

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 24, Issue 4

Edited By: Ethan Natelson

November 9, 2010 Meeting

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Our November Guest Speaker on Pomegranates for Texas

We are very fortunate to have as our guest speaker, Richard Ashton, who is flying to Houston from his home and orchard in Brownwood, Texas, to address the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group on November 9th. If you study the map of Texas, Brownwood seems equidistant to many larger, more familiar cities, but close to none. Richard has written several books on stone fruits and has a major interest in pomegranates, as well as sweet cherries. He founded the Texas study group for pomegranates, which has had its second successful annual meeting. He and others, such as Extension Agent, Jim Kamas, believe this fruit has great potential for commercial growing in Texas. At our meeting I will make available copies of the very informative article Richard Ashton wrote on pomegranates for the Southern Fruit Fellowship (SFF) Newsletter, in 2008. Here he discusses the two major subspecies of the fruit, *Porphyrocarpa* (usually greenish) and *Chlorocarpa* (typically red or reddish-purple), and the variants that make up *Chlorocarpa var. mollisemen* which are sometimes referred to as seedless pomegranates. Heretofore, we have not grown these varieties in Houston but he has given me some promising hybrid cultivars to try which I hope will be successful. Some of these are called **Pink Satin**, **Mridula**, **Bhagwa** and **Parfianka (Garnet Sash)**. He has released a hybrid called **Texas Pink**. Unfortunately, a major plant nursery has been selling a less desirable cultivar under the name, **Garnet Sash**, so beware of the source of your plants. These hybrids may be cold sensitive compared with other pomegranates that do well for us in Houston, but it is doubtful that climate will be a problem for us. Pomegranates are very low chill plants. At our meeting, I will also provide copies of a recent pomegranate taste testing provided to me by Lee Sharp, a member of SFF who lives in southern MS, and a California tasting evaluation.

Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting

Our upcoming meeting is at **7:00 PM** on **Tuesday, November 9**. Our guest speaker is Richard Ashton of Brownwood, Texas. Mr. Ashton has written several books on stone fruits and will discuss pomegranates, which he believes has potential as a commercial industry in Texas.

Contact Us!

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What Is Nafex?

In late August, we held our 2010, annual NAFEX (North American Fruit Explorers) meeting in East Lafayette, IN, with our hosts from the Purdue University horticultural programs. We heard lectures on landscaping with fruit plants by Lee Reich, a noted horticultural author, and we learned how to grow blueberries successfully by simply planting them in a buried bale of peat moss in order to give the plants the soil acidity they favor. Janna Beckerman, a plant pathologist who trained at Texas A&M, discussed common plant diseases and we sampled a number of fruit wines from one of the leading wineries in the country to manufacture non grape-based wine. When we later held our annual plant auction, where I was the emcee, I was accused of sampling too many of these unique wines. However, we turned an excellent profit for the organization. We even had a Purdue insect specialist cook live worms for us to demonstrate how good they tasted when freshly prepared (I declined this experience in favor of the wine).

Nafex was established as a formal entity in 1967, as an outgrowth of a round-robin of letter writers. With the rapid development and expansion of our modern and sometimes frenzied communication through the Internet, it may be hard to believe that individuals once waited weeks to receive a slowly multiplying document outlining the observations of a few dedicated people with a unifying interest in horticulture and fruit growing, where today we demand almost instant gratification on our computer screen. Nafex is a fully tax exempt organization, maintains a website (www.nafex.org), and has recently activated a fund to provide small grants to help support defined fruit growing projects for members, with the results published in Pomona, our quarterly journal. Bowing to progress, Pomona will have three issues on-line next year and one as the usual printed version. All issues are archived on our website. We meet annually at locations all around the country, usually with co-hosts from a university setting. The prior meeting found us in Grand Junction, CO, and an earlier site in Lexington, KY, to visit the pawpaw national plant repository. Next year we plan to be in Gainesville, FL, in conjunction with the Citrus Expo group, although we will see much more than citrus in our tours. In 2012, we will be in Saskatoon, Canada, with a regional plant station. We think this will be a very unusual and fun trip. We make these excursions very affordable and look forward to your joining our group and learning from fruit enthusiasts around the country.

Persimmon Cookies (source: Southern Fruit Fellowship Newsletter, Issue #82)

1 cup persimmon pulp	1 cup nuts	1 cup raisins
1 cup sugar	½ cup shortening	1 tsp. soda, dissolved in pulp
2 ¼ cup flour	½ tsp. cinnamon	½ tsp. ground cloves
½ tsp. nutmeg	1 egg	

Cream shortening and sugar. Add egg, soda and persimmon pulp. Add dry ingredients, nuts and raisins. Drop with teaspoon on greased cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes in 350-375 degree oven. Makes approximately 90 cookies.

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group Event Schedule for 2011

The first scheduled event is the annual fruit tree sale on March 5, 2011, which this year will be combined with the Master Gardeners' Pepper/Tomato/Vegetable sale. We will also have our usual symposium discussion in the auditorium which includes a description of the plants being sold, information on the cultivars that do best here in the Houston area, and grafting demonstrations. A listing of all programs for the year will appear on the website <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort/events.htm>

We plan to have a spring bus tour sometime between February and April and a 2nd tour between May and June, possibly to the E&B berry and peach orchard. Our regularly scheduled evening programs, which begin at 7 PM, will now be held on the 4th Tuesday of the month, rather than the 1st Tuesday, as we have done this year. The first program will be on March 22nd, the second on June 28th and the third program on August 23rd, which will include our annual pear tasting. The subjects and speakers will be announced on our newsletters and on the website and, as before, we plan to give away some plants as door prizes (you are certainly welcome to donate unusual cultivars that will bear in our area so others can share). We hope many of you can attend.

Fresh Pear Cake (source: Southern Fruit Fellowship Newsletter, Issue #89)

1 cup oil
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
3 cups diced pears
1 cup chopped nuts
3 cups plain flour
2 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. soda
½ tsp. salt

Mix first four ingredients in mixer. Fold in pears and nuts. Mix together flour, cinnamon, soda and salt. Fold into blended pear mixture. Bake in greased and floured bundt pan at 300 deg. for 1-1/2 hours.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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