

## January 2017 – Coconut



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 \$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: Kathy Pflugrad

Vice President: Suzy Valentine

Secretary: Denise Houghtaling & Adrienne Diaz

Treasurer: Melrose John

Director: Berto Silva

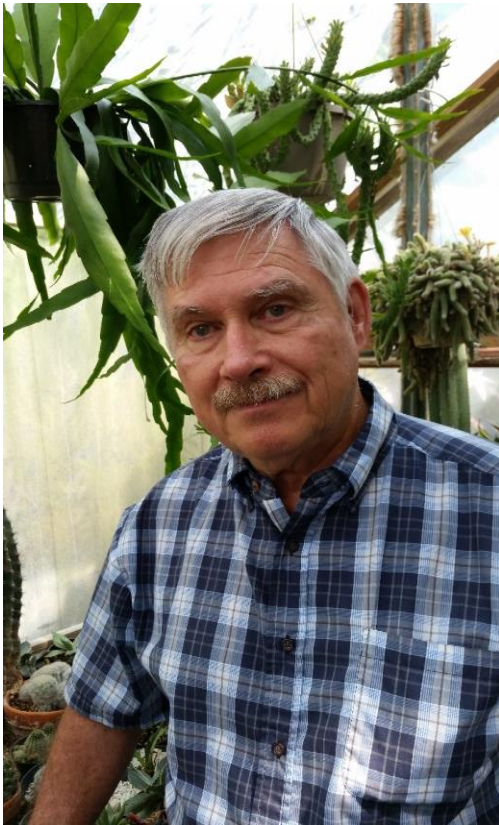
Director: Crafton Clift

Director: Rickford John

Past President: Madeline Bohannon

Email us at [Info@BonitaSpringsTropicalFruitClub.com](mailto:Info@BonitaSpringsTropicalFruitClub.com).

## Guest Speaker January:



Our speaker on January 10 will be David Southall. He is a retired museum educator, environmental biologist and professional horticulturist. David managed successful nursery, landscape, greenhouse and interior plant operations in southwest Florida for decades. David and his wife Suzy Valentine are avid growers of award-winning plants often seen at garden club flower shows all around Florida.

David's topic will be "Container Growing: the Secret is in the Soil." He has over forty years of successful container growing experience in our region. He will explain the environmental differences between growing plants in the ground and in a container. Container construction, drainage, size and depth as well as growing media will be examined in detail. Success with container growing depends on creating and maintaining a healthy, stable environment for the "other half of the plant we never see"—the root system. Come learn to grow fruit in small spaces from a true professional.

## Message from the President

Happy New Year! This is a great time of year to plan your planting projects for 2017. Factors to consider are your available space, the microclimate of your property (i.e. how cold it gets in the winter), ease of care, harvest season, and of course—taste! Consider growing fruits that you truly enjoy, but that aren't readily available to purchase.

January is the time to start spreading the word about our tree sale, too. No doubt you have fruit loving friends who will want to buy trees. The sale is February 25, and this year, we will be taking pre-orders. This will help ensure our customers get exactly the trees they want. Watch your email for more details and a copy of the pre-order form that you can use to spread the word and increase our business.

Our club will hold a special seminar for the public on "Growing Tropical Fruits in SWFL." This will be on Tuesday, Feb. 7, 6:30-8 PM at our usual meeting site. Please invite your friends to attend. It will help them choose which fruits to grow and learn how to grow them in limited space. Those who attend will have the opportunity to pre-order trees to be picked up on Feb. 25. We're happy to present the seminar at other venues, as well. Please call or text me (239-822-7151) with opportunities. This will help to spread word about our club and increase the number of trees sold this year.

Working together, we can spread the love of tropical fruits and make the tree sale a success.

## Announcements:

**2017 Dues**—Membership dues must be paid on or before January 10 to be eligible to vote in the annual election. If you haven't yet done so, please come prepared to pay by check or cash at the Jan. 10 meeting. Dues are \$15 per individual or \$25 per household per year. Name tags for first time members are \$5 each. If you prefer to pay by mail, please mail checks to our treasurer by January 5 to allow transit and processing time: Melrose John, 1631 SW 52<sup>nd</sup> St., Cape Coral, FL 33914. If you have questions, call or text her at 718 809 9956.

