

# the pits

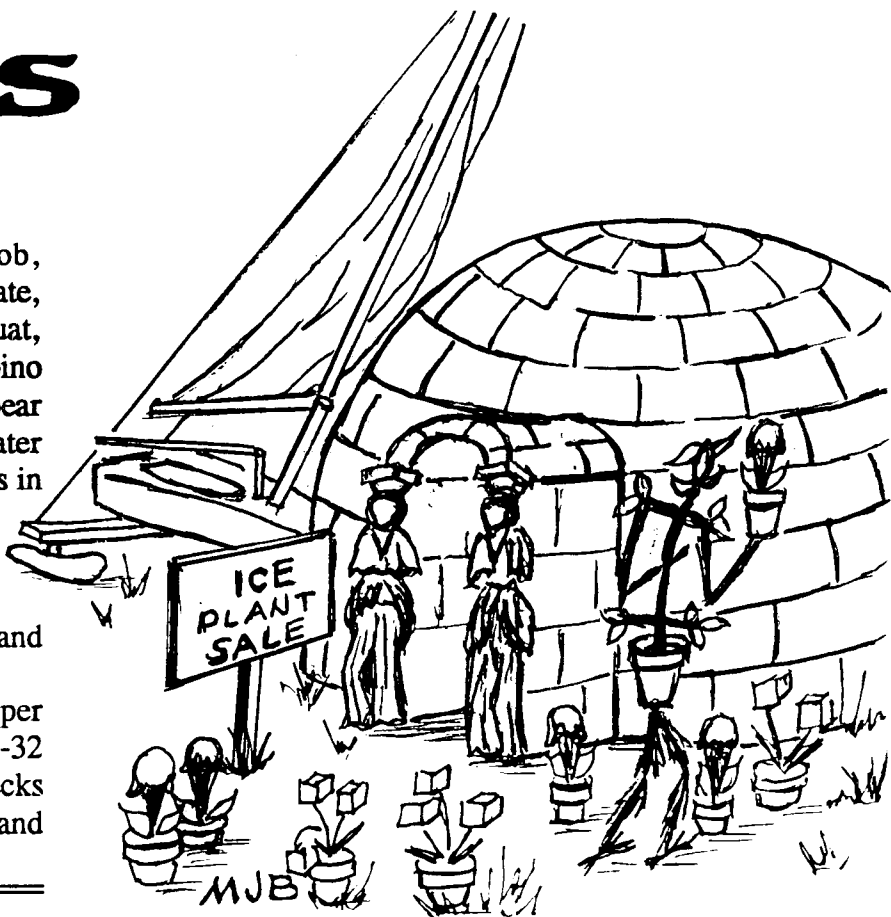
## WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Carob, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Bitter melon, Date, Feijoa, Guava, Horned Melon, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Malanga, Mango, Ñame, Pepino melon, Papaya, Passion fruit, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Tamarillo, Taro, and Water Chestnuts. Keep an eye out for Spanish limes in Latin markets.

## SEEDS

This month Bob is offering tamarind and gardenia seeds.

If you are interested send, \$1.00 per packet and an SASE to: Bob Jurgens, 116-32 227th St., Cambria Heights, NY 11411. Checks should be made payable to the Rare Pit and Plant Council.



As we write this newsletter, the Northeast is its 10th day over 90°. In response to our local weather conditions, Kay Buttenheim, sent in the following:

## TROPICAL REFLECTIONS, AT ONE HUNDRED AND TEN IN THE SHADE

How beautiful it is to sweat!  
How lovely to be warm and wet,  
Diffusing through the dewy skin  
The poisons richly stored within.  
The English do no sweat enough,  
Their home is cold, their hide is tough.  
Nor is it hard to understand  
Why acidosis rules their land;  
Why they devise with bat and ball  
Barbaric games, to sweat at all.

