

# Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 22, Issue 1

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

February 5, 2008 Meeting

## *Planning Committee:*

Carol Brouwer

Anthony Camerino

Carolyn Cannon

Gregory Carrier

Yvonne Gibbs

George McAfee

Doug McLeod

Rick Matt

Ethan Natelson

David Parish

Victor Patterson

Bob Randall

## STORING AND SHIPPING SCIONS FOR LATER GRAFTING

For those who wish to try their hands at grafting new scions onto existing trees or new rootstocks, the proper storage of plant material to be set aside for later grafting or mailing to a friend is not difficult and should be planned in advance. The best success with grafting is done with a dormant scion grafted on an actively growing rootstock. The scions should be cut when fully dormant, for example, in December or early January, in Houston. You are looking for a 6-8 inch shaft of last year's hardened wood which is about 1/4-3/8 inches in diameter and contains several healthy-appearing buds (these also are typical diameters of shipped rootstocks). Any remaining leaf material should be removed. Citrus do not have a true dormancy, but with leaf removal, their scions can also be stored. The cut end(s) of the scions may be sealed with warmed candle wax to help prevent dehydration, and they are placed in a sealed zip lock bag containing slightly moistened paper toweling. They are stored in the refrigerator (but not the freezer) and in the case of apples and pears, are stable for several months to as long as a year. Stone fruit scions are viable for a shorter duration, and citrus should be grafted within a few weeks. When you are ready to graft, make a fresh cut just above the wax seal, and you are ready to go, preparing the scion for the particular type of graft you are attempting. The scions can be mailed by simply sending them in a padded envelope, first class, and stamped, "Hand Cancel" so they are not crushed. They do not require any refrigeration. Some like to throw in some moist peat moss, but the toweling is lighter and less messy. In shipping scions interstate, many states have different rules – particularly for citrus and stone fruits. You can find this out at <http://www.nationalplantboard.org>. Just type in your state in the search panel, or click regulations on the left panel, and it provides a listing of the regulations for each state which can then be printed out in Word or pdf format. **Dr. J-B van Mons**, the discoverer of the **Bosc** pear, was the first to perfect the shipment of dormant scions more than 200 years ago, when he shipped pear scions from Belgium to the United States in individual glass cylinders (pipettes) containing moist glass wool at either end which were then sealed with wax.

## *Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting*

Our next meeting will be on  
**February 5, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.**  
Master Gardener David Parish  
will discuss his extensive  
experience with berries and bees.

## *Contact Us!*

*Harris Cty Extension  
Service  
3033 Bear Creek Dr.  
Houston, TX 77084-4233  
Phone: 281/855-5611  
Fax: 281/855-5638*

## FRUIT EXPLORING

We have two pears currently under trial in Houston and that should soon be available to our group thanks to the ability to easily ship scions as described above. Last year I received an urgent call from **Lon Rombough**, a long-time NAFEX member and recently-published grape expert, as well as chairperson for our various fruit study interest groups. He said that an elderly member, **Bob Zehnder** of Summerville, SC, was very ill, and I needed to obtain scions from his unique pear tree before it was lost to history. Lon and others had tasted the pear and could not believe the sweetness. It had never blighted over more than 30 years observation, and bore heavily. Bob was also a grape expert, and had obtained the tree many years earlier, by accident. A friend was sorting a large shipment of pecan trees he had ordered from a nursery in Louisiana, and noted one which was not a pecan. It had a label on it with the single word, "**Lemate**". Presumably, it had been reserved for a **Mr./Mrs. Lemate**, and was caught up in the pecan order, because no one I have spoken with in Louisiana knows of this name as a variety. Bob did not have any pears and planted this one, with spectacular results.

I called **Mr. Zehnder**, and then sent him a self-addressed mailing envelope. It arrived here several weeks later with two very small scions that did not look like the greatest quality, but I immediately grafted them with *Parafilm* protection. Sadly, he died a few months later. Fortunately, both of my grafts took, having now given rise to abundant additional graft material. The pear is pyriform, very low-chill, and I actually had one set this past season, so it is precocious. I have great expectations for this season.

Three years ago I was mailed cuttings from two ancient pear trees for trial. One is from an old plantation site in **Mansfield, Georgia**, and there are existing records describing its planting around 200 years ago. It was a known European variety, of high quality, but the original name (probably French) is lost to history. I received a picture of the tree, and it looks its age. The pear is low-chill, greenish and bulky looking, with an excellent dessert flavor. It came with the name **Epps-Greer**, of the original and current property owners. The second was from an 1815 original homesite of the Stockton family, in **Pendergrass, Georgia**. It is called **Stockton's Pleasure**, and has yet to fruit – perhaps this year. It is described as a round pear. It came with a fig from nearby Hog Mountain Farm Road, so you know it has to be good. How does the saying go, "if you plant a tree, you will live forever".

