

September 2016 – Pineapple



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.

Tree sale: Semi-annual tree sales in spring and fall at Riverside Park in downtown Bonita Springs raise 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.

Guest Speaker for September:



Our speaker on September 13, 2016, will be **Dr. Jonathan Crane**, from University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) at Homestead. He earned his Ph.D. in horticultural science and soil microbiology, serves as tropical fruit crops specialist and professor of tropical fruit production, does ongoing research and writing, and is an internationally known consultant and presenter.

Dr. Crane's topic will be "Avocados." He has researched avocado botany, production, pests and diseases extensively and is expected to share information on the recent emergence of laurel wilt and its impact on our avocado trees.

Message from the President

Our club is growing! At each meeting there are a number of first-timers visiting to check us out. Thank you for spreading the word about BSTFC, inviting friends, creating a welcoming atmosphere, and answering newcomers' questions. There are now a hundred people signed up for our group on meetup.com, and as they visit our meetings I know that your helpfulness and hospitality will help draw them toward becoming regular members.

Our club is full of people who know things I don't, and I love it when they share that knowledge. I recently asked Adrienne Diaz about growing strawberries. Though not traditionally considered a tropical fruit, strawberries were growing in Thailand when I lived there—and they certainly grow well in subtropical Florida, if you know how to cultivate them.

September is the month to order strawberry plants and prepare a planting spot, so I'll share our conversation below. Happy harvesting!

STRAWBERRIES

Why are you growing strawberries, anyway? I literally grew up next door to Smucker's strawberry field in Orange County, California. I can't imagine life without strawberries, and since they are at the top of the "dirty dozen" list, contaminated with 32 (!) chemicals, I made it my mission to figure out how to grow them here. I discovered we have to grow them as an annual in Florida due to lack of chill hours.

Who can grow them successfully? Home gardeners with a raised bed or room for some containers.

Where should they be planted? Strawberries need 6-8 hours of daily sun. If you don't have a raised bed, strawberry pots or a vertical garden tower work fine, even on a lanai.

STRAWBERRIES continued

How do I get started?

1. Order plants in September for October planting (this is ideal, but you can plant as late as December). Online, WillisOrchards.com sells 'Sweet Charlie,' an early variety. Locally, Danny Blank (239-229-3579 or danielpblank@gmail.com) sells 'Camarosa,' 'Festival' and 'Fronteras' varieties. I like to plant several varieties to lengthen my harvest season. Fifty plants produce plenty for a family of four. (NOTE: Danny Blank will speak at our October meeting. He may be able to deliver orders that night.)



2. Prepare a raised bed or containers with well-drained soil rich in organic matter.

3. When you receive the bare root plants, trim the bottom 1/4" to 1/2" off the roots, fan the roots out, and plant with the crown just above soil level. In a raised bed, place two plants per square foot. Mulch with a 3" layer of straw (not

hay). There's a reason they're called *straw*berries! The straw is very important; it keeps the soil moist and keeps the fruit up out of the dirt.

How do I care for them? Water daily, morning if you can. I use a wand and—this sounds crazy—I water each plant the length of time it takes to sing the happy birthday song. Pots need more water than raised beds, but plants don't want to be soggy. (By the way, container grown strawberries will produce sooner with smaller, more plentiful berries.)

What are the challenges? High humidity and moist soil can bring fungus & diseases. That varies year to year.



When is harvest? It usually begins about six weeks after planting. In an average year, berries will begin ripening in late December or January, peak in February, and bear into March or sometimes April. They're such a treat, and a big savings over buying organic berries at the store.



Strawberries grown in tower container.



Bowl of fresh picked strawberries.

Chores Outdoors: September Edition

MANGOS: If you haven't already fertilized your mango trees, NOW is the time, with either 0-0-22 or 0-0-18. Select pruning to maintain the recommended height of ten feet. If the tree is 'hat-racked' it will struggle to have fruit next year.

LYCHEES & LONGANS: Your last nitrogen fertilizing of the year should be before the end of September using 8-2-8, 10-2-10 or 6-4-6.

CITRUS: Fertilize with same formula as for lychees. Remember BioWash and micronutrients to fight psyllids and citrus greening.

PERSIMMONS: The early varieties are starting to get ripe. The variety called Winterset ripen as late as December to early January.

