

the pits

NEWSLETTER

JUNE/JULY 1996
Volume 19 #4

WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Cape gooseberry, Carambola, Cherimoya, Bitter melon, Durian, Feijoa, Guava, Litchee, Loquat, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Malanga, Mango, **Mangosteen**, Monstera, Name, Papaya, Passion fruit, Pomegranate, Prickly pear (pads & fruit), Tamarillo (orange and red varieties) Taro, and Water Chestnuts, White Sapote *The fresh figs on the market at this time are not viable

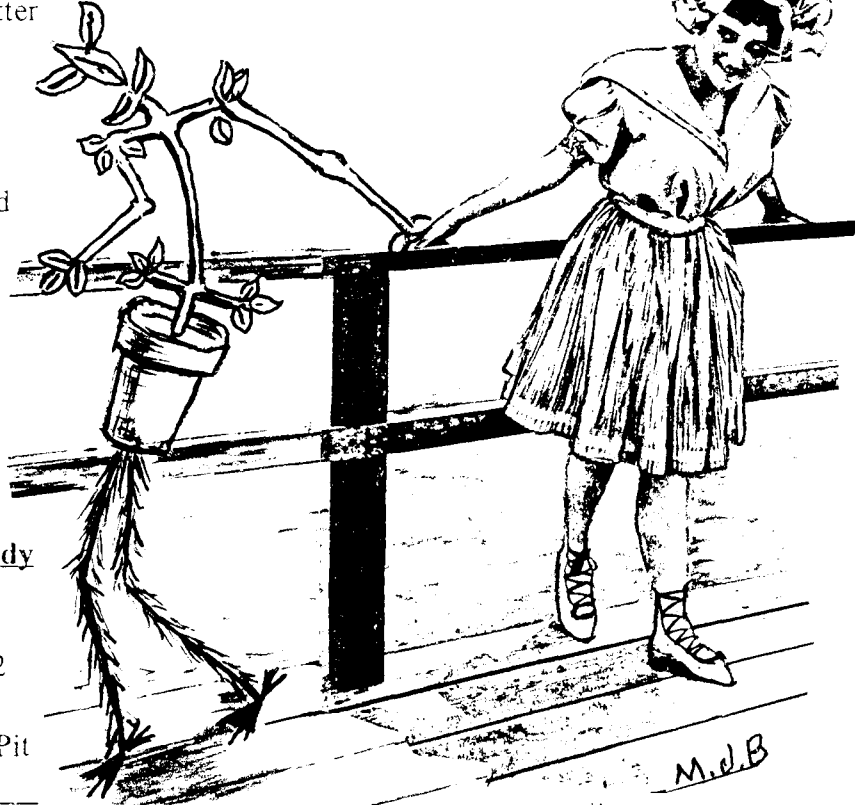
SEEDS

This month Bob is offering Bitter melon seeds harvested from his own plants and Tamarillo. Bitter melon makes a wonderful hanging baskets. Bob also requests that you send sturdy envelopes

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.

Hi Chris - Does anyone buy dunes?



Pits Annual Plant Sales & Cocktail Party

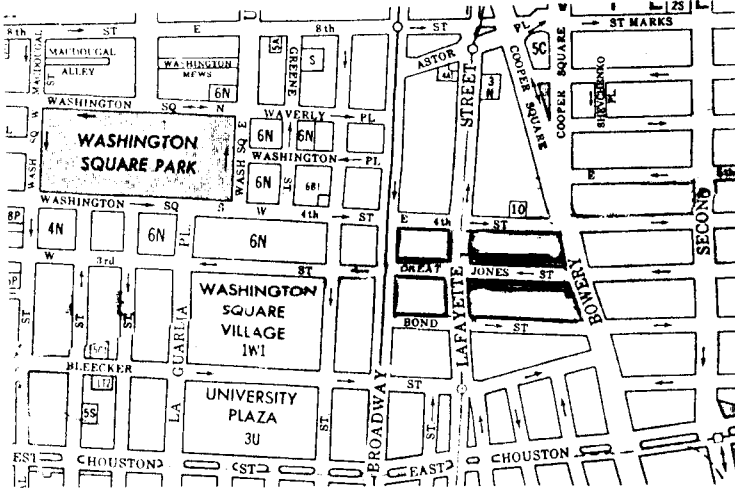
Wednesday, October 2nd - 6:30 PM
New Manhattan location

