

# Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 20, Issue 5

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

November 28, 2006 Meeting

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## Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 28th, at 7:00 PM, with dessert and coffee at 6:30 PM. Bill Ree, Extension Pecan Entomologist, Texas A&M University, will speak on *Pecan Insect Pests*, and the diagnosis of disease and insect problems. Bring insects, affected leaves or shoots, or other pest problems in plastic bags for a free diagnosis and recommendations for control. There will also be a pecan tasting – please bring your varieties, as well. At 9:00 PM there will be a drawing for door prizes.

### Contact Us!

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## THE FRAGRANT PEAR

Keep an eye open in the supermarkets this year for a new import from China called the Korla fragrant pear, or **Korla Xiangli**. This pear is described as oval, and of medium size. Its ancestry is uncertain and is thought to have some contribution of *P. communis*, the European pear, along with a background of either or both *P. bretschneideri* or *P. ussuriensis*, two firm Asian pears. The Korla pear is alleged to have a very strong and pleasant aroma and is firm with an excellent flavor. It is grown in the Xinjian Province, south of Kazakhstan, if that helps. China is the world's largest producer of pears, with most of the crop used in local consumption. The Ya Li pear, grown in eastern China, a variety which constitutes about 20% of China's total production, is very low-chill and works in Houston, although it is quite sensitive to fireblight. The chill requirement and disease resistance of the fragrant pear are unknown.

## INNOVATIVE PEAR CULTIVATION TO OVERCOME INADEQUATE CHILL

Pear production is also a major effort in Taiwan, where a unique way to overcome chill requirement problems in their Houston-like climates are practiced. I believe we had a program and film about this labor-intensive technique about 10 years ago. David Byrne, of Texas A&M, and his associates have published in this area.

In this effort, pears are grown on a trellis system, like grapes, with an overhead grid of wires providing a flat surface about 5-6 feet above the ground. Horizontal branches along the flat surface are cut to about an 8 inch length to stimulate production of the water sprouts we usually prune away. Here, higher chilling flower buds from 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Housi, collected in Japan or elsewhere in the dormant season, are grafted by cleft grafts to these water sprouts. According to a report in the Good Fruit Grower magazine, 150-300 of these grafts per tree are done each year to make this a continuous process (George McAfee would be in his element there, particularly if he could locate the hand-held Australian mechanical grafting tool Dr. Atlas acquired). Each graft is alleged to produce 3-4 pears the season following the graft. The trees are often more than 20 years old and are vigorous growers, allowing rapid callousing of the graft site. They produce a low-chill pear which aids pollination and adds to the total harvest.

(continued)

## INNOVATIVE PEAR CULTIVATION TO OVERCOME INADEQUATE CHILL (continued)

In some instances, Dormex (which is hydrogen cyanomide, not hydrogen cyanide, but still potentially toxic to the sprayer) is used. This compound can add about 100 synthetic chill hours to the plant. A similar product is Revent (thidiazuron). In the United States, Dormex has been used primarily on peaches to broaden their range in a low chill area. I tried it here in Houston on pears, and could not ascertain much effect. The entire grafting process must be repeated each year. With labor costs, it certainly would not be commercially feasible in the United States, but might be something interesting for a hobbyist to try to master, in Houston.

It seems hard to remember the last cold winter we have had here, and growers in Mexico are having the same experience. The August issue of Good Fruit Grower magazine reports on orchardists in Chihuahua who have been forced to switch apple varieties to more low chill cultivars, particularly strains of **Gala**, or abandon apples entirely for low chill peaches in order to have a viable crop. They also use Dormex to improve the fruit set. Heretofore, chill has not been a major concern of most fruit breeders, but if the warming process persists, I look for this attribute to soon become as desirable as size, color, texture, and firmness, depending upon the tree fruit crop under consideration.

## IN MEMORIAM

We noted, with sadness, the passing of Max Porch on October 19, 2006. Max was one of our founding members and attended our last meeting. He was a kind and gentle person and, in addition to fine wines, was very proud of his unusual pawpaw tree. It is one of the few examples of this plant to bear tasty fruit here, which he often shared with other members. We hope this cultivar can be propagated, in his memory.

## PECAN PIE RECIPE

(source: Star of Texas Cookbook)

3 eggs  
1 cup white sugar  
1 cup white Karo syrup  
2 tablespoons melted butter  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
9-inch pie crust, uncooked  
1 cup pecans

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Barely beat eggs by hand. Blend in with fork: sugar, Karo syrup, butter, salt, and vanilla. Pour into pie crust. Sprinkle pecans over top. Bake for 15 minutes, then reduce temperature to 350 degrees F. and bake 30 to 35 minutes more. Serves 6-8.

## PERSIMMON-NUT BREAD

(source: Persimmons for Everyone, by Eugene and Mary E. Griffith)

1 cup sugar	2 cups sifted flour
3/4 cup margarine	1 teaspoon soda
2 eggs, well beaten	1 cup persimmon pulp
	1/2 cup chopped nuts

Cream the sugar and margarine, then add the well-beaten eggs. Sift the flour and soda together. Add the flour-soda mixture to the creamed sugar mixture, mixing well. Then add the persimmon pulp and nuts and stir into a very stiff batter. Line two small oblong loaf pans with waxed paper and place half of the batter in each. Bake about an hour at 325 F. Serve hot or cold, with or without a sauce. Black walnuts, butternuts, hickory nuts, pecans or English walnuts may be used, depending on taste and availability.

## PERSIMMON-RAISIN BREAD

(source: Persimmons for Everyone, by Eugene and Mary E. Griffith)

1/3 cup shortening	1 2/3 cups flour
1 1/3 cups sugar	1 teaspoon soda
2 eggs	3/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup water	1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup persimmon pulp	1/3 cup raisins

Cream the shortening and sugar, add the eggs, persimmon pulp and water. Sift dry ingredients together and blend them with the creamed shortening mixture. Stir in the raisins. Pour batter into a well-greased 9x5x3 inch loaf pan. Bake 65 to 70 minutes at 350 F. Dates may be substituted for the raisins and one third cup chopped nuts may be added if desired.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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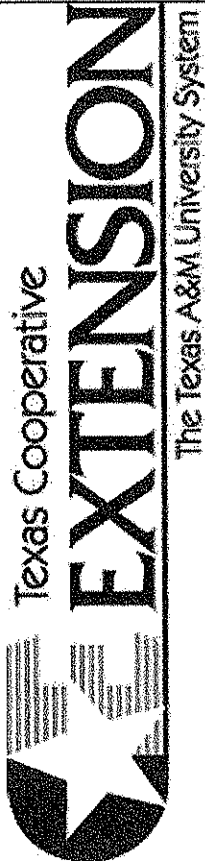
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