

February 2017 – Avocado



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 \$20 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: Gerda Gyori

Asst. Treasurer: Melrose John

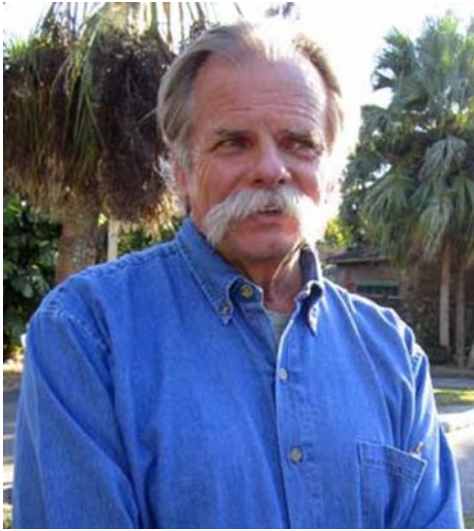
Director: Berto Silva

Director: Crafton Clift

Director: Rickford John

Email us at Info@BonitaSpringsTropicalFruitClub.com.

Guest Speaker for February: Chris Rollins



In keeping with our Valentine's Day meeting date, Chris's topic will be "Love and Fruit." He will share a fun presentation on fruits you'll love growing and fruits that are purported to grow your love life.

Chris was the director for over 30 years of the Fruit and Spice Park in Homestead, FL. He organized rare fruit conferences and fruit-focused trips to the tropics, hosted a radio show, and has appeared on national TV. Chris is known for his charisma and entertaining presentations.

Message from the President

Thank you for allowing me to lead this club for the coming year. New members, new directions, new ideas—but we continue with the same goals. Our Purpose includes the words.... *"to distribute information and care on the many rare... tropical and subtropical fruits grown throughout the world; to educate...in the selection of these valuable tree/shrub/bush crops..."* I intend to concentrate on what we CAN grow HERE in SW Florida, and what we actually might enjoy consuming in some form. We live in a sophisticated world where foods are shipped all around the world year around, and no longer must depend on subsistence farming or local, seasonal produce. Unfamiliar fresh fruits can be scary, or we may not know how to prepare them safely to produce a tasty dish. Among our members are many who have traveled, lived and grown a wide variety of fruits around the world. We share what we grow at our meetings, and offer Workshops and Programs on how to select, plant, cultivate, propagate, utilize, and preserve the huge variety of fruits available here. Container growing also works for many of our favorites. Social networking has opened our doors to new people interested in what we offer.

Welcome! Take time to explore our website and read past Newsletters. Many of your questions will be answered, and interests will be piqued by the fascinating variety of information found there.

As your President, I am open to suggestions and ideas which may help us further our common goals. Email me: suzy.valentine@att.net Specific questions which I may not be able to answer will be passed on to more knowledgeable members. **Savor, Enjoy, and Share!** - **Suzy Valentine**

Announcements:

2017-18 Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club Board

Elected at the January 10 meeting as club leaders for 2017 were Suzy Valentine, President; Kathy Pflugrad, Vice President; Don McBride, Secretary; Gerda Gyori, Treasurer; Melrose John, Asst. Treasurer; and Berto Silva, 2017-2018 Director. Directors Crafton Clift and Rickford John have one year remaining of their two year terms. A huge thank you to all who served on the 2016 board.



Don McBride, Secretary

Don is originally from Haverford, Pa., a graduate of Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pa. He is a former New Jersey elementary school teacher and coach and was a Certified Master Gardener there. Don has lived in Florida since 2014 and has been very interested in learning about what plants grow and how they grow here in Southwest Florida. He is a newer member of the Bonita Springs Tropical Fruit Club and ready to be of service and contribute however he is able.

BUS TRIP: We are planning a bus trip on Sat., March 4th, to the Homestead area. Our first stop will be a visit to the Farmer's Market area of a Homestead flea market that has an amazing variety of tropical fruit at reasonable prices. Next is the Asian Culture Festival at the Fruit and Spice Park.