**2017 Election**—An election will be held at the January 10 meeting to fill the following offices for 2017: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and one director position. All paid members who are present will be eligible to vote.

From Suzy Valentine: **Our Annual Holiday Party** was a great success, thanks to EVERY ONE of us! Very special thanks to Karen & Rich Marks, Anna Bailey & Charlie Strader and my husband David Southall for getting our hot foods ready to eat (no easy task!)---and to Gerda & Ivan Gyori for fetching ice for our cold drinks, and to Sherina Tiberia, Marilyn (Kathy's mother) and the others who were there early and helped set the tables. If I haven't mentioned your name, I apologize! Your help was needed and appreciated. You know who you are!!!!

The variety of food offerings was incredible, as always, and everyone found lots of old favorites as well as new taste sensations. Fruits can be savored in so many ways---as can friends!

And then the clean-up....and many, many thanks to those who stayed and helped package left-overs for sharing, and the general work of putting our meeting place back in order. The church likes us when we do our part!

Best of all, we had many new faces among us, and this means we are GROWING! Sharing our love and knowledge of tropical fruits is a wonderful way to connect in today's complex world. Let's GROW Together!

**Fruit Tree Sale** will be open to the public Sat, Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, from 9 – 1. Our volunteer helpers should arrive between 7:30 and 8:30 am. Tasting table will be ready at 9 am.

Any member or friend of a member who wishes to set up their own table or space to sell anything related to our mission (promoting fruits and/or other parts of plants which are useful as food, condiment, medicine, or even ornamental, and which can be grown in SW Florida), may do so. Space must be reserved with the BSTFC in advance, and the product approved by the Board. Call Suzy: 992 0113. Examples include jams, preserves, pickles, spices, herbs, container grown mixed planters, etc. 10% of proceeds must be donated to the BSTFClub. We encourage and appreciate all such products as they help make our Sale more interesting and appealing to the public.

# Chores Outdoors: January Edition

By David and Jenny Burd

**PRUNING:** Its pruning time for GRAPES, PEACHES, NECTARINES & PERSIMMONS. Each has a very particular way to be pruned. Check reliable information on how it should be done. Also, **figs** are pruned in February or when the new growth is starting to show.

**PERSIMMONS:** when trimmed, should also be defoliated (remove the leaves either by hand or with small clippers). Then fertilize with a balanced (preferably organic) 6-6-6 or 10-10-10 until the first leaves are pushing. Remember if persimmons are fertilized when the leaves are pushing, it will signal the plant to either not flower or should the fruit set, it probably will abort.

**MANGOS:** WOW! They are blooming; what a sight to look at a mango tree covered with flowers. Now is the time to fertilize with either 0-0-18 which has a package of minors including the iron which mangos need. Or 0-0-22 is OK—just! Both are available at Helena Fertilizer Company in Immokalee. Get out the water bottles again to hang in the mango trees to attract pollinators. See the April 2016 newsletter or come to the January meeting to see an example. Powdery Mildew can be a problem on the flowers, especially if the mornings have a heavy dew or it actually rains. Powdery Mildew looks like white powder on each tiny flower and so if the fungus is heavy it will destroy the whole panicle. Now some recommend spraying with copper. Liquid copper might seem the easy way to spray the flowers, but from our experience LONG ago it resulted in the fruit aborting. Powdered copper can be used; we prefer powdered sulphur or SAFER SOAP which would be easier to find. Always follow exact instructions,

**COLD PROTECTION:** Yes, it has been unusually warm for this time of year, but be prepared--or if you don't need it, yea yea! If a really cold night is coming, water at the warmest time of the day (20 minutes for each sprinkler zone is enough.) Cover the trees if you can, especially those that suffer at 40° F; NEVER USE PLASTIC. Make sure the seam is on the south east side, because cold wind will come from the N to NW. If it's a really strong "nor'easter" then check afterward for salt on the leaves, especially on lychees, jaboticabas and jack fruit. If you see the salt glisten on the leaves, hose the tree gently—no need for soap or chemicals.

ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF YOUR FRUIT TREES. If you have an abundance, HELPS OUTREACH on J&C Blvd would be very glad to receive your fruit, as well as the food bank in Bonita Springs.

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

1/10 Tue. –Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM; OFFICER ELECTION; Speaker: David Southall;  
Topic: "Container Growing: the Secret is in the Soil"

1/24 Tue. –Workshop Meeting, 7:00 PM

2/7 Tue. –Special Seminar for the public, 6:30-8 PM, (See President's Message),  
"Growing Tropical Fruits in SWFL."

2/14 Tue. –Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM; Speaker: Chris Rollins.

2/25 Sat. –FRUIT TREE SALE, Riverside Park, Bonita Springs. 9am-1pm

## Fruit of the Month – Coconut

Scientific Name: *Cocos nucifera*

Family: Arecaceae (Palmae)



Coconut palms are an important bellwether for tropical fruit growers. It's common to hear of newcomers to southwest Florida who learn *after* buying property that it's in an area too cold to grow mangos and other delicacies they'd dreamed of planting. If they had known to look for mature coconut palms their disappointment could have been avoided. These signal a zone where many tropical plants will survive.

The coconut fruit is a drupe—albeit a dry and fibrous one—rather than a true nut. It is valued for its tasty flesh and refreshing juice. Processed, the fruit yields oil, milk, soap, and more. The inner juice, or “coconut water,” has been used for oral rehydration therapy, and even as IV fluid in emergencies.

The species' place of origin is uncertain as the fruit spreads widely on ocean currents. The tree itself is tremendously useful in tropical cultures. It is a source of roofing, fuel, basket and hat making materials, bowls and utensils, decorations, brooms, rope and coarse fabric, and edible heart of palm.

While some cultivars reach a height of 100 feet, dwarf varieties are recommended for SWFL homeowners. “Fiji Dwarf” bears at an early age and within easy harvesting height. Several “Malayan Dwarf” varieties are available, too. These cultivars are resistant to the fatal “lethal yellowing” disease. Coconut palms grow rapidly, and generally begin to bear three to seven years after planting. Heavy crops are available almost continuously. The trees are very low maintenance, will grow in poor soil, and tolerate salt. A light freeze, though, will damage the fronds; a drop to 27° F is generally fatal.



Coconut shown up close and full tree.

Photos compliments of Kathy Pflugrad

## Using Coconuts

Search online for "how to husk coconuts," and watch a few of the videos. Remove the fibrous husk, crack open the shell, and remove the coconut meat.

Young coconuts (harvested 7-8 months after flowering) yield "coconut water" and soft jelly-like pulp that's refreshing and easy to digest. Mature coconuts (11-12 months after flowering) have thicker meat that's solid and chewy.

### Chewy Coconut Granola

Preheat oven to 170°.

In large mixing bowl, combine:     4 c. quick oats, 4 c. rolled oats  
  2 c. fresh or frozen mature coconut, chopped or coarsely grated

In two cup measure, combine:     1/4 c. vegetable oil, 1/2 c. honey,  
  1/8 c. vanilla, 1 1/2 t. salt and  
  water (and/or coconut water) almost to the 2 cup line

Stir liquids till well mixed, then quickly pour over dry ingredients, and stir together until evenly moist. Spread in a large roaster pan or in two cookie pans and place in preheated oven. Bake 8 hours or until thoroughly dry and golden brown. Cool and store in airtight container. NOTE: Using fresh coconut yields a more chewy texture; frozen coconut results in a delightful crispy texture.

### Indonesian Young Coconut Pudding

Cream together and set aside:     1/2 c. cornstarch, 3 egg yolks, and  
  2 T. butter or margarine

Bring to a boil:                    3 c. coconut water, 1 c. sugar, scant  
  1 can evaporated milk

Stir the starch mixture into the boiling liquid until just thick. Reduce heat to simmer.

Stir in:                                5 c. young coconut

Simmer for a few minutes to cook the coconut and achieve a custard consistency.

Meanwhile, create meringue by beating: 3 egg whites

Turn custard into a baking dish. Cover with: meringue, 1/2 c. raisins, chopped nuts to taste, a sprinkle of cinnamon

Broil to lightly brown the meringue.