

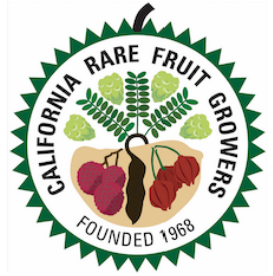
Fruit News and Views

Year of the Fruit Breeder's Paradise

Volume XXXVII

Issue 10

October 2021



Meetings Schedule

Location: online or in person
Zoom video conferencing application
Download to your computer or tablet from your App Store. To join, you may click on the link on our website under the Meetings tab.
7:30 p.m. www.ocfruit.com

Thursday, October 21

Masks will need to be worn indoors and there will be no refreshments or fruit tasting. Also, if you'd like to have something to drink, please bring your own. The chairs will be positioned at a safe distance from each other.

We are pleased to present a live, in person meeting at the First Congregational Church of Santa Ana for the first time in over 20 months! We'll be simultaneously streaming over Zoom as well, so those who choose to stay home can still join us. This is the annual meeting during which we welcome and award our scholarship recipients from Cal Poly Pomona. We have four scholarship winners again this year and are looking forward to hearing about their studies and goals. We delight in welcoming Dr. Aaron Fox and his students via Zoom tonight. Dr. Fox will present the newest agricultural projects at Cal Poly Pomona. It is always an illuminating meeting!

Welcome

We extend a very warm welcome to all our new members and guests. This club has a wealth of knowledge and many active members. You will soon become acquainted with the members of the club. Please avail yourselves of their wisdom by asking questions!

Membership

Applying for, or renewing membership is easier than ever! We have a new application that you can complete online and then pay by PayPal or check. You can also still print out an application and mail the application and check to the OC CRFG P.O. Box. Information is on our website at www.ocfruit.com. The application is under the Join Us tab.

Passionfruit

Don Winterstein

Passion flowers, intricate and attractive, have an intriguing name. "Passion" is from a Latin word that means suffering. Here passion means crucifixion, the crucifixion of Christ—a meaning familiar to Mel Gibson fans.

17th century Spanish priests who came upon passion flowers as missionaries in South America used features of the flowers as mnemonic devices to teach converts about the crucifixion.

The corona, for example, represents the crown of thorns. The five large anthers, they said, bring to mind the five wounds Jesus suffered on the cross. The three stigmas suggest the three nails driven through his flesh. The five petals plus five sepals recall the ten apostles who neither denied nor betrayed him.

Passionfruit thus gets its name from the flower, and the flower gets its name from a Catholic priest with a fertile imagination. Jesus lasted less than a full day on the cross; passionfruit flowers, extending the crucifixion parallel, fittingly stay open less than a day.

The flowers of my Frederick variety open about 10 am and close permanently around 8 pm. Julia Morton in *Fruits of Warm Climates*



says flowers of plants with purple fruits in Florida open around dawn and close by noon. Frederick has purple fruits, but its flowers behave more like Julia's yellow varieties, whose flowers open at noon and close around 9 pm.

To pollinate Frederick flowers, then, you have less than a day to complete the job. Any flowers that bloom on following days are new flowers. Pollen is abundant on the undersides



of anthers. It is so thick it's more like paste than powder, easy to apply to the three stigmas.

A cyclone fence closes my garden at the north end. Who put it there, and why, I have no idea; but it enhances privacy. When the fence is bare, though, it detracts from garden ambience. It begged to be clothed with a passionfruit vine, so I obliged in March of year

2000, not long after I'd taken control of my garden area.

A disadvantage of the vine's being at the very northern end is that it's more than 300 feet from my back door. The north side of the vine can be viewed only after passing through a gate that must be unlocked every time. Consequently, I've monitored its behavior less than most of my other plants.

Nevertheless, passionfruit plants have been growing at that spot by the fence for most of two decades. With the prospect of writing an article about passionfruit facing me, I've tried to make up for prior years' lack of attention by paying extra attention in recent months!

