

WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Antemoya, Carambola, Cherimoya, Cippolini, Bitter melon, Black sapote, Date, Guava, Horned melon, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Loquat, Mango, Olive, Papaya, Persimmon, Pomegranate. Passion fruit, Prickly pear, Tamarillo, White sapote.

SEEDS OF THE MONTH

This month Bob Jurgens is offering tamarind seeds. These are freshly cleaned and stored. No work for you!

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



**In this issue:
Tamarinds, Gift Ideas
and Subscriptions, Dates
and What to do in Florida**

FOR THE GARDENER WHO HAS EVERYTHING

There is still time to send a year's subscription of the Pits or a copy of Beyond the Avocado or The Joy of Pitting. Call (212) 255-9256 or write the Rare Pit & Plant Council, 251 West 11th St, New York, NY 10014 and we will send one of our "tasteful" cards out post haste to your friends, informing them of your generosity.

In Memoriam

This has been a sad fall; three of our active members have passed away. Katherine Bachert, one of our founding members, Dave Clarkson and Elliott Zak, two of our most thoughtful and enthusiastic young members. We shall always miss them.

This month's seed offering is Tamarind.

Few 'Pits' can equal it for ease of culture and beauty. If you live near a Middle Eastern or Indian market you can sometimes purchase the pods. They, also, sell plastic wrap packages of the pulp which includes the seeds as well. It is a bit of a mess to separate them from the pulp, but these seeds will germinate as readily as those in the pod.

Tamarind is a slow growing, ornamental and useful evergreen tree. In nature this tree can reach a height of 80' and live for two hundred years. However, when grown in a pot, they can be pruned to any size and shape that accommodates your growing conditions. The delicate, mimosa-like foliage is pinnate (3-6 inches long) and composed of 20+, 1/4 inch leaflets. These close up at night.

The yellow, pea-like flowers are borne in small racemes. These are followed by large, pods that are iridescent green maturing to cinnamon brown. When the pods are ripe the shell becomes very brittle. Inside the pod, there is a sticky, golden brown flesh. It is quite tart but has a pleasant tang. Quarter inch, round hard seeds are imbedded in the flesh. If cleaned and stored, these will keep their viability for months. Tamarinds grown under ideal conditions, will flower and fruit in four years. We have yet to flower one in a pot.

Tamarind has been cultivated for at least 2,500 years. Tamarind now grows throughout the tropical world, from the Pacific to the West Indies,

from India to Italy and all of tropical America. Tamarind has many uses. The flesh of the ripened fruit can be eaten out-of-hand, or steeped to make a delicious tea. It is one of the essential ingredients in Curries and thought, perhaps, to be one of the ingredients in the secret Worcestershire sauce made by Lee and Perrins.

The seeds can be ground and used as a coffee substitute or additive. In 1942 two Indian Scientists, T.P. Ghose and S. Krishna, discovered that the cured seed contained 46-48% of a gel-forming substance. F.R. Savur of the Pectin Manufacturing Company, Bombay, patented a process for the production of a purified product, called "jellose", "polyose", or "pectin", which has been found superior to fruit pectin in the manufacture of jellies, jams, and marmalades.

The leaves are used as fodder for cattle and silkworms and our cats enjoy an occasional nosh. The boiled leaves and flowers are used to

make poultices. The core wood is hard, dense, and used in fine carpentry. It is sometimes sold as Madeira Mahogany. The twigs are used as "chew sticks". The bark contains 7% tannin and is used in tanning hides. The Tamarind tree is also host to the Lac insect, *Kerria lacca*, which deposits resin on the twigs. This can be harvested and used to make lacquers and varnish.

There are many superstitions surrounding the Tamarind tree. "Few plants will survive beneath a tamarind tree and there is a superstition that it is harmful to sleep or tie a horse beneath one,



Tamarind

Tamarindus indica



probably because of the corrosive effect that the fallen leaves have on fabrics in damp weather. Some African tribes venerate the tamarind tree as sacred. Hindus may marry a tamarind tree to a mango tree before eating the fruits of the latter."

fore eating the fruits of the latter."

HOW TO GROW

1. Soak the hard brown seeds in water until they begin to swell and the skin begins to shrivel. (About 2-6 hours) If left too long in the water, the seeds will rot.
2. Sow them up in any kind of a container filled with a moist sterile potting medium. Sold in supermarkets, nurseries and 5 & 10s.
3. The seeds will germinate within a week. The young seedlings are adorable! A solid green disk (cotyledon) emerges atop a stout 2-4" green stem.

