Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 1 | Edited By: Ethan Natelson | August 12, 2003 Meeting

Planning Committee:

Carol Cammack
Yvonne Gibbs
George McAfee
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Current Meeting:

Our program will begin at **7:00 p.m. on August 12, 2003** at the Extension offices at the Bear Creek Facility. Numerous pear varieties will be available for taste testing.

Contact Us!

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A Visit to Clarksville

Clarksville, Arkansas is the site of the University of Arkansas experimental breeding program for berries and some tree fruits, including peaches and nectarines. Over the past several years they have had extraordinary success with their blackberry program, introducing many varieties such as Kiowa, Apache (highest chill requirement), Navaho, Choctaw (lowest chill requirement), Chickasaw, Shawnee and their newest release, Ouachita. These cultivars now make up the backbone of blackberry production in the United States, as well as some South American countries. A few weeks ago we visited at the station with Dr. John Clark, who is the research director, and Dr. Dan Chapman, who is the resident director. This location will be the site of the Southern Fruit Fellowship meeting on June 17, 2004.

Initially, their berry program was directed to increase berry size and flavor, eliminate thorniness, promote heavy bearing and select upright growth of the canes. All of these objectives were obtained with their tetraploid (four sets of chromosomes) plants. Now their direction has changed a bit to promote firmness in the berries in order to facilitate storage and shipping, and to select plants with primocane fruiting. Typically, these plants produce fruit on their floricanes, or later lateral growth extensions. Those plants which exhibit primocane fruiting allow the grower to harvest earlier and actually obtain 2 crops, similar to some figs. All four sets of chromosomes must contain the identical set of genes to eliminate thorniness or to favor upright growth, or to exhibit primocane fruiting.

Firmness is now also the objective in their peach and nectarine production, and the so-called melting peaches are no longer sought after because of bruising and shipping problems. The program is also looking at the flat peaches, or Saturn (pinto) types which are favored in China. These deformed-looking fruits probably would stack more to a box but look more like a sandwich than a peach. We tasted a number of these. Dr. Clark personally selects all of the crosses and decides which of the plants are worth pursuing. He puts in countless hours of work at the research station, and his dedication has certainly paid off in some wonderful fruits.

(continued)

A Visit to Clarksville (continued)

The berry and tree fruit-breeding program must be a labor of love and pride. Despite all of their remarkable success in berry breeding, and the fact that all of this plant material has been patented, propagation agreements are not lucrative and often short-change the owners of the intellectual property. They are also especially difficult to enforce in foreign countries, which may grow the plants, and then ship the fruits back into the United States to compete with local growers. Dr. Clark mentioned that the whole of the propagation and royalty rights for the University of Arkansas material netted them around $86,000 last year (up from $36,000 the prior year). Hardly enough money to pay the expenses at the experimental station.

It's Never too Late to Start

I received a call today from Mr. Hartwell Cook, of Jackson, MS. Hartwell wanted some information about a quince rootstock for pears, named BA-29C. He was planning to buy about 100 of them to experiment with, aiming to improve the yield of the **Warren** and **Magness** pears. One would think nothing unusual about such a call, except when you consider that Hartwell is 94 years old. Hartwell has a number of acres of trees on his beautiful farm and even has a large pond with a resident alligator, to entertain visitors. Hartwell has long been known to wary professional and university horticulturists for his habit of casually pruning interesting cultivars from experimental orchard tours for reproduction on his property. While this is a practice that we strongly advise against, now, after many years, those same horticulturists often visit his farm seeking out those same cultivars which have been lost, over the years, except to Hartwell. A large man, he has difficulty in walking now on his arthritic knees, but has a small tractor he calls his "hog", which he uses to drive around, as well as a battered station wagon, long used to having its paint peeled away by encounters with unpruned branches. Gardening is a wonderful hobby, and you get to meet some very unusual people.

Book Review

A new book that some may wish to read is, "Gardening in the Humid South" (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 359 pp), by retired LSU horticultural professors Ed O'Rourke, Jr., and Leon Standifer. Several years ago, I had the opportunity to hear a lecture by Dr. O'Rourke on his fig breeding projects, and it was a real treat. He is the developer of the LSU purple fig, certainly among the best cultivars for our area. The book is written as if one were listening in on a conversation between two curmudgeons with opposing views, presenting each side of the issue, and both are very forceful individuals. It is not surprising that between them, they were awarded 8 campaign battle stars in World War II.

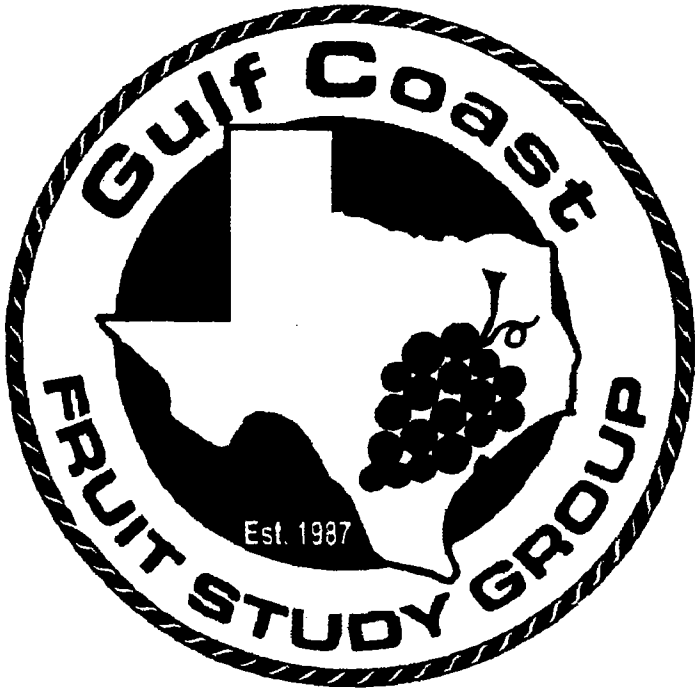
The book's interesting style makes up for the poor quality black and white photographs. This would be in sharp contrast, for example, to Bill Adams and Tom Leroy's book, "Growing Fruits and Nuts in the South", published a few years ago. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of useful information here, gathered over many years by two remarkable individuals.

Persimmon Bread (untried recipe) (source: Jackie Rawls)

Ingredients:

2 cups persimmon pulp	3 eggs
2 tsp baking soda	1 tsp vanilla
2 1/4 cup sugar	1 dash nutmeg
2 cups nuts (chopped pecans)	3 tsp cinnamon
2 cups raisins (chopped)	2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 cup oil	1 tsp baking powder

1. Add baking soda to persimmon pulp mix and set aside.
2. Use small portion of flour to lightly coat raisins and nuts.
3. In a large bowl mix sugar, oil, vanilla, and eggs.
4. Mix all dry ingredients (flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and nutmeg) and then add to and mix into large mixing bowl with sugar, oil, vanilla and eggs.
5. Then stir in pulp, nuts, and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees F using 3 standard bread pans (5x9) for 40-50 minutes.



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