

the pits

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2000
Volume 21 #6

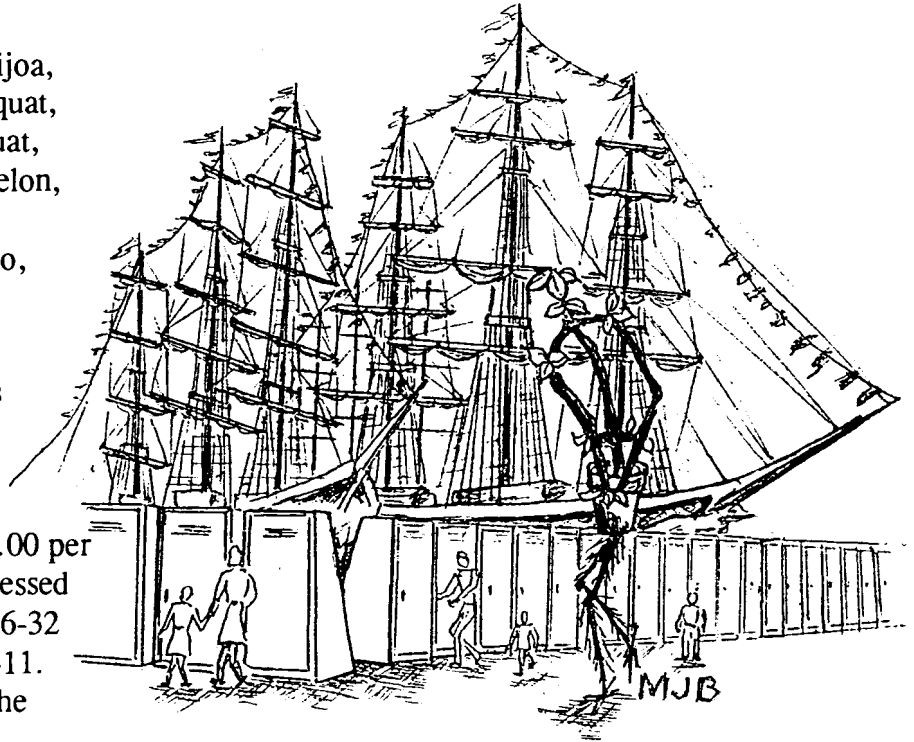
WHAT'S IN THE MARKET

Carob, Cherimoya, Bitter melon, Feijoa, Ginger, Guava, Husk Tomato, Kumquat, Lemon grass, Litchee, Longan, Loquat, Malanga, Mango, Name, Pepino Melon, Papaya, Passion Fruit, Persimmon, Prickly Pear (pads & fruit), Tamarillo, Taro, and Tomatillo.

SEEDS

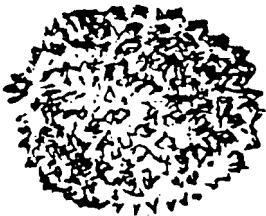
This month Bob is offering seeds of Passion Fruit and Tomatillo and a very special offer of Passiflora alata sent to us by A. Adair of Australia.

If you are interested, send \$1.00 per packet and a sturdy SASE (self-addressed stamped envelop) to Bob Jurgens, 116-32 227th St., Cambria Heights, NY 11411. Checks should be made payable to The Rare Pit and Plant Council.



DURIAN

If there was an Olympic Gold Medal for surfing the Web, member Michael Riley would probably win the gold. He found a web-site for all you 'Durian Foodies'. Durian On-Line at: durian@ecst.csuchico.edu. They have fact sheets, news bulletins, recipes, books, a song, and even poetry: Get a computer just to visit this site.