Soon a little halo or wreath of minute leaves forms around the disk. They look like strange little green men from outer space. The seedlings stay like this for weeks.

4. When the disk falls off, the first fernlike true leaves appear. At this time, move them to individual 2-3 inch pots.
5. The little plants should have some protection from full sun and be kept evenly moist.



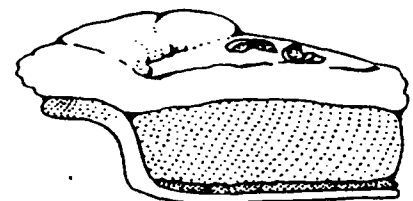
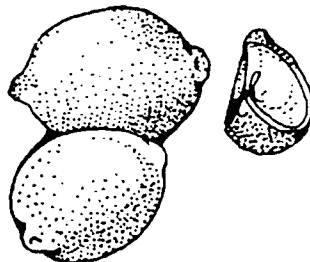
6. The wood of the Tamarind is very supple and can be trained to a lovely bonsai, or even a wreath as our friend Jim Fryer did.

THESE ARE GORGEOUS PLANTS AND BELONG IN EVERY PIT COLLECTION!

We always feel guilty when we rerun an article, but this is such a great plant we felt it was worth repeating.

HOW TO MAKE A REAL KEY LIME PIE

- 1/2 cup key lime juice *
- 1 tbl grated lime rind
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 14 oz can sweetened condensed milk
- 4 egg whites & 1/4 cup of sugar for meringue topping.



Prepare a pie crust from scratch, the freezer or whatever your preference and bake according to directions.

Beat the egg yolks with the lime juice until creamy. Add the grated lime rind and a drop of green coloring, if desired. Add the condensed milk and beat until the mixture forms a thick custard. This is the result of the action between the milk and the citric acid and happens almost instantly. It's great fun. Pour the custard into the pie crust.

Beat the egg whites, slowly adding about 1/4 cup of sugar, until they form moist stiff peaks. Place spoonfuls of the meringue mix on top of the pie.

Bake 15 minutes or until the meringue topping is a nice even golden color.

** The Key Lime juice sold at William Sonoma is a fine substitute for the real thing off season.*

A gift subscription to a newsletter or a magazine is one of the most thoughtful and year-round gifts you can give a friend. Here are a few of our favorites.

Living Off the Land

PO Box 2131
Melbourne, FL
32902-2131
\$14.00 US \$15.00 Overseas

Living off the Land is a bi-monthly newsletter. We have always considered it our sister publication (Sorry, folks it is not our person publication). It is edited and I suspect largely written by Marian Van Atta. Marian's style is warm, informal and informative. The newsletter is geared to the Florida grower who has some outdoor space. There is, however, a wealth of pertinent information about tropical fruits for those of us who struggle to grow the same plants indoors in the north.

Each issue has at least one in-depth article on a tropical fruit, several recipes, a seed exchange and frequently book reviews. I particularly enjoy Marian's articles on edible native plants. The layout is similar to ours - 6-8 black and white pages, home drawn illustrations, and scanned photos. Our format is so similar, Marian and I have toyed with switching places just for a change and see if anybody noticed.

Living Off the Land is a must for rare fruit growers in the southern tier of the country and nicely rounds out the library of northern pot-bound tropical fruit growers. *DSP*



Avant Gardener

published by Horticultural Data Processors
Box 489, New York, NY 10028
8 pages, 8-1/2" x 11" monthly
\$18 US, \$20 foreign (special \$12 offer for 1st time subscribers)

This is a sort of Reader's Digest for serious gardeners. Edited by Thomas Powell, past director of the Hort, and his wife Betty, Avant Gardener contains news and information excerpted from hundreds of specialized publications, backed up by comprehensive lists of suppliers and brief reviews of new products, books and services.

Most issues cover a range of subjects, but sometimes a whole issue will be dedicated to a subject like groundcover plants, and covers it very thoroughly.

Avant Gardener is not light reading - it is very solid, informative meat. It's the sort of newsletter that you'll refer back to again and again for information and help when some crisis or question occurs, so it's a good thing that an annual index is available.

It's hard to imagine any friend with an even slightly green thumb who wouldn't have a lot to

learn from and be delighted to receive a gift subscription - and that \$12 introductory offer is hard to beat.