Oh! I would dwell in some fair clime  
Where one is sweating all the time;  
And not through chasing any ball,  
But simply sitting in the hall.  
Where even putting on one's shoes  
Provokes a beneficial ooze.  
How beautiful it is to sweat!  
How lovely to be warm and wet!

*Charles Ranson  
May 1931, India*

### **ANNUAL COCKTAIL AND PLANT SALE PARTY**

September 8, 1993, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

251 West 11th Street

New York, NY 10014



Everyone who receives this letter is invited to come. We are just two blocks from the 7th Ave. IRT. Get off the train at 14th St. Use the 12th St. exit, walk south on 7th Ave, hang a left at W. 11th and walk to the stop light.



## **MANGO**

*Magnifera indica*

We get almost as many requests for information about mangos as we do avocados. We are continually xeroxing the following article from our July 91 issue. Summer is the height of the season, and if you've never grown a mango before, *NOW'S THE TIME!* They're terrific!

Mangos are beautiful stately evergreen trees. The lustrous, dark leaves are lanceolate, 5-16 inches long. The new growth is a lovely shade of copper, turning to peach, pale green and maturing to dark green. The tiny pinkish-white flowers are borne on large panicles, that can contain as many as 4,000 flowers. These are quite fragrant and bloom in mid-spring. The fruit sizes vary according to the species, from 5 ounces to 5 pounds (the average commercial size being about 2 pounds). The color is greenish, yellow to red. A large single seed is enclosed in a wooly husk.

Mangos have been called "Tropical Gold" and are as important to the diets of tropical people, as is the apple to those in the temperate zones. They have been cultivated in India a scant 4,000 years, and were eventually introduced around the world during the 16th century. The first recorded mango tree appeared in Florida in 1833. There would be no Major Grey's Chutney without the mango and no Mango Chicken.

Mangos are divided into two main groups: The Indian and the Indochinese. The Indian varieties are highly colored and the seed is monoembryonic (one plant per seed). Most of the commercial varieties fall into this category. The Indochinese are not usually available. The seeds from these mangos are polyembryonic (multiple trunks from one seed). They are smaller and have a slight odor of turpentine to the flesh. If you get several trunks sprouting from one seed, you probably have an Indochinese type. Many people ask, how many trunks should you allow to grow. Just one, choose the strongest and cut off the other weaker stems.

### **Growing the Mango from Seed**

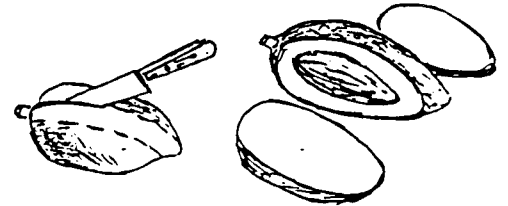
Before you can germinate the seed, you must get it out of the hairy husk. To do this; scrape the excess flesh from the husk with a serrated (grapefruit) knife. Let the husk dry out overnight. The next day, gently twist the husk on a hard surface until it begins to split. Ever so gently, pry the husk apart and *Voila!* a beautiful dark brown, kidney-shaped seed. Put the seed in a sphagnum bag and wait. Check the bag every other day to make sure it isn't too wet. Most seeds germinate in a week or two.

Mangos are gorgeous from the day they emerge from the pit. The trunk and the leaves are a lovely shade of red. Pot the little plant up in a sterile potting soil in a 4 inch pot. Keep it evenly moist, but not soggy and place in bright light. In a few months, the little plant will send up another cluster of leaves. Do not pinch the trunk to try and force the plant to branch. It will branch in its own good time. As the plant grows, replot at least once a year to the next larger sized pot. Try to put it outdoors for the summer.

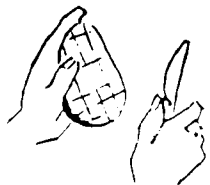
Alas, you probably will not get flowers or fruit from seed-grown plants. Store bought mangos are hybrids. When you plant the seed, your seedling will not be the same as the mother plant. Hybrids must be reproduced vegetatively.