All hail great Durian, in whose spiny breast
A thousand wondrous flavours have their birth
All hail to thee! We wanderers from the West
Here crown thee King of all fruits of earth
H. S. Whiteside "Gula Melaka" 1914



TIME TO PLANT: Last year we noted a column in the New York Times stating that all imported fruits would be radiated by the USDA. This followed after an outbreak of dysentery, reportedly, from imported Chilean raspberries. Radiation may make the fruit safe to eat, but it doesn't do wonders for the seeds. Now our US markets are filled with native un-radiated fruits,, carambola, cherimoya, litchee,* loquat mango, and tamarillo. These presumably have fertile seeds.

The Rare Pit & Plant Council

17 Circuit Ave. Scituate, MA 02066

EMERGENCY

Fellow Pit Bob Jurgens recently alerted us to pending federal legislation which will effect all of us whether as pit growers or just plain citizens. The proposal known as the "White List" would be to draw up a list of seeds, plants and other living things certified as "safe" and to prohibit the propagation, importation or distribution of all other species and genera. To get a plant added to the list as "safe" would require investing millions of dollars which only a large corporation could afford.

We currently have government controls of identified pests but under the sponsored legislation any plant not on the safe list would be considered dangerous and the possessor could be required to pay the costs of removing it. It is not surprising that major sponsors of this bill are major manufacturers of herbicides.

Part of the impetus for this legislation comes from a genuine concern regarding invasive plants in our environment such as Tamarix (Salt Cedar that clogs the waterways of Texas and is a water thief in the West. This concerns fails to take into account local conditions. Here in New England, Tamarix is a lovely, well behaved shrub and an important coastal plant that helps to control erosion.

This is the kind of federal legislation we neither need nor want. If this legislation were in place when our founding fathers arrived we would lack half the currently native, New England wild flowers including Queen Anne's Lace, Vipers Bugloss and the lovely Rosa Rugosa to name only a few.

For more information on the Internet call

DURSBAN

About ten years ago Dr. John was involved in a law suit in which a young child was alleged to have been severely neurologically injured by the insecticide Dursban or Chlorpyrifos (chemical name). This product had been touted as a "safe" insecticide. The case was settled for an unknown amount of money but given the degree of injury probably a high figure.

up www.geocities.com/nnowhitelist.

If you agree **Please** write:

Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240 or phone: 202-208-3100

Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman
USDA 200 A Whitten Building
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20250 or phone 202-720-3631,
fax 202-720-2166

Secretary of Commerce William Daley
U.S. Department of Commerce
14 St. & Constitution Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20500 or phone 202-482-2000
or fax 202-482-2741

It is important, if you agree to oppose the white list your voice be heard. A letter in a stamped envelope is much more effective than a phone call or fax. Your letter(s) should arrive by mid-August. We suggest that your letters be your own but you may want to mention that: Existing weed legislation is in place, banning the cultivation of 99 % of the worlds plants severely limits US competitiveness and discovery of beneficial qualities of some of those plants. The proposed legislation creates an unelected bureaucracy just as globalization is causing barriers to fall.



John Hart
Diversity

Now it has been announced that the substance is toxic especially for children and will be phased out.

What should you do? I for one wouldn't use it and certainly not around children. Why did it take the EPA so long to make this finding and why are they not taking existing stocks off the shelves????

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT

We have received some spectacular pictures of fetes by our fellow 'Pits'. Toni Carella sent a pictures of his Sugar Apple in fruit that he has grown from seed and a lemon in fruit that he had grafted. Maggie Limburg, a master of Bonsai, sent us a photograph of her Dwarf Kumquat with at least 30 fruits. Maggie grew the small tree from fruits I distributed at a lecture some 5+ years ago. Joseph Mule sent us a pictures of his Carob, and Loquat in fruit. Joseph fruited his plants by grafting scions to the rootstock of his plants that he grew from seed. None of these growers has a greenhouse or a hired gardener. They are folks like you and me, just very skillful. Their successes take us a few steps away from the local grocery store.