Chris Carrdus

Pacific Horticulture

PO Box 22609
San Francisco, CA 94122
Approx. 78, (5 1/2 by 8") pages
Quarterly \$18.00 US \$20.00 Overseas

Of all the gardening magazines and newsletters I subscribe to (and there are many) only Pacific Horticulture is read from cover to cover the day it arrives. It is a beautiful, glossy magazine with many mouth-watering color photo-

graphs. The articles are geared to the western outdoor gardener, but we always find something of interest. The magazine in my hand has the following articles; How to Build Alpine Trough Gardens, Violets - Wild and Tame, Feathers and Fothergillas, 4 book reviews and a host of ads for nurseries and books.

The ads alone are worth the price. We buy most of our tender houseplants from nurseries on the coast where they have been raised out-doors. The plants are twice the size and half the cost of those available from greenhouse nurseries.

This is a gorgeous magazine for all gardeners, the articles are short, well written and beautifully photographed. *DSP*

Tropical Fruit News

Newsletter of: Rare Fruit Council International

P.O. Box 561914 M, Miami, FL 33256

Approx. 20 pages, 8-1/2 x 11 monthly

\$35 US & foreign surface mail, \$45 airmail

(includes RFCI membership)

If you have plans - or even daydreams - about retiring to the sunbelt, Tropical Fruit News is a wonderful Wish Book. This is about Pit-growing for people who don't have to bother with lights or sphagnum bags; they just poke the pit in a hole in the ground and wait. This newsletter is for people who grow their own pineapples, litchis and citrus the way that people further north grow apples and pears.

The articles are strong on how to grow full size, fruit bearing trees outdoors, including advice on how to cope with insect pests and diseases. A lot of information is relevant to our indoor type of growing, but you have to read between the lines. As well as the how-to aspect, TFN is full of people news about Rare Fruit Council members who sound a very interesting and knowledgeable bunch. The ads are fascinating - nurseries offering 15 varieties of mango and a dozen types of orange. Local restaurants are offering to buy home-grown exotic fruits and "oddities" - whatever they are. One ad that I seriously thought of answering was seeking a "Plant Sitter" to mind a

small nursery in a Dutch Caribbean island for 6 weeks; 2 hours work per day, free housing, transportation & utilities.

The RFCI seed inventory, \$3 per packet, features 30 strange-sounding varieties, from "Japanese raisin tree" to "Blackberry jam plant," as well as more familiar guavas and cherimoyas.

If you have ever dreamed of picking fresh tropical fruit right off the tree for your breakfast, this magazine will bring a far-off look to your eyes. *CPC*

POMONA

North American Fruit Explorers

Rt 1, Box 94

Chapin, IL 62628

\$8.00

Pomona is a quarterly publication put out by the North American Fruit Explorers'. This unique society is a network of individuals throughout the US, Canada and the rest of the world who are devoted to developing, discovering, cultivating, improving, evaluating and appreciating superior varieties of each fruit and nut species.

Input from members and testers over the 15 years of their publication has provided a wealth of information on a wide range of fruit and nuts species. They also have a borrowing library that has 20 pages of listings. An annual meeting is held each summer at a facility involved in horticultural research. In some areas regional groups hold scionwood exchanges, grafting workshops, and fruit tasting.

I liked the cover that has a drawing of two little children with crayons drawing a fruit tree and a nearby dish of a variety of fruits. The 72 page Journal was packed with information from members throughout the country with their current experiences and recommendations. This issue included such topics as, 'A Search for the Lost Persimmon', 'Bagging Apples on the Tree', etc. This is a very worthwhile organization for anyone growing single or varied fruits and nuts. If you are interested, checks should be made to NAFEX and mailed to the above address. *Jim Fryer*

The Award for Gift of The Year is ...

(Pass me the envelope, please)

About this time of year, we search the nurseries and the catalogs for an offbeat, financially feasible "gift of the year." Of late, we have been coming up empty-handed, but not this year. We have found the penultimate gift for the gardener who has everything (including a good sense of whimsy), to wit:

POOH PETS

Sister Barbara gave me a Sleeping Scat™ as a hostess gift this summer. My "scat" is an 8" x 2" sculpture of a sleeping cat made from 100% dehydrated cow manure. It is "dung" brown, odorless and totally charming. The molds for the pets are all handmade by the Amish craftsmen in Pennsylvania and are remarkably lifelike.

