

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

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June 28, 2011 Meeting

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A Change in the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

It seems the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group and the many Extension Service offices throughout Texas supported by the Texas A&M system, are not immune to the budget cuts affecting all of our educational institutions, as well as our city government. As a consequence, the Extension Service can no longer sponsor the costs associated with the mail out version of our newsletter. Moreover, Carol Brouwer, who developed GCFSG access to newsletter on her website, and archived all of our prior newsletters, is no longer with the Extension Office. Fortunately, Clayton Bell stepped in as a volunteer to set up a website (www.gcfsg.weebly.com) for our group which can provide the same information to our membership. Our intention is to post the newsletter on this new website, and also send out the newsletter by a mass e-mail system which Yvonne Gibbs is mastering. Happily, our meetings will continue to take place as before, in the same general format and the Bear Creek Extension auditorium. We hope to continue with these services at no cost to those who wish to attend.

Birth of a New Jujube Variety

Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting

Our upcoming meeting is at **7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 28**, with a discussion on blueberries by Victor Patterson, who has been a successful berry grower here for many years, and a discussion of bee keeping by Greg Carrier.

Contact Us!

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Jujubes are stoloniferous plants, sending out rootsuckers often appearing as shoots 10-20 feet away from the primary trunk and generating identical copies of the parent, if it is not grafted onto a wild jujube rootstock. Like many fruit trees, where sports or bud mutations may appear on a single limb, such genetic variations may also spontaneously but rarely occur in such rootsuckers as well as from seeds generated from the parent fruit. Richard Ashton, who recently lectured to us on pomegranates, sent me a new jujube plant, which is just such a sport of the **Li**, and produces a very sweet large round improved fruit, which he has named **Lian**. It is growing vigorously in a pot and I hope it will soon sucker after planting and provide us with a new fruit for distribution in the area and which he indicates we may propagate without fear of being sent to a Gulag. The **Sherwood** jujube was also found in this fashion as a chance seedling by the late Sherwood Akin, and my large tree was generated from one of the first rootsuckers he separated from the parent tree. It is a large, oval fruit of good quality. The tree has heavy bearing once it is mature and is a nice landscape tree. The suckers appear in April-May and are easily mowed if the tree is planted in a lawn setting as I have. I will bring a few rootsucker plants generated from my tree for door prizes and to continue the cycle of introducing new fruits well-suited for our area.

Blueberries

Our program for Tuesday, June 28th includes a discussion on blueberries by Victor Patterson, who has been a successful berry grower here for many years. There are many varieties suitable for our area and there is a good general discussion of the planting and care of these plants on the Texas A&M website. Numerous varieties have been grown here and Yvonne Gibbs has asked Dawn and Robert Chmieliwski to bring some of their berries and Robert Parish is planning to bring some of his crop for tasting at our program. The use of low ph sandy soil is emphasized, but some Nafex members have successfully grown these plants entirely in a peat moss bale either in the ground, in trenches, or in wooden barrels. One of our founding GCFSG members, the late Herb Durand, spent many years hybridizing these plants. An original Nafex member, the late James Anding, mastered the technique of grafting blueberries onto huckleberries (*aka sparkleberries, farkleberries*) and, several years ago I saw his plants which were then 40 years old with thick single trunks and still producing heavily. In a university-based testing system we visited at a prior SFF meeting, we saw a comparison testing of matched rows of different cultivars either on their own roots or grafted on huckleberries, and those on the huckleberries out produced those on their own roots by 20-30%. The advantage of the grafted plants is that the huckleberries have a rootsystem that is more spread out and less fibrous and tolerates much higher ph values with lower water requirements. Unfortunately, only certain clones of huckleberries are compatible with blueberries, and the native plants around Houston, are not. Mr. Anding obtained natives from the North Carolina area and others from the Southeast work well.

August Program

Despite our terrible drought, we will have our annual pear tasting at our program on August 23rd and, if the squirrels permit, we will have some new varieties fruiting here for the first time as well as our own **Tennousi** pear fruited on several different rootstock systems to see if there is any variation in fruit size and quality. This is a fine fruit for our area. We would encourage you to bring other ripe fruits such as pomegranates and jujubes, as the late Sam Powers and his wife Ginger often provided at this program. The full content of the lecture section of that program will be later announced.

Frozen Blueberry Pie

(source: Southern Fruit Fellowship Newsletter Issue #88)

2 cups blueberries
1 can sweetened condensed milk
¼ cup lemon juice
1 – 8 ounce whipped topping
½ cup chopped nuts
2 – 8" graham cracker or cookie crumb pie shells

Mix whipped topping, condensed milk and lemon juice. Fold in blueberries, spread into pie shells and top with chopped nuts. Freeze. Remove 15-20 minutes before serving.

Orange-Blueberry Freezer Pie

(source: Southern Fruit Fellowship Newsletter Issue #88)

10 inch ready made cookie crumb crust

Filling:

2 cups orange sherbert, softened
8 ounce whipped cream
½ cup mandarin oranges
1 ½ cups blueberries

Mix all ingredients and spread into the pie shell and freeze.