SUGAR APPLE - *Annona squamosa*

The sugar apple is a close relative of the Cherimoya that is currently available in our supper markets. It is somewhat hardier to both cold and heat than the Cherimoya. Toni sent away to the Rare Fruit Council International, Inc. in Florida*. The seeds were marked, "Purple *Annona Squamosa*" and were from Haiti. He planted them in the summer of 1996. Four years to fruiting!!!



I have visited Toni's setup. He grows the plants during the cold months in a modest sized room, jam packed with huge plants, Bananas, Cherimoyas, Guavas, etc. The ceiling is covered with flourescent lights and a humidifier runs constantly. The temperature is never below 55°. In the summer all the plants are moved to a sunny alley behind his row house in Queens.

Toni is Italian (I think there is an ethnic gene for superior growing) and a

retired chemist. He does some fancy footwork with fertilizers that he mixes himself.

KUMQUAT - *Fortunella hindsii*

Dwarf Kumquat is very hard to come by. It is a small 2-3' tree that is frequently the centerpiece at a Chinese New Years banquet. After dinner the guests pluck the fruit from the tree to clear the pallet. I can't quite remember how I came to own a few precious fruits. I think Steve Facciola and I begged a few fruits off a tree being sold at the time of the Chinese New Year in Chinatown, New York City. The small tree grows naturally in the shape of a small tree, compact with a rounded crown of dark evergreen leaves. The bright orange 3/4" fruits are very ornamental against the dark foliage.



The fruits are especially succulent and sweet, even the rind is tasty. Maggie simply sowed a couple of seeds. They all germinated and she gave away the extras. I was unable to get a hold of Maggie to learn when it first fruited, but I suspect it was several years ago. You may have to search far and wide to find a fruit or a tree, but it is well worth the time. I will ask Maggie to send us some seeds for distribution the next time her tree fruits.

LOQUAT - *Eriobotrya japonica*

Loquats are currently in the better supermarkets. Their season is short-so rush out to buy them. The fruits are apricot-orange, egg shaped and about 2-3". Another common name is Japanese Apricots and they do have a flavor reminiscent of an apricot (not as tasty by our standards). Within the flesh there are 2-3 1", round, dark brown seeds. These may be sown in individual pots

or in a sphagnum bag. Germination takes about 3 weeks.



Loquat is large and exceptionally handsome pit. The blue-green leaves are lanceolate, 4-8" long, serrated and covered with fine wooly hairs. The new leaves are almost as soft and wooly as 'Lamb's Ears'. In nature the trees

are about 15' tall with a rounded crown of dense foliage. Loquats are native to Japan, but have been grown as an ornamental in the warmer parts of Europe for centuries. When grown in a pot, they can be maintained at a pleasant height between 3-4'.

Again, Joseph does not have a fancy setup, but he is also Italian (those genes!).

*Rare Fruit Council International is a marvelous source for seeds, scions (budded wood for grafting) and general all around cultural information. Membership in the RFCI is \$40.00 a year for 12 issues. Checks should be made out to: RFCI and sent to Carolyn Betts, 12255 SW 73rd Ave., Miami, Florida 33156. For further information call: 305-378-4457 or visit their web site at: <http://.gate.net/~tfnews>.

GRAFTING

Is a form of vegetative propagation. The branch (scion) of a superior plant is attached to the rootstock of another plant To reproduce the superior plant.. If you have a rose in your garden, chances are it has been grafted. Look at the base of the plant, if you see a thickening in the trunk, that is the graft.

"Grafting solves many horticultural problems. Some of the most floriferous lilacs also have the disagreeable habit of suckering from their roots. The attractive-blooming lilacs can be grafted to the roots of the less attractive, non-suckering types to capture the best qualities of both."