Where: Janet Sutto
43 Great Jones St.
New York City

Between Lafayette and Bowery
(3rd Ave.)

3 Blocks North of Houston
1 Block South of E. 4th St.

(There is legal parking after 6:00 PM)



The Rare Pit & Plant Council

17 Circuit Ave. Scituate, MA 02066

BITTER MELON

Momordica charantia

This month's seed offering includes two of our favorite plants, bitter melon and tamarillo.

Bitter melon: Few pits can offer us both flowers and fruit within a year. It is easy, fast, and a lovely addition to the indoor garden

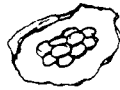
The fruit is available year round in Oriental markets. You cannot mistake this unusual looking vegetable. It is 6-8 inches long, tapered at one end, and has smooth warts in longitudinal bands. The unripened fruit is a soft gray-green color, as it ripens it turns a brilliant orange-red. The ripened fruit splits into the shape of a squash flower, revealing rows of bright red seeds.

The bright red is actually an aril that surrounds a flat 1/2 inch light brown seed. The arils are very sweet and considered a delicacy in Japan. However, the seeds are poisonous (I inadvertently swallowed and embryonic seed and was violently ill)

Bitter melon is in the cucumber family and is a fast growing vine with pale-green, deeply lobed leaves. It climbs by means of tendrils and you will have to supply a support. They can be grown hanging baskets using the hanging wires, or use them to trail around a window on a string support.

In two to three months, small yellow flowers appear. Bitter melon has both male and female flowers. The female flower can be easily recognized by the small ovary (swollen nub) behind the blossom.

Unless you are raising bees in the house it will be necessary to pollinate the flowers by hand. Take a small paintbrush and touch it to the pollen on the stamens of the male flower then brush to the center of the female flower. Within a week the female ovary will begin to swell. This is a wonderful experiment for the class room or a project at home with the kids



Bitter melon is an understatement - it tastes terrible. In Chinese cooking, the fruit is boiled, and cut into thin strips and used to garnish bland soups and meats

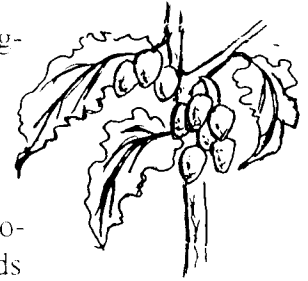


TREE TOMATO / TAMARILLO

Cyphomandra betaceum

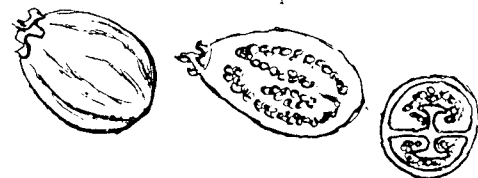
If you think your thumb is brown, give these seeds a try. Few "pit" seeds germinate as easily, and few seedlings grow as quickly

The fruits are egg-shaped 3-4 inches long and either deep red or brilliant orange. Within the fruit there are hundreds of small tomato-like seeds. After the seeds have been cleaned they can be sown immediately or dried and stored for months in an air tight jar. The seeds germinate in 2-3 weeks. When the seedlings have two pairs of true leaves, move them to a bright sunny window. NEVER let them dry out.

