lapins** are two exceptions). Several cultivars also exhibit "intrasterility" and will pollinate certain but not all other sweet cherry varieties. The sour cherry is *Prunus cerasus*, which is often self-fertile but which will not pollinate the sweet cherry. Although these two species are both within the broad category of stone fruits, they are typically graft incompatible with familiar rootstocks that interchangeably support peaches, plums, apricots and almonds, such as **Nemaguard**. Aside from rootstock considerations, most cherries, both sweet and sour, require about 700-1,200 chill hours, arguably well out of our range in Zone 9 (this year we may have had about 625 chill hours, up from our typical 450 hours).

The named rootstocks currently available in the trade have not been studied, in any detail, in the South. Some of these in wide use elsewhere are as follows:

**Mazzard** – A *P. avium* seedling which produces a 30 foot tree with delayed bearing but good disease resistance and used widely in coastal California.

**Mahaleb** – Produces a slightly dwarfed tree with some precocity and good nematode resistance but susceptible to root rot in poorly drained soils, and, thus, not for us.

**Stockton Morello** – This is a mildly dwarfing rootstock which tends to overgrow the graft union, but has tolerance to wet soils. It is not widely available.

(continued on next page)

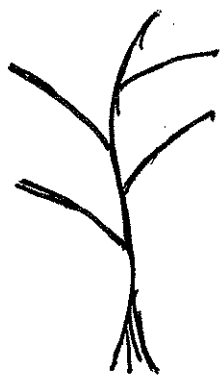
## SWEET CHERRIES FOR HOUSTON? (continued)

**Colt** – A cross of *P. avium* X *P. pseudocerasus* eventually producing a tree 15-20 feet tall with heavy bearing and which has become the leading cherry rootstock in California.

**Giesla** – This is a newer series of variably dwarfing crosses of *P. cerasus* X *P. canescens*. **Giesla 5** (formerly, **Giessen 148-2**) produces a precocious and heavy bearing tree with flat branch angles and a final height of 8 – 10 feet. Bearing may begin at 2 years with full production at 4 years and yield may be increased by a factor of 5 over standard trees. Fruit production is alleged to taper off after 10 years. This rootstock series may become the standard in the industry.

**Krymsk** – This is an interesting new rootstock series from Russia under test. I have two planted here. It consists of hybrids of *P. fruticosus* X *P. lannesiana* and is alleged to support apricots and peaches, as well as cherries. The **Krymsk 5** cultivar will dwarf cherries by about 20 – 30% and is also a precocious rootstock. It is more dwarfing for peaches. It also allegedly roots well from cuttings.

Further dwarfing and increased crop yield may be obtained by a technique known as “bending” which is also used for other fruits. Here all of the side branches of a young tree are tied down, along with the central leader, as shown in the diagram, to the base of the tree or to an adjacent stake by twine attached to a metal anchor ring. The process may be repeated the second year. After this, the twine is permanently removed and the branches will continue to sag naturally, dwarfing the tree. We saw this technique successfully used for newly planted pears grafted on quince at the Harry and David Orchards in Medford, Oregon.



Tree After Planting



Tree With Twine Applied

There are many named sweet cherry cultivars in the trade with **Bing**, remaining the standard for the industry. Rick Matt has obtained two new allegedly low-chill sweet cherries called **Royal Lee** and **Minnie Royal** which both ripen well before **Bing** and are able to pollinate each other. Several of us have planted these under trial. Some sources place their chill requirements at 250-500 hours. Another low-chill variety that needs further testing here, along with these two is **Early Ruby**. This one was known to flower in our area years ago, but never had a pollinator to go with it and then lost a duel with a tractor. If anyone knows a source of **Early Ruby**, please let us know. We are also trying **Lapins**, which some sources claim is actually lower chill than its usually listed rating of 700 hours. Perhaps, Dr. Atlas' quest for the sweet cherry for Houston will finally be realized.

## CHERRY AND NUT COOKIES

(untried recipe)

(source: Diana Rattray, <http://southernfood.about.com/od/cherryrecipes/r/blcookies9p.htm>)

### Ingredients:

½ cup shortening	¼ cup butter, room temperature
1 tsp. vanilla	½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup brown sugar	1 egg
½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts	¼ cup maraschino cherries, finely chopped
2 cups flour	½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt	½ tsp. cream of tartar

Place shortening, butter, vanilla, sugars, and egg in a bowl and beat. Add nuts and cherries; mix well. Sift together dry ingredients; mix about half of the sifted mixture into the batter. Add remaining sifted mixture; knead dough with hands until smooth. Pack firmly and shape into two 2 by 2-inch bars. Wrap bars in waxed paper. Chill until firm. Cut in 1/8 inch slices and place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 6 to 8 minutes. Makes about 5 dozen.

## PERSIMMON GINGERBREAD

(untried recipe)

(source: Eugene Griffith & Mary E. Griffith, *Persimmons for Everyone*)

### Ingredients:

1/3 cup shortening	1/3 cup sugar
1 egg	¾ cup sour milk, buttermilk, or yogurt
2/3 cup dark molasses	¾ cup persimmon pulp
½ tsp. soda	1 cup whole wheat flour
¼ cup powdered milk	½ cup wheat germ or wheat germ flour
3 tsp. double-acting baking powder	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. ginger	½ tsp. salt

Cream the shortening and sugar. Add egg, sour milk, molasses and persimmon pulp. Stir well. Sift the remaining dry ingredients together and add them to the moist mixture with no more than 20 strikes. Oil a ring mold or 8-inch square loaf pan and dust with flour. Pour the batter into the pan and bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes. Be careful not to overbake. Serve with whipped cream or sauce.

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3033 BEAR CREEK DR.  
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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