Pooh Pets are described as functional garden ornaments. They are slow-releasing fertilizers (2-1-2) that are released into the soil as you water your pots or garden. The average life expectancy is about 2-5 years outdoors, and much longer indoors. They are biodegradable and so safe an

infant could teethe on them. There is a wide variety of pets to choose from: Turdles™, Stool Pigeons™, Stool Toads™, Sluggo Snail™, etc. There are mini Pooh Pets that are about 2" and are just the right size for a houseplant and a Christmas stocking. The cost for the larger pets is \$10.95 and \$1.50 for the smaller ones.

Pooh Pets can be found in many garden centers that sell



both gifts and plants. If you cannot find them in your area, call Tewksbury Gardens at (908) 236-0885 in New Jersey and ask to speak to John Rothman - or write to Tewksbury Gardens, 77 Bissell Road, Lebanon, NJ 08833. They will direct you to the nearest supplier and, if there is none, they will fill an order for you.

Sources in New York City are the Bronx Botanical Gardens in the Bronx, and the Shop in the Garden, 590 Madison Avenue.

Lawrence Saphier sent us the following information on dates to share with our readers:

Commercially prepared "dates are treated with SO₂ (Sulfur Dioxide) gas to help preserve them for packaging. This will very often sterilize the pit making it impossible to germinate. A source of fresh, growable pits are health food stores selling organically grown dates. I have had 90+ % success rate with pits from these dates. (They also taste better).

To germinate the pits I do the following. Place the washed pits in a Zip-Lock type, heavy duty freezer bag along with a folded, dampened piece of cheesecloth or paper towel. Set the bag aside in a warm, indirectly lighted place and leave it be. Inside of two weeks, small white sprouts will appear on the pits. When they reach 1/4 to 3/8" in length move the seeds to the pot which will be their permanent home. Plant no more than 1/2" deep with the sprout down, as this is the root. There will likely be some mold form inside the plastic bag during this

process, but this is in no way detrimental to the germination process. If the mold is bothersome, open the bag and carefully rinse off the pit and replace the damp cloth or paper.

I have followed this technique for years and have started many plants. My first was in Michigan in 1975. This particular date traveled to Houston, TX with me in 1979 and continued to thrive in larger and larger pots till it was seven feet tall.

When I moved from Houston in 1992, the palm was too big to move in my auto, so I gave it to a neighbor who transplanted it into the ground and the palm is still thriving. I have used the same technique here in Florida and have three 14" high palms ready to transplant onto my lot in a few weeks. Date palms thrive here and grow to huge proportions."

(Lawrence, we've been told dates will grow in FL, but will not fruit. True?)

MAIL BAG

After Disney World, What Next?

If you are heading to Florida and the sun this winter, there's no shortage of things to do. But after you've "done" Epcot and cheered Shamu, it would be a pity not to check out some of Florida's many exceptional gardens and nurseries. They're all over the state - see any good guide book for details of what's available where you'll be staying

This page is in no way a guide to Florida horticulture - it's drawn on a trip I made to Miami and the Keys earlier this year. Our Editor waved goodbye, saying "Try and bring me back a Limeberry plant - and be sure to see the Spice Park!"

After a few days of soaking up sun and margaritas, I started serious Limeberry-hunting. Every roadside nursery had heard of it but said "Why don't you try up around Homestead?" And that is how I came upon a very strange place indeed.

From Homestead at the edge of the Everglades up to the western suburbs of Miami is a completely flat plain that is checkerboarded with farms and nurseries - dozens and dozens of nurseries. Some specialized in fruit trees, others in orchids or bromeliads or palms. A few said Wholesale Only but most welcome visitors. Even though this area is miles from the city it is part of Miami's street grid, so a farm may be at SW 177 Ave and SW 344 St. On that corner, I found a nursery with every kind of shrub sitting in a pot out in a couple of open acres and photosynthesizing away happily. At the back of the lot was a greenhouse where small cuttings were rooting. Landscapers' trucks drove up in a stream, loaded a dozen of this, two dozen of that, and sped away.