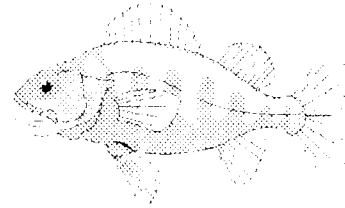


Tamarillos are members of the Solanaceae family along with peppers, potatoes, eggplants, and tomatoes. They are small (15 ft) evergreen trees with lovely 4-8 in heart shaped leaves. The new leaves are thin and rather limp, as they mature, they become leathery, glossy and deeply veined and resemble anthurium leaves.

Tamarillos rival bitter melons for taste. They are very astringent and we have never found a suitable recipe. Please send us one.



PIT STOP BOSTON



Boston is a lovely user-friendly city nestled in a swamp on the edge of the Atlantic. It is a small city - no part is more than a mile away from another. There is, however, no straight line from one place to another. Boston is built on filled land and myth has it that the streets were originally cow paths. Regardless of their origins they are all ONE WAY the WRONG WAY!

Dr. John and I set out a few weeks ago to explore Chinatown. After a few hairy U turns and curses - we landed in the heart of Chinatown

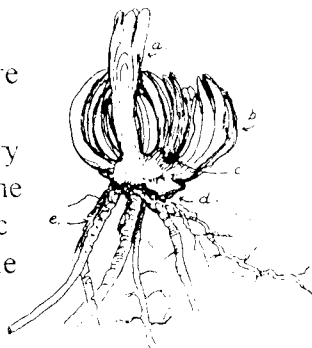
Boston's Chinatown is much smaller and more sedate than New York's. The City has been undergoing a face lift and gone are the dark and tiny shops below stairs and the noisy pushcarts that used to line the streets. They have been replaced by Supermarkets-alas, for ambience

The markets are quite wonderful and carry an enormous variety of Asian and Middle-eastern foods. We found many of our old friends, bitter melon, yard long bean, taro, malanga, lemon grass, ginger and even durian (frozen fruits). And we found some new (to us) vegetables: lilies and Turmeric. Our modus operandi is to buy one fruit or vegetable to eat and one to grow.

Lilium brownii:

We asked for water chestnuts and were told they were not in season, but we should try these as a substitute. The clerk pointed to a plastic bag that held two lily like bulbs. The bulbs were about 3 in across,

translucent white and looked exactly like the lilies we plant in the garden. Following our usual method, we ate one. It was very sweet



and juicy and I suspect it might break down when stir fried but was tasty when eaten raw

I tossed the other on top of the soil in a flat I use for cuttings. It didn't look too healthy, the center growth had been removed and I really expected nothing to grow. A few weeks later I noticed a plump green sprout with feathery emerging foliage. The leaves were very fine and somewhat needle-like. Some four weeks later four, 3" orange lilies with recurved petals opened. They were very similar in both color and form to a turk's head lily

When we first got married some 30 odd years ago, we were given a collection of all the spices necessary to use the Gourmet Cookbooks. Turmeric was included and remained sealed for 20 years until we began to make our own curries. Beyond curry, what is the allure of turmeric - it has a kind of musty dry taste - not a universal quality for all cooking.

The June issue of "Bon Appetit" has a marvelous article on turmeric written by Jeannette Ferrary. "The story of turmeric brings up a basic question about human nature: Why do we like yellow food? For thousands of years turmeric has been coveted, partly for its taste and aroma but perhaps equally for its ability to bring a golden hue to anything edible. This Midas touch has won the spice a permanent place into the world's mustards, margarine, cheeses and liqueurs, many of which rely on turmeric to give them their sunny good looks.

But nowhere is turmeric more important than it is in curry. 'For a spice blend to be called a curry powder', says Indian cookbook author Julie Sahni, 'it must contain three core spices: coriander, turmeric and pepper'. ... Even the US armed forces had a strict guideline regarding the

composition of this Asian spice mix: Federal Military Specification EE-S-63IJ stipulated that 37-39% of the curry powder used in military mess halls had to be turmeric."