TIP FOR UNFRUITFUL AVOCADO, LYCHEE & LONGAN TREES: If you have a seedling avocado four to six years old that has never fruited, girdle it just below the first branch (so as not to show the scar that will occur). Girdling will prevent the sugars from the leaf areas going back down to the roots. Applying extra 0-0-22 also will help to give a higher chance of flowering and fruiting the next year.

To girdle an avocado, use a pocket knife or hacksaw. Cut through the cambium layer to the hardwood. DO NOT TAKE AWAY ANY BARK. This technique can also be used on lychees and longans, but ONLY on 1 inch or smaller branches.

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

9/13 Tue. – Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM. Speaker: Jonathan Crane of TREC; Topic: Avocados

9/27 Tue. –Workshop Meeting, 7 PM

10/11 Tue.–Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM. Speaker: Danny Blank;

10/25 Tue.–Workshop Meeting, 7 PM

11/8 Tue. – Regular Meeting, 6:45 PM. Speaker: Jean & Chris Sapp;

11/22 Tue.–Workshop Meeting, 7 PM

Future Speaker

The Future speaker for the October General Meeting will be Danny Blank.

Associated Club Invitation

Fort Myers Lee County Garden Council, Inc. (FMLCGC) is a county wide organization with headquarters in Fort Myers, at 2166 Virginia Ave. This is next door to Edison-Ford Estates, off McGregor. **BSTFC is a member, and all our members are welcome to attend their General Meetings.** General Meetings take place 5 times a year and beginning this season, held at the newly renovated headquarters. The Berne Davis Botanical Garden and the Mina Edison Botanical Reference Library are there also and available to us.

Meeting dates, times and programs: 9:00 am Hospitality 9:30 am Meeting & Program

September 9, 2016. Fruitscapes Steve Cucura & Pine Island Tropicals Gary and Donna Schneider

November 11, 2016 Everglades Wonder Gardens

January 13, 2017 Archbold Biological Station and MacArthur Agro-ecology Research Center
(Lake Placid is home to this)

March 10, 2017 Brookdale Basketeers Pine needle basketry...and more... using natural materials

May 12, 2017 No program Installation of new President with appropriate 'fanfare'

I, Suzy Valentine, am currently 2nd VP of FMLCGC, and am responsible for Programs. I encourage any and all to attend any meeting, and find out more about this great networking opportunity. Our club has planted several fruit trees in the garden, and we welcome input and help in managing them. This might be a venue for a future Tree Sale.....so check it out!

Fruit of the Month – Pineapple

Scientific Name: *Ananas comosus*

Family: Bromeliaceae

Pineapple is native to inland areas of Paraguay and Brazil, but found its way to the Caribbean where Christopher Columbus discovered it on the island of Guadeloupe in 1493. The genus name, *Ananas*, was apparently derived from its indigenous name, “anana,” meaning *excellent fruit*.

Today pineapple is common around the world. It wasn't always so. After its discovery, 200 years passed as Europeans attempted to grow them successfully. In the meantime, they had to rely on rare and expensive imports—the cost of one pineapple equaled months of pay for a common laborer. Only the super-rich had the opportunity to eat this fruit, though others could rent one to display at their dinner parties as a status symbol.

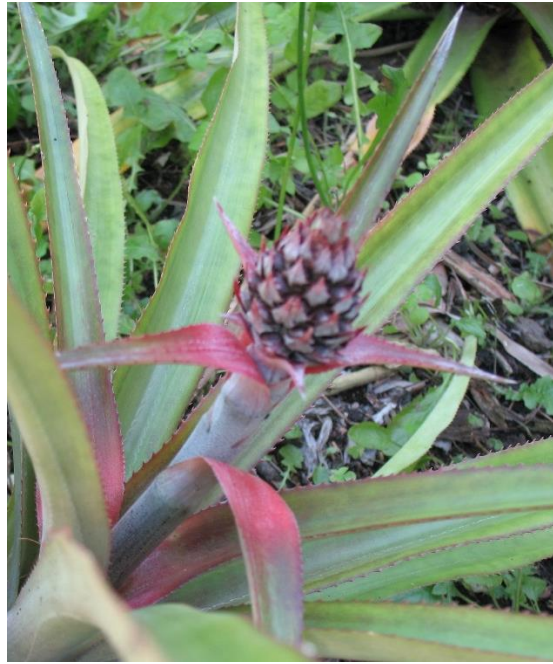
In southwest Florida, pineapples produce year round, peaking in summer and fall. They're adaptable and easy to grow. Though the plant can be three to five feet in diameter, and equally high, their shallow root system allows them to grow in small pots. They can also be planted directly into the ground, though nematodes are a risk. Sandy, acidic soil is best, and good drainage is essential. They succeed in sun or part shade. Irrigation and fertilizer is recommended.