The name of my first variety I didn't bother to remember. The plant was extraordinarily vigorous and produced large, yellow fruits. The vines not only quickly covered the fence but grew high into a neighbor's Eucalyptus tree!

Julia Morton says, "Yellow passionfruit flowers are perfect but self-sterile," so once again I must tell Julia, "Not mine!" My garden notes tell me the vine held 25 fruits by August 2001, a year after planting. I can say with a fair amount of confidence there was no other passionfruit in the area, so cross-pollination seems very unlikely. The fruits were beautiful on the outside, and the juice had the distinctive, pleasant passionfruit flavor, but it was tart.

There were a great many new blossoms later that year, but few of them set fruits. This could have been because a serious problem was brewing unnoticed inside the heavy foliage: scale insects were proliferating. By the following February the plant was clearly suffering, and leaves were wilting. A closer look was shocking: A large white scale insect was densely covering most of the main stems.

Spraying the scales with oil and insecticidal soap seemed to have no effect. The insects had sequestered themselves inside their individual hard shells and seemed impervious to insecticides. But I found it easy to scrape them off the stems by hand. So, with considerable reluctance, I severely pruned back the plant to make the job manageable and scraped off the remaining scales by hand.

The plant recovered well; my notes say I was able to harvest more fruits by the following December.

My relationship with that first passionfruit variety was something of love/hate. I enjoyed the fruits—sort of—but they were really too tart. But what sealed the plant's fate was its susceptibility to that white scale.

In April of 2005 I replaced it with a variety called Frederick, planted in the same spot next to the cyclone fence. Was it really Frederick? Since then fellow fruit growers have told me that Frederick is often not really Frederick, so maybe mine is not. All I can say is I bought it at Blue Hills Nursery in Whittier, and I trust the owner.

Frederick was a vigorous, precocious plant and yielded many fruits over the next decade, including at least 14 in its second year. The eating quality was appreciably better than that of the yellow fruits.



In 2010 I started propagating new passionfruit plants by layering, five plants a year, until Frederick died. Propagating new passionfruit plants became one of my major passionfruit activities. The method I used is called *simple layering*.

Simple layering means simply burying a plant stem in soil and allowing it to root there while still attached to the plant. Instead of burying the stems in garden soil, however, I folded them back on themselves, making 180-degree bends, and inserted them into pots filled with soil. Before inserting I made small cuts in

the ends of the bent stems to encourage root initiation.

While generally successful, this mode of propagation was cumbersome and limited by the number of suitable stems. I also had to make the long walk to the pots whenever they needed watering or other maintenance.

"FREDERICK DIED," say my garden notes of January 6, 2016. The plant's production had been diminishing in previous years, but it had given no hint it was about to die. In fact, the season before, it had fathered its normal five offspring by layering. After clearing away Frederick's remains, I immediately replaced it with one of those offspring, locating it a few feet west of the previous spot to give it a bit of fresh soil.

I replanted Frederick with low expectations, primarily because it was going to be getting its life support from pretty much the same soil its predecessors had used for 15 years. Besides this, Edison Company maintenance crews had recently taken to gratuitously cutting Frederick's branches off the cyclone fence. I now think this butchering contributed to Frederick's death.

In any case, I replanted Frederick because, more than anything, I just wanted something nice to cover the fence. At the same time, to prevent attacks on the plant from Edison crews, I needed to keep the vine from actually growing on the fence. So I constructed a separate trellis just a couple feet south of the fence.

As things turned out this trellis has functioned only as a nuisance. New Edison crew supervisors came on the job as soon as I replanted Frederick—supervisors so pleasant and accommodating they instructed their crews to keep their distance from my plants. If this new, improved version of Edison persists, I may need to remove my reference to Edison's dead body from the author's blurb at the end of the Fruit Gardener version of this article!

Soon after I'd planted Son of Frederick, member Martha Haber showed me a superior way of propagating passion fruit vines. As it happens, these vines are easy to propagate from herbaceous cuttings. Just cut stem segments with four nodes, strip off all but one leaf at the top end and insert into damp soil. I

keep the potted cuttings in the shade of a large avocado tree and water weekly. In four months most are ready for up-potting to one-gallon pots.