Turmeric has had many uses throughout the ages. Buddhist monks used a dye made from the rhizome to color their robes. Indian brides would dye their hands, arms and feet yellow to insure fertility. Clumps of turmeric were planted in rice paddies to insure a good harvest. Oriental women used a powder made from the ground rhizome to color their cheeks a rich bronze color. Holistic doctors proscribed a potent made from the powder to cure jaundice.

Turmeric grows wild on the Malabar Coast and this is thought to be its origin. However, it is cultivated throughout much of the tropical world, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Taiwan, India and in the New World it is grown in Peru and the West Indies. India grows 94% of the world crop.

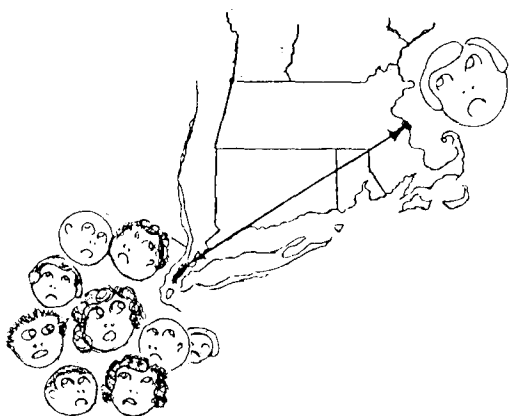
Turmeric is processed from the rhizome of *Curcuma longa*, a tropical herbaceous perennial. The leaves resemble those of a lily and the flowers are a soft pale

yellow. (It is doubtful it will bloom indoors as houseplant).

Most turmeric is sold as a powdered spice. The mature rhizomes are harvested, peeled and boiled and then put in the sun to dry for several days. After drying the rhizomes are ground to a fine powder. The deeper the yellow, the better the turmeric.



Turmeric rhizomes can be started in a sphagnum bag and given bottom heat. Within a few days, small, terminal nubs will develop at the end of the "fingers". The roots develop at the base of the swollen nubs. When the roots are 3-4 inches long, transplant to a shallow pot that is wide enough to accommodate the whole rhizome. Fill the pot 2/3 full with a moist sterile planting medium. Place the rhizome on top and lightly cover it with soil. Turmeric can be grown in full sun on a southern window sill or a shady north window. It is a more compact and we think more attractive plant than ginger, but just as easy to grow.



OOPS GOOFED AGAIN!!!

Your editor (DSP) recently dunned 100 subscribers to renew their subscription. Unfortunately, I left out such vital information as the \$12.50 amount and a merged name on the return postcard. Marty has been laboriously answering all the inquiries by hand. He offered the following explanation:

"Fog and rain on Manhattan Island, and 200 miles away - mist and high waves off the shores of Scituate... at times dialogue difficult."

I suspect it may be Hailhiemers disease.

- (45N-TRV) Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous 1:00 8298837**
- (44-SCI) Buck Rogers 1:00 8924721**
- (45-COM) Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death—Comedy 2:00 776547**
(1989) Just so much guacamole about a professor (Shannon Tweed) and a sinister government plot. Dr. Kurtz: Adrienne Barbeau. Jim: Bill Maher. Bunny: Karen Mistral.
- (47) Eryella—Discusión 1:00 48837**
- (48-ES2) Auto Racing 1:30 1844127**

Don't bother to check local listings!

pg 6.

COMPUTERS II

Some issues back we discussed whether computer illiterate adult should purchase a computer. Our bias of course was that everyone should. Subsequently we discovered another reason, and that is, that children as young as four can use computers, and there are terrific instructive games that they can play. Learning without realizing they are being taught.

We propose to further educate some of our readers in computer lingo, and what follows is taken from a larger and more comprehensive article in September Consumer Reports.

What kind of computer should I buy ?

