



April 2017 – Mulberry



Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club Newsletter

Who we are and what we do:

The Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club, Inc., is an educational not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to inform, educate and advise members and the public in the selection of tropical and subtropical fruiting plants and trees, to encourage their cultivation, and to provide a social forum where members can freely exchange plant material and information. The club cooperates with many organizations, and provides a basis for producing new cultivars. We function in any legal manner to further the above stated aims.

Meetings: Regular membership meetings that include an educational program are held the **second** Tuesday of each month. Meetings begin with a tasting table at 6:45 PM followed by a program at 7:15 PM, at the First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Avenue, Bonita Springs. The meetings are held in the "Fellowship Hall" meeting room.

Workshops: Workshops (monthly discussions) are held on the **fourth** Tuesday of each month. This open format encourages discussion and sharing of fruits and information. Bring in your fruits, plants, seeds, leaves, insects, photos, recipes, etc. This is a great chance to get answers to specific questions, and there always seems to be a local expert on hand! The workshops begin at 7pm and are also held at the First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Avenue, Bonita Springs, in the "Fellowship Hall" meeting room.

Directions:

From the intersection of Old 41 Road and Bonita Beach Road SE, proceed north to Dean Street. Turn right on Dean St. and go two blocks to Shriver, then turn left on Shriver and go two blocks to the Methodist Church. Free parking on both sides of the street. Shriver is parallel to Old 41, two blocks East.

Tree sale: An annual spring tree sale at Riverside Park in downtown Bonita Springs raises revenue for educational programs for club members and other related purposes of the club.

Trips: The club occasionally organizes trips and tours of other organizations that share our interests. The IFAS Experimental Station, the Fruit and Spice Park, and the Fairchild Nursery Farm are examples of our recent excursions.

Membership:

Dues are \$21 per person for new members, and \$15 per person for renewals. Send checks to: PO Box 367791, Bonita Springs, FL 34136, or bring to any regularly scheduled meeting.

Newsletter: This newsletter is available to anyone via website and email, and to paid members via post office mail upon request.

Officers and Board of Directors:

President: Suzy Valentine

Vice President: Kathy Pflugrad

Secretary: Don McBride

Treasurer: Victoria Strickland

Asst Treasurer: Melrose John

Director: Berto Silva

Director: Crafton Clift

Director: Rickford John

Email us at Info@BonitaSpringsTropicalFruitClub.com.

Guest Speaker for April:



Our speaker on April 11 will be Erica Klopff. She was raised in Naples and is dedicated to developing sustainable landscapes in South Florida. Erica completed her undergraduate work with a double-major in Environmental Studies and Art at Florida Gulf Coast University and completed internships at the Fruit and Spice Park, at Naples Botanical Gardens, and at Benchmark Inc. as an Edible Landscape Designer. Her studies of ecology, tropical fruits, and design culminated in the design of the FGCU Food Forest. Erica founded Florida Edible Landscaping where she continues to design, install, and manage edible gardens in Collier and Lee Counties.

Erica's topic will be "Tropical Fruit Botany," an interactive presentation. As you explore the anatomy of fruits and learn about each part, you will better understand how fruits develop. This will improve your growing skills. Attendees are invited to bring in one or more ripe fruits, a cutting board, and a sharp knife. Doing so will help you to get the most benefit from this topic.

Message from the President

Our Tree Sale was a big success!!! Thank you everyone who helped, in any way. You know who you are!! Coordinating this was a new experience for me, but with Tom Betts' guidance, cooperation from the City, Fruitscapes' excellent quality and reliability—and good weather—we managed to please lots of buyers, and make a nice profit. The Tasting Table had many different delicacies, and smiling volunteers offering samples to our visitors. Many of you have worked on the Sale for years, and helped us 'novices' make it all come together on the day. Special thanks to the strong, willing arms and backs who helped load and unload heavy plants, bags of fertilizer, signs, tables, etc. And to the "salesmen" who shared experienced advice with buyers about the specific varieties and conditions required for each fruit tree. Happy and successful growers = repeat customers!