BSTFC will offer this trip at \$25 per person for all our club members, and \$45 per person for non-members (this includes admission fees). It will leave Ft. Myers at 7:15 AM from the Walmart parking lot near I-75, and depart at 8 AM from the Walmart lot near Immokalee and I-75. We'll return around 6 PM.

For more information and reservations, call Madeline at 239-851-4448. Do NOT assume just leaving a voicemail is sufficient, as more information will be needed for confirmation.

Feb 7th, special seminar for the public – invite your friends to attend!

Public Seminar—David Southall and Kathy Pflugrad will present “Growing Tropical Fruits in SWFL” on Tuesday, Feb. 7th 6-8:00 PM, First United Methodist Church, 27690 Shriver Avenue, Bonita Springs. This is for new or non-members wanting to gain knowledge prior to selecting fruiting plants to purchase and plant. Invite your friends to RSVP at <https://www.meetup.com/Bonita-Springs-Tropical-Fruit-Club/events/236802039/> or phone 239-822-7151.

Chores Outdoors: February Edition

LOW-CHILL “NORTHERN” FRUITS: For those of you who have Florida-friendly varieties of peaches, nectarines, grapes and plums, there is still time to prune in early to mid-February. The classic pruning for peaches and nectarines resembles an open upside down umbrella. Try to trim out the center to allow sunlight to create more evenly sized fruit.

MANGOS: Don't worry, mangos are still working on pushing flowers; flowering can happen as late as the end of March. You can fertilize now, even without the flowers—it won't hurt, and will probably help. Use 0-0-18 in the same amount as your other fruit trees. Less is better than more, though potash can't burn the leaves. Feather the fertilizer starting from half way out from the trunk, out to and even a wee bit beyond the dripline. Never throw fertilizer against the trunk of any tree.

CITRUS: Citrus trees are pushing new growth, so the Asian citrus psyllid calls this party time. Let's be party poopers and eliminate them by spraying with a mixture of BioWash (1 oz. per gallon of water) together with minor elements (vitamins for the tree). Follow directions on the bottle. Spray early in the morning or in late afternoon. Ten days to two weeks later, spray again, except 1/2 oz. BioWash per gallon, and the same amount of the Minor Elements. Safer Soap is OK if you don't have BioWash. This regimen will repel the psyllids and feed the tree through the leaves. Think about fertilizing the citrus—8-2-8 or 10-2-10 is what we like to use. Many of the citrus trees are already in flower. Again don't fertilize heavily; too much nitrogen will burn the leaves.

FERTILIZER NOTE: 0-0-18 does not lose its potency once the bag is opened, but 8-2-8 or 10-2-10 does deteriorate; close the bag well. If you have had an open bag for more than a year, put that fertilizer on your bananas and buy a new bag for the citrus etc. Avocados, peaches, nectarines, plums and grapes use the same citrus fertilizer.

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.

Calendar of Events

2/7 Tue. –Special Seminar for the public, 6-8 PM, “Growing Tropical Fruits in SWFL.”

2/14 Tue. –Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM; Speaker: Chris Rollins; Topic: “Love & Fruit.”

2/25 Sat. –TREE SALE, Riverside Park, Bonita Springs, 9 AM-1 PM.

2/28 Tue. –Workshop Meeting, 7:00 PM

3/4 Sat. – Bus Trip to Homestead

3/14 Tue. –Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM; Speaker: Dr. Richard Campbell
of Fairchild Gardens.

3/28 Tue. –Workshop Meeting, 7:00 PM

Future Speaker

The Future speaker for the March General Meeting will be Dr. Richard Campbell of Fairchild Gardens.