This is a loaded question a little like Ford owners versus Chevy owners in the forties. The Macintosh family are undeniably easier to use for the novice and they are the choice of many school systems. If a child will be using the computer for school check out what kind they are using. Unfortunately only about 10 % of the computers in home use are "Macs". So that there is a risk that fewer and fewer new programs will be written for "Macs", and they will go the way of "Betamax", a perfectly good system of VCR, which withered on the vine and couldn't compete with the current system in use.

IBM type computers are the remaining 90 % of the pie and are not just made by IBM. Names like Dell, Gateway, Compaq and Hewlett Packard are just a few of the brands that are similar in operation. They are all reviewed in the CU report.

Desktop or portable ? If you plan to

travel and use your computer a portable is required, but an equal amount of power and speed in a portable costs almost double that of a desktop model. One problem is that the beginner doesn't know what features will excite him or her. If you really get into computing you may find yourself upgrading every 2-4 years. The industry is changing rapidly. Current models unimaginable 5 years ago, they are so much faster and more powerful. If you buy a new system for \$ 2000 be prepared to see it discounted for \$ 1200-\$1500 in six months. If cost is a major factor, consider buying a year old model or used machine.

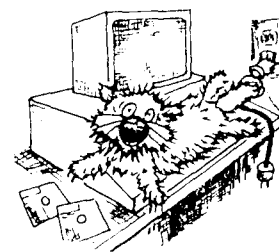
If you buy a new desktop be sure you count the cost of a monitor into the total! Many are sold without monitors.

Hardware versus Software

The hardware is the computer and all its component parts. It's absolutely useless without something to tell it what to do. That is the job for software. For example: I am typing this article on a Hewlett Packard Pavilion computer with a 486 chip (definitely not a contemporary machine). But I am only able to type because of a program (software) called WordPerfect running on a program called Windows 95. I have dozens of other programs I can call up including games designed for adults, recipes, financial programs, etc.

John Hart

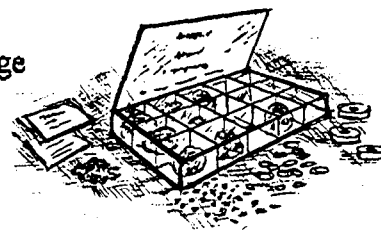
*Our 4 yr. old grandson played Putt Putt happily unattended for hours. It required colors, numbers, letters and the ability to use the mouse. If he can do it, so can you.



QUICK, PIT, FIX

The Pits designed a clever growing kit to sell at the Flower Show. It contains, mung beans, mustard, peanut, papaya and tamarind seeds. The supplies included are, plant labels, fertilizer, jiffy pellets, charcoal, screening, ziploc bags and instructions. We are offering

these for \$5.00, postage included. It's a great buy for beginners and experienced growers alike.