### How to Eat a Mango

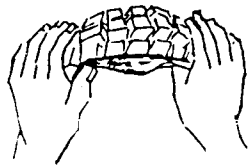
1. Place Mango lengthwise on a cutting board. Cut through on both sides.
2. Hold one side of Mango, skin side down, and score fruit down to the skin.
3. Holding scored portion, turn Mango skin inside out.
4. Remove cubes from skin with a knife or teeth (over a large bowl or sink.)
5. Remove rest of fruit from seed portion as best you can.



1.



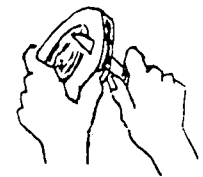
2.



3.



4.



5.

Or as they do in Mexico and Central America: Peel and cut it from the stem end. Put it on a stick like a popsicle. You may want to put a napkin around the stick.

*There was a young lass from Durango,  
Who slipped to her \*\*\*\* on a mango.  
The stain on her \*\*\*,  
Disfigured the lass,  
And ruined her chance for a Tango.*

### COLD & HOT RECIPES FOR THE MANGO SEASON

"My favorite use of the mango is in a yogurt sherbet. I slice a large mango, after peeling, into a blender, add a 1/3 cup of sugar, a kilo of natural yogurt and either the juice of a lime or a good dash of rum and puree. This is poured into the ice cream freezer (I use a Donvier) and voila! If you want to dress it up a little, melt some chocolate chips in the microwave, mix with some cream and dribble over the dish."

*James W. Grant  
Jalisco, Mexico*

## MANGO-MANGO CHUTNEY

7 cups of sugar	1 Tbls salt
2 1/3 cup cider vinegar	4 red chili peppers
12 cups sliced mangoes	2 Tbls lemon juice
2 large onions, peeled & diced	Nutmeg to taste
1 lbs. seedless raisins	1 pkg sliced almonds
2 cloves of garlic put through a press	1/2 cup crystallized ginger

Simmer sugar that has been mixed with the vinegar for 5 minutes. If you desire a thicker consistency add a bit more sugar and cook longer. Add sliced mangoes, onion, raisins, garlic, salt. Stir. Add chili peppers - a few at a time - lemon juice, nutmeg, sliced almonds and crystallized ginger. Cook until soft - about 45 minutes. Pour into sterilized jars and seal immediately. This chutney is sweet and tangy and ever so good - chutney lovers will agree!

Tizzy Lizzy

## NOT REALLY TALKING DIRTY

The English language is full of words that sound - well, questionable. However sure you may be that "fuggerite" is a green mineral or that "menstruum" is a chemical solvent, these are still awkward words to use in polite company. Professional and technical vocabularies are loaded with terms like the "Dick test" (for scarlet fever) "symbolic debuggers" (used by computer programmers) and "Wad impregnators" (used in making shotgun shells.)

Even in our own polite and proper field of (dare I say it?) Horticulture, there are plenty of names to bring a blush to any well brought-up cheek:

Ass Parsley	fools parsley, a poisonous European weed
Bedding Pansy	a European violet also called tufted pansy
Black Titi	a southern US tree, also called buckwheat tree
Blue Ball	a European herb also called blue scabius
Blue Dicks	North American wild hyacinths
Bubby Bush	the Carolina allspice
Clitoria	a genus of herbs and woody vines
Cushcush Yam	herbaceous twining vine with edible tubers
Dildo	a West Indian spiny cactus
Female Fluellen	germander speedwell, a European herb
Indian Poke	the hellebore (herb) <i>Viratrum viride</i>
Lillypilly	an Australian hardwood tree
Mossy Vaginula	part of the moss's archigonium
Naked Lady	meadow saffron
Prickmadam	any of the stonecrops (herbs)
Quamoclit	a genus of twining vines
Stiff Bushpoppy	an evergreen shrub with yellow flowers
Wankapin	an American lotus with edible nutlike seeds

These terms and many more beside are entertainingly listed and defined in "Did I say something wrong?" by David Grambs, Plume Books, New York, 1993, \$9.00. Excellent bathroom reading!