In the middle of the lot was an open grass-roofed shelter inhabited by a family of cats and a villainous-looking but very helpful staff. "Limeberries? Sure, hey Luis, take this gemmun to Row 17 near the back!" I had been hoping for cute little plants in 4"

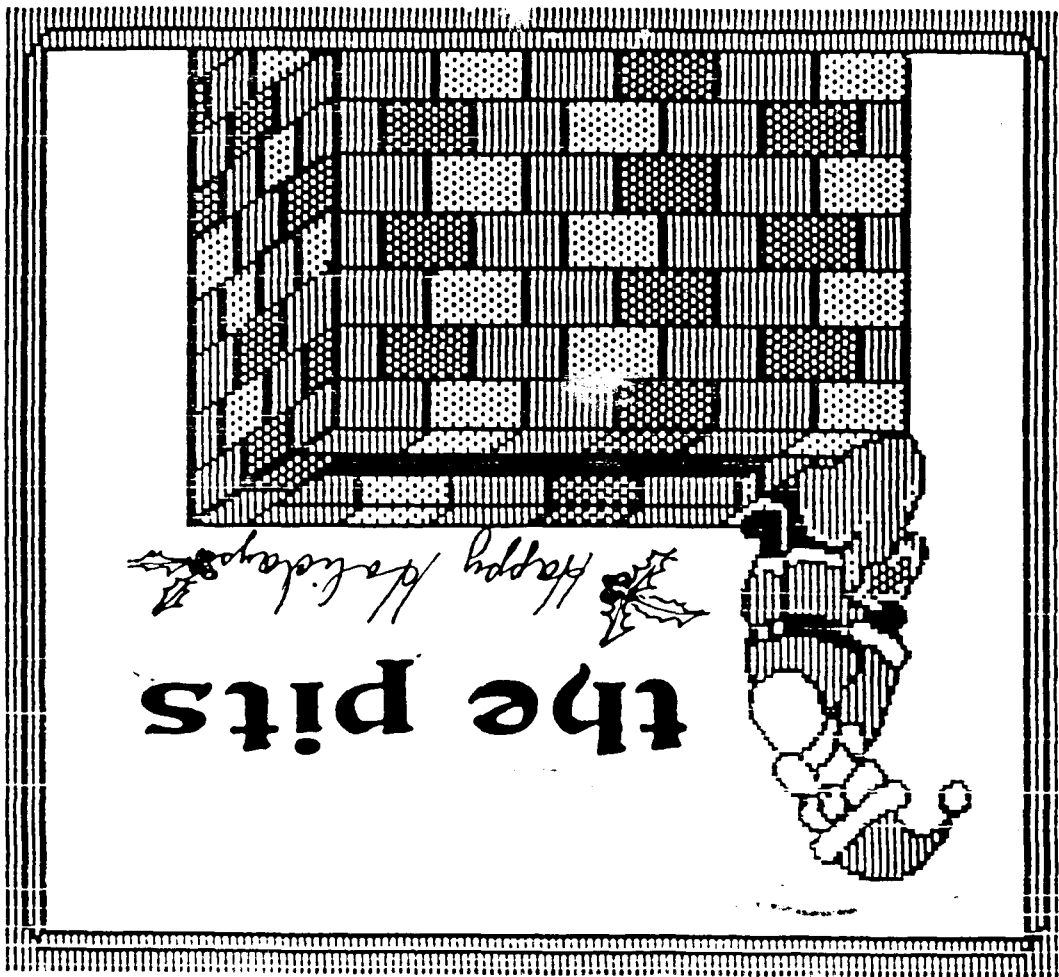
or maybe 6" pots. These limeberries were sturdy adolescents in heavy 2 gallon containers. No boxes were available; they did their best with brown paper and tape which collapsed embarrassingly in Miami airport, but that's another story. The lesson is to demand a box, or bring your own.

The Fruit and Spice Park, a few miles north, is a Pit's dream - 20 acres of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices, 500 varieties in all, to walk around, sniff, touch and photograph. You may not pick the fruit but anything that has fallen to the ground may be eaten or taken for seeds. There is a small but eclectic gift shop selling books, seeds and fruit products. Admission is \$1.50/\$1.00 for kids. I was there on an off-season weekday and had the park to myself. Winter weekends, it's much busier and guided tours are available.

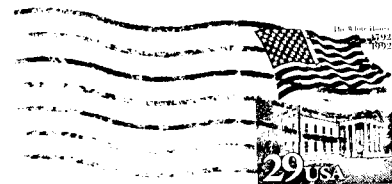


The Spice Park was so enjoyable, I left too little time to do real justice to Fairchild Tropical Gardens in South Miami. This is a much bigger and more formal park, opened in 1938 and named for the great plant explorer, Dr. David Fairchild. Its 83 acres are laid out in 3 walks; the Palmetum, the Upland and the Lowland, covering every soft of tropical plant from high desert to rain forest. \$7 in, open every day except Christmas. A guided tram tour is offered, else bring comfortable shoes for several miles of walking.

CPC



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