## MULBERRIES

Once a common sight in the South, mulberry orchards are now only rarely encountered. They served primarily to feed swine and poultry and the varieties planted were not selected for human consumption. These are generally long-lived trees and have been known to bear for 200 years. There are many species of mulberry, but the three generally written about and grown by hobbyists are named cultivars of *Morus alba*, *M. rubra* and *M. nigra*. *M. alba* (native to Eastern China) and *M. rubra* (native to the United States) have identical chromosome numbers and frequently hybridize. Confusing the picture is that the fruit of *M. alba* may be either white or dark. White fruits are always examples of *M. alba*. The *M. nigra* varieties are alleged to be the tastiest, but are also subject to fungal disease and are the least cold hardy, and seldom planted. Favored named varieties are **Black Beauty** and **Kaester**. Varieties such as **English** and **Watts** are pure *M. rubra* and may be red or black. **Pakistan**, **Shangri-La** and **Florida** are pure *M. alba*. We primarily see hybrids between *M. alba* and *M. rubra* in the nursery trade and common among these are **Illinois Everbearing** and **Silk Hope**.

Mulberries are generally wind-pollinated and require little care. Particularly pure *M. rubra* may become very large trees. Usually, mulberries are self-rooted, which is an easy process likened to rooting of figs. They are also easy to graft, and a favored method is the bark graft, as we use for pecans. Grafted trees fruit very quickly while seedling trees may not fruit for as long as 10 years, similar to citrus. We have had very good success in Houston with **Pakistan**, which produces very elongated reddish-purple fruit. Dr. A.J. Bullard, of North Carolina, who has grown some 125 different mulberry varieties favors **Pakistan** grown on its own roots and opines that the fruit is too large for the birds to swallow whole, and thus he can eat what is left behind – a true organic grower.

**PERSIMMON CAKE**

*(Reprinted in the Southern Fruit Fellowship newsletter, issue #49 (July-Sept. 2000))*

1 or 2 cups of sugar (I use 1 cup)	2 cups flour (all purpose)
1 tsp. cinnamon	1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp baking soda	2 tbs. baking powder
½ tsp. salt	2 tbs. melted butter
2 cups persimmon pulp	1 tsp. vanilla
1 cup golden raisins (I cut them in half)	1 cup chopped dates or prunes
2 cups chopped pecans	

Mix all ingredients together. Pour into a greased & floured 5" x 9" loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 2 hours. After about 1 hour cover with foil to prevent burning the top. This makes a good moist cake that reminds me of fruit cake. I have made two of them this year. Submitted by Larry Brown, Hattiesburg, MS

**FUTURE PROGRAMS**

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, agronomist Wayne Thompson will describe the science of soils and Bob Randall, retiring director of Urban Harvest, will chronicle chill hour observations and trends in the Gulf Coast area. Our August 12<sup>th</sup> meeting will be our annual pear and jujube tasting session and include a repeat of the outstanding grape program previously given by viticulture Extension Associate Fritz Westover. On November 25<sup>th</sup> George McAfee will discuss tropical fruits such as mangos and papayas. For the Study Group advisory panel, we will have our pre-meeting agenda prior to each meeting and we hope you all can attend. For our future bus tours, on June 14<sup>th</sup> we plan a trip to the EB Peach Farm which is NW of Hempstead and a pick-your-own operation. Fruit should be ready at that time. On October 25<sup>th</sup> we will visit David Shackelford's expanding Brazos Nursery in West Columbia, where his containerized planting of citrus and other fruits is extensive and very successful. All of this material as well as current and prior Fruit Study Group newsletters and other information are to be found at Carol Brouwer's website, <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort/fruit.htm>.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Please provide corrections to your contact information as shown in the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Roster you may have recently received in the mail. A number of names were accidentally omitted and a corrected version will be forthcoming.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Texas Cooperative Extension  
 ATTN: Fruit Study Group  
 3033 Bear Creek Drive  
 Houston, TX 77084

HARRIS COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
3033 BEAR CREEK DR.  
HOUSTON, TX 77084-4233

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*February 5, 2008 Meeting*

Our next meeting will be on  
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Master Gardener David Parish  
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experience with berries and  
bees.

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