We have many ideas and suggestions for making future sales even better, and welcome any input from you. Our club is growing rapidly in numbers, so we must be doing some things RIGHT! Happy Smiles from *Suzy Valentine*

Chores Outdoors: April Edition By David & Jenny Burd

FIGS: As they are just pushing (putting on their brand new leaves), it's now the time to selectively prune so that you won't need a ladder to pick the fruit. A light sprinkling of a full fertilizer (e.g. 6-6-6 or 8-8-8) and a good mulch will encourage fruit and help fight nematodes. That brings us to—

COTTONSEED MEAL: Our experience of using cottonseed meal as an additive has seen trees restored to their potential glory. We use it two to four times a year at the same time as the regular correct fertilizer; remember, with fertilizer as well as cottonseed meal, less is better than more. It promotes acidity combined with minor elements and helps citrus, avocados, jaboticabas, figs, and miracle fruit thrive. Cottonseed meal also helps any acid loving ornamentals; it gives gardenias lush green leaves and many flowers. Cottonseed meal can be purchased at feed stores, and usually has to be ordered in advance.

To everything there is a season.....

The month of April here in South Florida reflects these words, because much of the winter crop is over. Some exceptions are citrus—the Valencia oranges are probably at their best and some grapefruit, especially the Marsh Pinks & Whites can linger on to late May. So what else can be harvested in April? Custard Apples, Mamey Sapotes, Cherry of the Rio Grande, Grumichama Cherry, Mulberries, and maybe Jaboticabas. Also, some of the early mangos ripen at the end of April—Rosigold, Florigon, and Manilita depending on when they bloomed and were cared for. A point to remember—for mangos, watering in the dry season should be kept to once a week as this will result in larger fruit. Too much water will dilute the flavor of each mango.

Everyone make sure to give a big thanks to David and Jenny Burd for providing us our *Chores Outdoors this Month tips* for each month. Thanks guys.



GROUP OF WONDERFUL PEOPLE ENJOYED THE BUS TRIP



Photos courtesy of Madeline Bohannon

Fruit of the Month – Mulberry

Scientific Name: *Morus* spp.

Family: Moraceae

Mulberries flourish throughout the state of Florida and beyond. This low-maintenance species is traditionally a sizeable tree; dwarf varieties are now available which can be kept as shrubs or in containers. Fruiting season is short, peaking in April, but prodigious harvests can be expected from a mature tree. The fruits vary in size and shape, but are often compared to a mild blackberry, though some cultivars yield red, white or purple fruit.

Mulberries have several advantages—they bear fruit in the first year after planting, thrive in sandy soil without fertilization, are drought tolerant, fast growing, and are not damaged by a freeze. One drawback is the staining that occurs on sidewalks and driveways from dropped fruit and from the droppings of the birds who eat it. Unfortunately, Caribbean fruit flies are sometimes attracted, as well. With those exceptions, mulberry is not prone to pests and diseases.

Two dwarf cultivars recommended by local nurserymen are 'Dwarf Everbearing' and 'Issai.' There are many excellent full-sized cultivars of *Morus nigra* (black mulberry) and *Morus rubra* (red mulberry) available. *Morus alba* (white mulberry) cultivars are sweet but generally less flavorful.

For more information about cultivating mulberries download the [Mulberry PDF](#) provided by the University of Florida IFAS Extension Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS). Or you can visit the [EDIS mulberry page](#).

Here is another link that gives some good info, including comparative size of the 3 types of mulberries: <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/trees-and-shrubs/trees/mulberry.html>

Using Mulberries

Mulberries are a great addition to your diet. They are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and more. They are wonderful eaten out of hand, but last only about three days in the refrigerator. To enjoy the health benefits year round, freeze or dry them (either in the sun or a dehydrator).

Mulberries can be used in juice, jam, cobblers, sauces, salads, muffins, pies, pancakes, smoothies, and sorbet. In short, use them just like blackberries.



Mulberry Blossoms



Mulberry Fruit Cluster



Mulberry Tree

Photos courtesy of Fruitscapes LLC.