PITS CROSSWORD

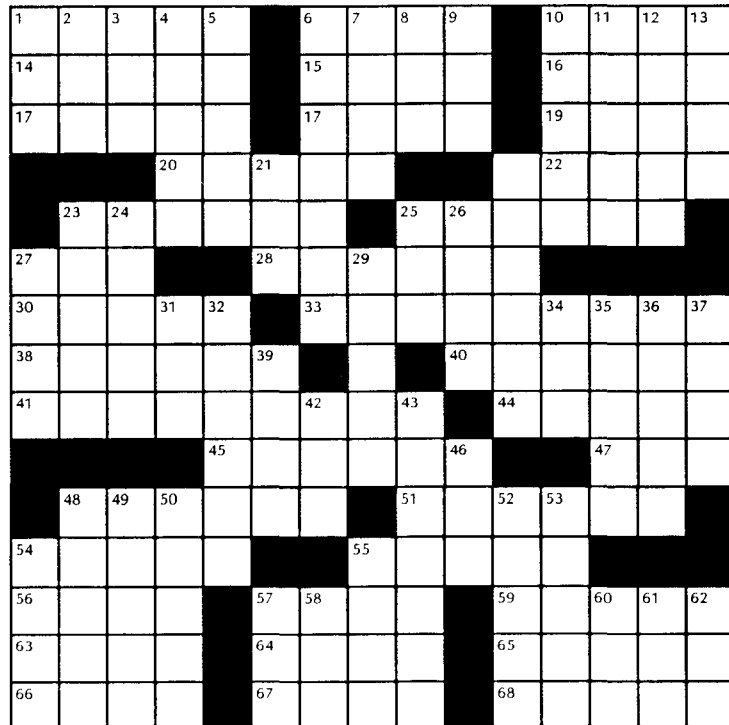
By Ted Marshall

CLUES ACROSS

- 1) Climber's aid
- 6) The worst? Or the best?
- 10) Orange underwear
- 14) Famously tuberous state
- 15) Brit interjection
- 16) Better-ventilated singing?
- 17) The present
- 18) Small mountain lake
- 20) Peanutty singer Della
- 22) Performed
- 23) Car radio button
- 25) Hidden stores of goodies
- 27) Chart or pizza?
- 28) Insect or tree?
- 30) Female plural ending
- 33) Eponymous law-giver!
- 38) Evangeline's home
- 40) Mollify or pacify
- 41) Chokes person, not car
- 44) East Indian trees
- 45) Cooked fast and hot
- 47) Fleur-de-___
- 48) Felt sorry for
- 51) Mexican indian
- 54) Spanish pine tree
- 55) Fur baron sounds floral
- 56) French-style enthusiasm
- 57) Jason's command
- 59) Longs for softwood
- 63) This little piggy got ____
- 64) Japanese ship
- 65) Warehouse
- 66) French holy women
- 67) Ancient roasting tool
- 68) Get rid of 1 down

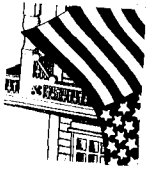
CLUES DOWN

- 1) This puzzle's hellish theme
- 2) Often vowed in June
- 3) Smidgen or small boy
- 4) Busiest airport
- 5) "Highwayman" poet
- 6) Breather at the Indy
- 7) Understanding words
- 8) Tobacco sailor?
- 9) Opp. of Ant.
- 10) Repair - or veggie garden
- 11) In a bad temper
- 12) Gets weary of rotation
- 13) Where birds count twice



- 21) Slippery customer
- 22) Energetic lawsuit
- 23) ___ and toss
- 24) Pave again
- 25) Non-pedigree canine
- 26) Requests or requires
- 27) It comes from the bog
- 29) Lightly tossed by Scots
- 31) Former Nippon capital
- 32) Occupies in protest
- 34) Arkwright's name (var)
- 35) Mayan calendar stone
- 36) About resistance
- 37) Capone's nemesis
- 39) A part of golf course
- 42) Diminutive male
- 43) Begins a journey
- 46) Girl ends sentence
- 48) Ship's guide
- 49) Witless or silly
- 50) Musical notes
- 52) Ran with easy gait
- 53) Unoriginal thought
- 54) Ladylike swans
- 55) The business of farming
- 57) Abbreviated mornings
- 58) Hurtful rhythm?
- 60) Sleepy material finish
- 61) A higher prefix
- 62) Egyptian tennis god?

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Rare Pitt & Plant Council
17 Circuit Avenue
Scituate MA 02066



RAGWEED

the pits

HAYFEVER



GOLDEN ROD

The sneezing season is upon us and the many of us who suffer will have to choose between antihistamines and the attendant drowsiness or sneezing and snuffling until the first frost when the pollen abates. There is a widespread misconception that Hayfever is caused by Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.). This is because it is at the height of its bloom in the early fall and when we look at a waste space we notice its bright yellow color. The real culprit, however, is Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) a member of the Compositae family with deeply cut gray green leaves and insignificant flowers. It can be controlled by mowing which is precisely what waste spaces don't get. So please don't dump on Golden rod.

John Hart M.D.