### Acrostic Solution

*To eat a plum  
Is not so dumb.  
It is legit  
To plant the pit.*

Ogden Tanner, *Garden Rooms*. "What the yacht is to the ocean, the greenhouse is to the garden and the world of plants, yet one doesn't have to be a millionaire or even a real gardener to enjoy one of these lovely, sun-filled spaces."

## PITS STOPS - THAILAND AND KOREA

Steve Facciola, the author of Cornucopia, a Source Book of Edible Plants has been in town this summer. He always has a list of new and interesting ethnic shops and restaurants to visit. We made two trips this summer, one to a Thai bookstore and another to a Korean grocery store. We found one commonly grown house plant that has culinary properties and some pits we'd never seen before.

Our first stop was to the Thailand Friendship (CRP. Bangkok Book Market) at 106 Park Street, New York City. If you plan to go there, call ahead as they are not actually on Park Street, but an alley that is between Park and Mott. (212) 349-1979. This shop is about the size of 6 phone booths. The walls are lined with books and there is one tiny bookcase with a small selection of fresh and dried herbs and vegetables. On the cashier counter there was a small citrus tree, struggling in the dark of the shop. (It now lives in a sunny home on the Massachusetts coast.) We found two really unusual and very ornamental pits; *Alpinia galanga* (Greater galangal) and *Citrus hystrix* (Kaffir lime).

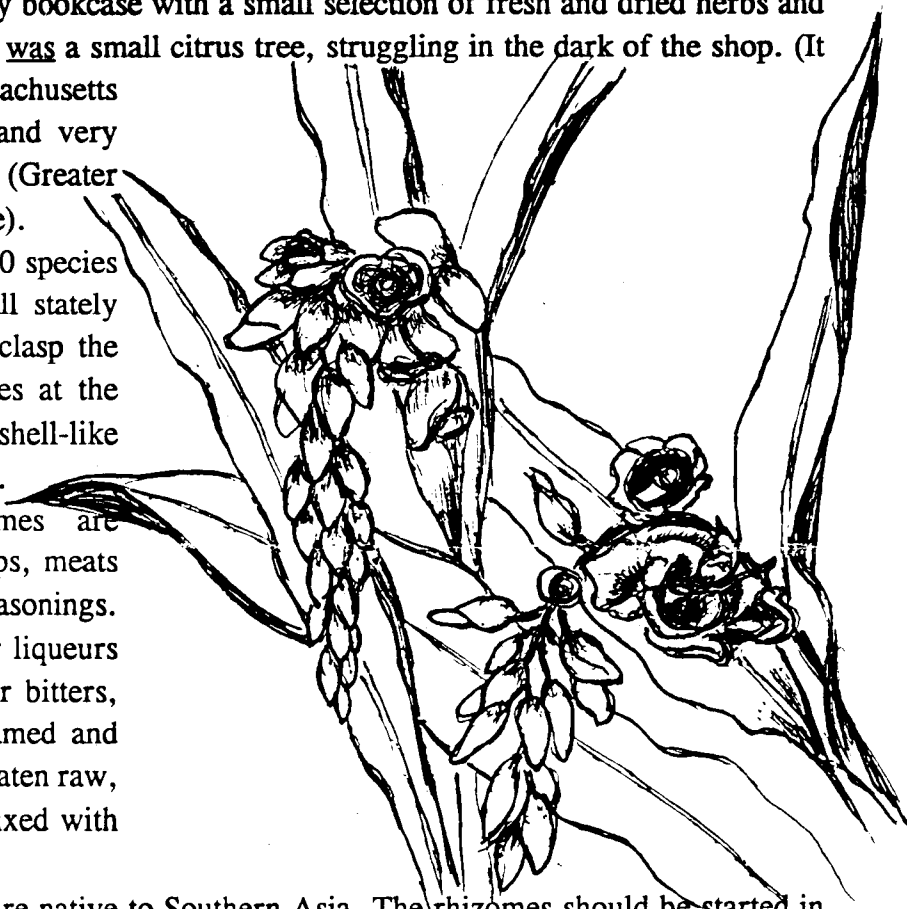
*Alpinia galanga* is one of the 250 species of the shell flower gingers. All are tall stately plants with long lanceolate leaves that clasp the stem. The flowers are borne in panicles at the ends of the stems. The delicate, sea shell-like flowers are used to make leis in Hawaii.