With this method I grow ten plants much more conveniently than the five I formerly grew from layering. A disadvantage is that the resulting plants are smaller than the ones from layering.

As expected, Son of Frederick was not a vigorous grower. It was much slower than either of its two predecessors. By its third year it was producing four or five fruits a year, and that kind of low production continued until this year. I tried pollinating the flowers to increase production, but nothing worked. In fact, the fruit production was so weak I'd decided to stop propagating the plant: How could I in good conscience sell such duds at our annual sale?

Imagine my surprise, then, when I passed through my northern gate in mid-June this year to inspect the vine from the north: dozens of fruits hung there like shiny green ornaments! I expected none, but there were literally dozens. From the south neither fruits nor flowers were visible. A quick count without probing the foliage indicated more than fifty—probably making the ultimate total an all-time record for my passionfruit vines.



At that point I knew I had to write an article on passionfruit. Fruitful plants inspire, fruitless ones not so much. Many scattered flowers were also blooming, enhancing the revelation.

A month or so later I paid a visit to John McNeil, our Chapter chair, and his garden, which featured a large Frederick passionfruit



vine also replete with fruits. John explained that his wife, Julie, regularly came out around noon to pollinate the flowers. Success rate for her pollinating he estimated at about 90 percent.

Frederick is self-fruitful, and hand-pollinating the flowers seems as straightforward as can be, given the richly pollen-laden anthers and the prominent stigmas, but I've had poor success. Back when I bought my first passionfruit vine, the word going around was that hand pollination rarely works on passion flowers. So, thinking pollination wasn't going to be worth it, I'd never put much effort into it; but I have tried it on and off over the years, recently with Son of Frederick, to see if I could get more fruit. Such hand pollinating simply didn't work. Kevin Hayakawa, who also grows passionfruit, reinforced that conclusion when he told me his success rate was less than 5 percent.

The literature says passion flowers are normally pollinated by carpenter bees. I've

never seen bees of any kind visiting them. But at least two species of large black bee regularly visit my dragon fruit flowers, presumably good candidates for pollinating my passion flowers. But why should dumb animals be able to do a better job than me?!

So I took on pollinating as a challenge. All attempts failed at first. The stigmas seemed dry, and pollen appeared to just slide off. I started moistening the stigmas with a little saliva when applying the pollen. Eventually, after many attempts, I could claim three fruits from flowers I had hand pollinated!

To avoid exposure to the heat of the day, I'd done my pollinating in the evening. But John's wife, Julie, believes noon is the best time for this. When flowers came on again in September, I was able to test more pollinating at 2 pm. In that trial, three of seven flowers fruited, which is progress.

Unfortunately these successes do not prove my hand pollination worked. The dozens of fruits that confronted me on that day in June all came into being without my intervention, so how could I be sure that these six fruits required my help? But, to be generous towards myself, I'll take the credit anyway.



When do passionfruit vines flower? Flowering of unknown duration occurred from spring into early summer, and that is when most of the fruits came on. It ceased on the fourth of July, resumed two weeks later, stopped again by mid-August, then resumed again on

September 9. In other words, flowering is sporadic.

Edible flesh or pulp of passionfruit is a bit skimpy, and the fruits weigh little for their size; but the flavor and aroma are truly special and make the fruit well worth cultivating. But I found that eating a lot of them at one time set my teeth on edge. In the future I'll rinse my mouth with water afterwards.

The best news of the passionfruit season for me is that the good harvest this year proves that Son of Frederick can be a fruitful plant, and I've started to propagate it once more.

Why almost all the flowers and fruits this year were on the north side of the vine is a mystery likely never to be solved. The only significant flowering on the south side came towards the end of the season, in September. And it didn't last long.