Pineapples generally flower in winter, but can be forced to bloom at other seasons. To force a pineapple, choose a large healthy plant. Fully dissolve three or four pellets of calcium carbide (from a hobby store) in a cup of ice water, and pour it into the center of the plant. Repeat one week later. Another technique uses apple slices placed among the leaves, especially at the plant's center. It's said that within two months a blossom should appear, followed by mature fruit six months later. Note that forcing may be unsuccessful in hot weather, especially if nitrogen fertilizer has been used in the previous two months.

Pineapple comes in hundreds of varieties, from miniature to over eight pounds, ranging from white and yellow to red and blue tones. If you eat one you like, twist off the crown, strip off its lowest leaves and plant it. (Some sources recommend either drying or soaking the crown before planting; neither is necessary.) It will take a couple of years to harvest the first fruit, but from this original plant you can also harvest vegetative sprouts to plant. These plants will produce larger fruits in less time. Soon you will have many of these excellent fruits in your own backyard.



Ripe Pineapple.



Pineapple before blossom opens.



Pineapple blossom.



Pineapple grown in container.



Pineapple cross section cut.

Recipes

Favorite Fruit Compote

Combine 2 cups fresh pineapple chunks, 2 ripe sliced bananas, 10-12 oz. frozen red raspberries, and 1-2 cups fresh or frozen strawberries. Serve chilled.

Suzy's Mango Chutney as tasted at July General Meeting

12 large mangos, firm and a bit under ripe
2 T salt
3 T mustard seed, soaked in a little water or vinegar
3 ginger roots, peeled and sliced very thin
3 – 4 cups good apple cider vinegar
4 ½ lbs. dark brown sugar
1 large onion, chopped
5 green peppers, chopped
1 lemon peel, grated
¼ t clove
1 T cinnamon
1 pound raisins
3 mashed ripe bananas
1 pound Roma tomatoes, seeded and chopped

Peel mangoes, cut into strips, cover with 1 T salt, and let stand 2 hours. Mix all other ingredients together in very large pot and bring to a boil. Cook for 30 minutes, and add drained mangoes. Cook another 30 minutes.

Adjust spices and sugar to taste. If it seems too juicy, drain off liquid and reduce it by boiling gently.

Note – this makes a large batch – you might want to cut recipe in half.

Photos in newsletter compliments of Kathy Pflugrad, Adrienne Diaz, PineapplePonderings Blogspot, and Fruitscapes, LLC.

Progress and Expenditures

BSTFC July 27 Board Meeting Summary

Present: Kathy Pflugrad, Suzy Valentine, Crafton Clift, Berto Silva, and Madeline Bohannon.
Absent: Denise Houghtaling, Adrienne Diaz, Melrose John and Rickford John.

We are successfully attracting new members by using Meetup.com. Also Kathy did a presentation to a Gardeners of SW Florida meeting to raise awareness of the club.

An increase in the annual *household* membership fee previously approved for next January was approved to go into effect immediately; it will be \$25 per household. Individual membership fees remain at \$15. As always, a \$5 fee per nametag applies.

Our club expenses (meeting room, insurance, speaker fees, door prizes, etc.) exceed our income. Income options were discussed, asking for ideas to augment Tree Sale income.

Approval was given to the possibility of having a mix of plants and other items as door prizes because some members have no place to plant more trees.

Newsletters have been mailed monthly to members for whom we have no email address. It is necessary to update our records so that we incur this expense only for people who truly don't have email access. Madeline will verify these.

Although Bonita Springs will celebrate Arbor Day on April 22, we prefer an earlier date for the tree sale. Suzy will find out if there is a Saturday or Sunday available in February or March for our sale.

A possible trip to Costa Rica was mentioned. Rodger Taylor will look into this.

Chris Rollins wants to organize an International Fruit Conference in SWFL in 2017. Kathy will follow up with him.

Meeting adjourned.