"The slightly pungent rhizomes are employed as a flavoring in curries, soups, meats and fish, or are mixed with other seasonings. Source of an essential oil used to flavor liqueurs such as Chartreuse, angostura and other bitters, and soft drinks. Young shoots are steamed and eaten. The flowers and flower-buds are eaten raw, steamed, pickled, added to soups, or mixed with chili paste. Red fruits are edible."<sup>1</sup>

Alpinias are tropical plants that are native to Southern Asia. The rhizomes should be started in a sphagnum bag with bottom heat. When they have sprouted, pot them up in a sterile potting medium. The rhizome should be planted horizontally, just below the surface of the soil. These are tall plants and it may be necessary to stake them as they grow. They need high humidity, lots of water and full sun if they are to bloom. Shell flower is one of the most beautiful and delicate flowers found in nature. What a joy if we could grow them in our homes.

*Citrus hystrix* is a most unusual member of the lemon family. Steve picked up a package of dried leathery leaves and asked me if I could identify them. Of course I could not. I took a sniff and the odor was rather sweet and mustily pungent. They were the leaves of *Citrus hystrix*.

"The fresh or dried leaves impart a pleasant citrus flavor when added to soups and curries. In



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<sup>1</sup>. Cornucopia, a Source Book of Edible Plants, Stephen Facciola, Kampong Publications, Vista 1990

Indonesia, fresh leaves are often pounded into a jelly and mixed with hot chili pastes. They also flavor an Indonesian soy sauce known as *kecap*. The rind is candied, or dried and used in curry pastes. The lemon-scented fruits are eaten with fish or made into drinks."<sup>2</sup>

We added a couple of leaves to a small pot of tomato sauce; the leaves did not impart a citrusy flavor, instead they added a rather sweet and musty quality.

We bought the little tree that was sitting on the counter, brought it home and looked it up in the Royal Hort. According to them, it is an ornamental, 20 foot tree that is grown primarily for its aromatic foliage. It does, however, have fragrant flowers and edible fruits. *Citrus hystrix* is a native of the Philippines and probably less cold tolerant than other species.

Our second stop, some two weeks later was to an area of New York City known as "Little Korea". It is on 32nd Street, between Sixth and Fifth Avenues. The street is lined with Korean restaurants, barbers, beauty shops, newsstands and grocery stores. Most of the signs are in Korean and the whole area teems with vitality. The name of the particular grocery store we went into will remain a mystery; the lettering was in Oriental characters.

Steve picked up a package of dried 2 inch seed pods of something he insisted I would know. Of course I didn't. He persisted, everybody grows this plant. They were gardenia pods and I corrected him....Everybody KILLS this plant. The day my buggy gardenia (#320) plant blooms will be a miracle, setting fruit is beyond the wildest imaginings.

According to Steve, the fruits are eaten or used as a yellow coloring, much as the Spanish use Anchiote seeds as a substitute for saffron. The flowers are used to scent jasmine tea, eaten raw or pickled. If I ever get a flower maybe I should pickle it to prove I did it.