OC Chapter Mango Project

Martha Haber

Over many years our chapter has made a name for itself growing avocado seedlings and grafting them for our Green Scene sales. Our resident avocado experts and grafting masters have led the effort to spread Queens and Sharwils, Reeds and Hellens, and a multitude of other lesser known but valuable avocado cultivars throughout Southern California. Now we'd like to launch a similar project with mangoes, and for this we'll need help from you, our members.

A contact at a local juice bar has given us their mango seeds over the past month. Propagating Group members are sprouting them and we hope that they'll be big enough to graft by next summer (although it's quite possible that they will need more time). We're learning as we go, much like our early chapter members did with avocados, and our experiences will allow us to increase our mango knowledge. How well do they grow from random seeds? How long does it take to grow a mango seed to grafting size? What conditions do they like best? We'll find out!

One thing we already know is that mango seedlings are more cold sensitive than avocado

seedlings. They need to be sheltered from the winter weather, and this is where our membership comes in. If you would be willing to tend some newly sprouted mango seedlings, giving them extra protection until they're big enough to graft, please get in touch with me. Take on one or several, there is no minimum requirement. We will appreciate whatever help you are able to give. As a thank you, we invite you to also grow a mango seedling for yourself, and when it's big enough to graft, you'll have your choice of mango scionwood for it. There are several grafters among us who will be happy to assist with the grafting, or offer their expert advice if you prefer to tackle this on your own. We want this to be fun as well as a learning experience.

Next spring we plan to start a second batch, giving the seedlings a longer period to grow before going into winter. Our plan is for this to be an ongoing process, giving us all mango trees for our own yards, as well as a steady supply to sell at our sales. I hope you'll be able to give us a hand.

If you'd like to participate, or if you have any questions, please contact me at mbretthaber@yahoo.com. I anticipate that there may be some seedlings available around late October and into November, but look for the majority of them next spring. I will post notices in the newsletter and make announcements at the meetings to keep everyone updated. And many thanks in advance to all our project partners.

August Propagating Committee Meeting

by Martha Haber

13 stalwart members came out in the August heat for the latest Propagating Committee meeting. First timers Tina and Mark Ward and Barbara and Arnold Fong joined propagators John McNeill, Isabel Barkman, Joan Day, Tree Krzewski, Jean and Newton Zane, Cyndi Najarian, Martha Haber and host Norm Johnson as they potted up dozens of seeds, including

jackfruit and papaya, guabiju and Australian bush cherries (thank you, Tom Waldron!), rose apples and mangoes. John continued grafting prepared scions onto the 20 mango trees recently purchased by the chapter for next year's Green Scene sale. Attendees also observed a presentation on air layering by Isabel that included potting up an air layered longan that had just been taken from its mother tree, along with a how-to demonstration on a sapote tree by John.

An open-air potluck lunch followed their hard work, and everyone enjoyed relaxing and socializing after their busy morning. Although unable to join this session, Don Winterstein had sent some stunning dragon fruit that took pride of place among the other dishes.

The Propagating Committee has been so successful in its efforts that there's currently no room left for more pots, and Norm is currently planning on increasing the capacity of the drip lines. Going forward, members will need to take newly potted plants to their homes to nurture. We hope that many of the young plants will be ready for our spring sale next April, freeing up space for a new batch of seedlings and young grafted plants.

Any chapter member who wishes to join the Propagating Committee is invited to contact Martha Haber at mbretthaber@yahoo.com to be added to the notification list. Refining your grafting skills under expert tutelage, learning new propagating techniques, visiting with friends, enjoying a delicious lunch - what a great way to beat the summer heat.

Pictures from the August General Meeting

What a wonderful venue!
The Great Park Farm and Food Lab



Pictures from the September General Meeting





In Memoriam

We are saddened to have received the notice that one of our very long time members has passed away at the age of 90. Rudy Haluza was a very active member of our Chapter in the 1980s. He developed the “El Bumpo” variety of cherimoya, wrote articles for this newsletter and for the Fruit Gardener magazine and has written several articles on grafting techniques. He had an extensive and impressive fruit garden in Villa Park which encompassed both the front and back gardens. The last event he attended was a mango tasting in Anaheim Hills this past summer. His daughter, Elizabeth McCants has notified us about his passing. She has offered to speak with anyone who knew him. For her number, please send an email to newsletter@ocfruit.com and I will send it to you.