Requested Container Soil Recipe:

Here is the recipe for container soil as presented by David Southall at our January meeting:

Cornell Long-term Container Growing Medium

To make one cubic foot (about $\frac{3}{4}$ bushel) of soil mix:

- 1) $\frac{1}{2}$ cu. Ft (about 4 dry gallons) of Canadian Sphagnum peat moss
- 2) $\frac{1}{2}$ cu ft coarse horticultural Perlite (wet)
- 3) $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Dolomitic limestone
- 4) $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Triple Super-Phosphate (0-46-0)
- 5) $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Potassium Nitrate (13.5-0-46)
- 6) 1 Oz. (tablespoon) Fritted Trace-elements
- 7) $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Osmocote slow release fertilizer

To modify soil mix for acid-loving plants omit Dolomite
Use water-soluble fertilizer $\frac{1}{4}$ strength every other watering.

CAN YOU SHARE?

We've received two requests recently. If you have fruit to sell or knowledge to share, please reply to these inquiries--

Is there anyone in your club who sells their fruit by mail? I used to live in the Ft. Myers area, and grew many of the delicious fruit grown by your club members. I'm looking for sweet fruit that I can't get in any store here in Texas. I love sugar apples. *From Larry, 512-297-9972 or Larrynarcisse1@att.net*

Your website is fantastic and informative. My wife and I live in NE Ohio and we love tropical fruits and plants. We are seriously thinking about relocating to Bonita Springs / Naples area in next couple of years to grow a small noncommercial farm - trees like mangoes, sapote, avocado, jack fruit, coconut etc. I was wondering if any of your members is interested in communicating with us and help us in this journey. We are going to be in SWFL on Feb. 2 & 3. Can we meet & see some of your members? *From Saju, abraham.saju@gmail.com*

Fruit of the Month – Avocado

Scientific Name: *Persea americana*

Family: Lauraceae

In southwest Florida we can't "grow a year round supply of guacamole" as one novice hoped, but it *is* possible to harvest avocados for eight to ten months a year if the right mix of cultivars is planted.

Archaeologists tell us that avocados were growing in south-central Mexico as early as 750 BC. Today, Mexican avocados are one of three races with distinct characteristics. The Mexican race bears small fruits with high oil content, and is quite cold hardy, but intolerant of heat and humidity. West Indian avocados are vulnerable to cold damage and have medium to large fruits with smooth skins and low oil content. The Guatemalan race has medium to large fruits with a pebbly skin and medium oil content, and is moderately cold hardy. These three races have been hybridized to produce our common modern cultivars.

It's easy to cultivate avocados from seeds, but seedling trees take a decade or so to bear fruit which often turns out to be of poor quality. To get a significant harvest within three years, choose a grafted tree of a known variety. Harvest is improved by planting two trees of opposite flower types (A & B) for better cross pollination. (For more details, search "IFAS avocado" online.) Fruit does not ripen on the tree, which means a home grower can harvest avocados as needed over several weeks, and ripen them at room temperature.

The avocado is an attractive, low maintenance tree, but can be killed by overwatering. The most ominous threat is from Laurel Wilt, a fungal disease carried by the Red Bay Ambrosia Beetle which has invaded Florida in recent years. Trees are usually attacked at the age of ten or eleven years, and generally die quickly as a result. Guatemalan and Guatemalan-West Indian hybrids are somewhat less susceptible, but certainly not immune. Scientists are currently searching for a solution. Let's hope they succeed soon, so we can keep enjoying that guacamole!

Using Avocados

In addition to guacamole, fresh avocados can be enjoyed mashed on toast, sliced as a sandwich filling, mashed with cream and sugar, diced into salads, or added to fruit smoothies. An online search yields interesting avocado dessert recipes such as cakes, pie, and avocado chocolate pudding.

Here is a list of the cultivars you will find available in this area:

BROGDON CHOQUETTE DAY FLORIDA HAAS HALL LULA LATE
MARCUS PUMPKIN MEXICOLA MONROE NISHIKAWA ORO NEGRO
SIMMONDS SUPER HAAS WINTER MEXICAN WURTZ

Great link to avocado information: <https://www.avocadocentral.com>

Cover photo compliments of the Smithsonian. Following photos compliments of Fruitscapes LLC.