<sup>2</sup>. Ibid

I took the fruits home and peeled away the tough hide. The seeds were clustered inside in a dry red, substance. I soaked the seeds to clean them and they did indeed give off an attractive orange-yellow dye. All of the seeds sank to the bottom of the bowl (which is an indication that they are viable). Since then, I have kept them in a moist paper towel, and the seeds seem to be swelling. The last step is not necessary. Once the seeds are cleaned pot them up in a flat or small pot. Cover the pot or flat with plastic wrap (to ensure humidity) and proceed as you would with other seedlings.

Gardenias are stunning plants. They have deep, glossy green leaves that densely clothe the plant. Their waxy white flowers are perhaps the most fragrant in the world! They are however, difficult plants to grow; bugs just love them. They need ample heat, moisture, and steady

feeding. Gardenias require trace elements and these must be chelated. Miracle Grow and MirAcid fertilizers have these trace elements. AND never, ever let them dry out!

Gardenias are native to China. Jim Fryer, on a recent trip, saw them growing on the edges of streams and in some cases in the water. They are relatively hardy and can be grown as far north as South Carolina.

Perhaps if we grow gardenias from seed, in our own native environment, they will not be so buggy or fussy.

In all of our wanderings in the Oriental sections, we found many different yams. They are all members of the *Dioscoreaceae* and deserve a newsletter of their own. Perhaps next time.

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## ESPRESSO BISCOTTI

¾ cup slivered almonds	2 cups + 2 tbs unbleached all purpose flour
3 tablespoons coffee beans	1½ teaspoons baking powder
2 tbs Kahlua or double strength coffee	¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup of butter	¼ teaspoon vanilla
1 cup of sugar	⅓ cup chocolate bits
2 eggs	¼ teaspoon almond extract

Place nuts in a shallow pan and bake in a preheated 350° oven for 7-8 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool. Grind coffee beans into a fine powder. Place in a small bowl, add Kahlua or coffee and heat in a preheated 325 degree oven for 5-7 minutes to steep. Set aside. In a mixing bowl cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, ground coffee, liqueur, vanilla and almond extract. In a bowl combine the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to the creamed mixture, mixing until blended. Fold in nuts and chocolate bits. Divide dough in half. On a greased and floured baking sheet pat out into two logs about ½ inch high, 1½ inches wide and 14 inches long, spacing them at least 2 inches apart. Bake in the middle of a preheated 325 degree oven for 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer from the baking sheet to a rack. Let cool for 5 minutes. Place on a cutting board. With a serrated knife slice diagonally at a 45 degree angle about ½ inch thick. Place the slices upright on a baking sheet ½ inch apart and return to the oven for 10 minutes longer to dry slightly. Let cool on a rack. Store in a tightly covered container. Makes about 3½ to 4 dozen

*Stan Schwartz*

## **CONTEST! CONTEST! CONTEST! CONTEST!**

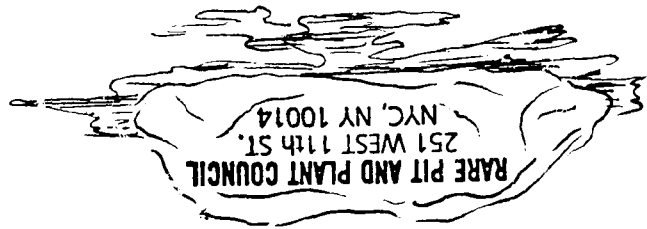
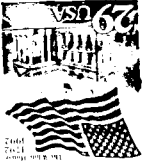
Dr. John is suffering from an attack of "Doggerel" and is offering remarkable prizes of an unknown nature for interesting contributions to the field of Pit Poetry. Send work to:

Dr. John Hart  
c/o Rare Pit and Plant Council  
251 W. 11th Street  
New York, NY 10014.

*Durian, that fruit of fable  
Its smell alone can clear the table.  
And if you doubt and are not sure,  
Perhaps the smell is just manure.*

*It is an act of mad bravado  
To try and prune the avocado  
There are much less demanding pits  
Upon whose leaves to test your wits  
If you're a bonsai aficionado.*

Christopher Cardus  
1424 East 17th Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11230



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