Facebook

If you are a member of Facebook, and have a moment, check out our page at www.facebook.com/ocfruit. Rob often updates our page with pictures from events and instructional videos. He reports that our site is up to 2085 likes and 2362 followers. People from 45 different countries follow our site!

Library

We have a new librarian! Lauren Hutain has filled the post and would be happy to help any and all members with library requests.

Grafting DVD

“THE TECHNIQUES OF GRAFTING’ is a professionally produced DVD and is available at our meeting for a \$12 donation. You can also order one on our website or by sending Sally Holly a \$13 donation to cover the additional cost of postage.

Are you aware that at the end of the Grafting DVD there is a tutorial on how to collect, prepare, and keep scion wood? This DVD is an excellent resource, and if you don’t have one yet, don’t miss your chance!

This Month’s Rain Amounts

It is interesting not only to record the total rain accumulation for the year, but also to compare the rain amount for the month just passed.

Richard	92637	0.0”
Ines	92861	0.01”
Julie	92646	0.40”
Martha	90808	0.00”
Kittie	92709	0.00”
Don	92821	0.06”
Adrienne	92620	0.275”

Cumulative Rain Totals

For the current rain year beginning July 1, 2021 up to August 31, 2021.

Richard	92637	0.00”
Ines	92861	0.05”
Julie	92646	0.46”
Martha	90808	0.00”
Kittie	92709	0.02”
Don	92821	0.35”
Adrienne	92620	0.45”

Let's Find Out!

Rick Yessayian and Kevin Hayakawa have quite a collection of films now for us to enjoy. You can find the videos if you visit our website and click on Media, or just go to Youtube and enter "Let's Find Out CRFG!" The more than 25 productions are excellent and very enjoyable, please be sure to look at them. They have 932 subscribers!

Fruit Ripening This Month

This month we have pomegranate, feijjoa, pitahaya, banana, acerola, pineapple, kei apple, lingaro, white sapote, mango, passionfruit, fig, jujube, Valencia orange, Asian pear, apple, red tuna (prickly pear), Turnbull guava, longan, grapes, Hachiya and Fuyu persimmon, Bartlett pear, Bearss lime and lucuma.

Bulletin Board

Norm Johnson has sugar cane ready to process. If anyone has a press to use to extract juice from the sugar cane, please contact him at njjahslow0@gmail.com. Or if you have processed sugar cane and can offer advice, Norm would also welcome hearing from you.



ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Chair: John McNeill
chair@ocfruit.com

Vice Chair: Ty Teissere

Secretary: Martha Haber

Treasurer: John Marzolino

Membership: Laura Holly
(714)838-9678, membership@ocfruit.com

Group Purchasing: Steve Berger

Newsletter, CRFG Liaison: Elke Kuhl
newsletter@ocfruit.com

Member At Large: Rick Yessayian

GSWX: Elizabeth Russell, Kathy Connell
gsx@ocfruit.com

Field Trip Coordinator: Laura Kemp

Public Relations: Rob Cluff

CALIFORNIA RARE FRUIT GROWERS
ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER
P.O. BOX 4046
TUSTIN, CA 92781
OCFRUIT.COM

Green Scene: Don Winterstein

OC Fair: Ed Robb

Past Chairs: Martha Haber, Elke Kuhl, Richard Snyder, Don Winterstein, Julie Frink

Registration/Greeter and
Scholarships/Nominations: Sally Holly

O.C. Webmaster: Robert Moodey
web@ocfruit.com

Hospitality and Centennial Farm Liaison:
Isabel Barkman

Videographer: Kevin Hayakawa
crfg_oc@yahoo.com

Librarian: Lauren Hutain