Why graft our pits? Most of the pits we grow from seed will not bloom and fruit and if they do it may take years. When you a graft a twig (scion =budwood) from a blooming branch of a similar type plant to your seed grown plant (the rootstock) your plant will bloom within 2 years or less after it has been successfully grafted. Dr. John and I have a Strawberry Guava that has been sitting around the house for 3 years. doing

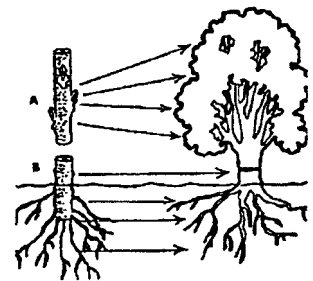
His small backyard in Pittsburgh, PA is filled with his tropical pits from May to October. In the winter, the plants spend their life growing under flourescent lights (probably mounted in the ceiling).

Both Toni and Joseph have fruited many of our tropical trees. Much of their success is their ability to 'graft' fruiting wood onto their grown from seed stock. Joseph sent me a wonderful film on grafting and there is an excellent article on the subject in the May '99 Issue of Tropical Fruit-the newsletter for the Rare Fruit Council International. If you are interested, I will xerox a copy and mail it to you. In the following article I will do my best to explain the theory and where to go for help.

nothing. We pinch it, it branches and that's about it. My friend, Doug Litchfield, has a blooming and fruiting Guava that is delicious. In mid-winter when both shrubs start to break dormancy, we are going to graft.

Grafting must be done between compatible or similar plants. You have probably seen ads for apple trees that bear 5 different kinds of apples-these were scions grafted to the original apple tree. You cannot graft your tender mango to your apple tree and hope to get mangos instead of apples.

All those who graft say it is easy. If you want fruit on your avocado, mango, or citrus, this is the way to go.



GRAFTING PURE AND SIMPLE

When you decide to graft the first thing you need to do is gather all the proper tools and materials:

Grafting knife or blades, razor sharp
Budding Tape, clear, 1/2"
Parafilm Grafting Tape cut to 2/3" by 2"
Alcohol, 90% rubbing-type to sterilize knives
Rootstocks (cut just before you graft
Budwood (cut just before you graft
(RFCI has a kit with all this material-enough to make 24 grafts. Contact Bob Cannon 941-474-6133 \$19,95 + \$3.00 shipping)

And last but hardly least a good set of instructions or a good friend who has done it before. We are going to send away for the kit and call upon our friend, Doug. Good Luck!

ROOTS, ROOTS, OH GLORIOUS ROOTS

Growing Beets, Turnips & Onions

Here is a simple, showy and botanically interesting project to do with the kids or to wow your friends. A member of the pits entered the following displays at the Gramercy Park Flower Show in New York. She got a first prize for 5 different types of onions growing in an elegant Japanese urn. The plants were, shallots, garlic, white, red and yellow onions. The bulbs were just above the ground and topped with spicy foliage. Her runner up was 5 deep red beets growing in an old iron frying pan. We have used the onion display as a centerpiece-the guests could garnish their food by snipping the leaves.

This is a wonderful project to do with children. It's fast and it's easy. Buy nice firm vegetables. Remove all the foliage, but leave any remaining roots. Find a pot large enough to hold all the roots. Fill the pot 2/3s full of moist potting medium, place the roots on top of the medium and fill in around them. They can be quite tightly packed. Leave 1/4-1/3 of the bulb exposed. Water well. The bulbs can be grown in full sun or dull light. Within 10 days the new growth

will start to grow. In three weeks you will have a bowl full of colorful bulbs topped with lush foliage. Beets have lovely deep green leaves with maroon veins and stems. I never give a pit talk without a pot of beets. It is always a crowd pleaser.

Botanically all these roots are biennials. Their first year of growth they put out leaves. These photosynthesize to form sugar and starch = energy. The plants go dormant for the winter. When we buy them in the grocery store they are at their plump and second year of growth. If you keep the bulbs for several months, their foliage will get ratty, but they will bloom. We've never had an onion bloom, but beets and turnips bloom easily. Their flowers, however, are not very pretty.

When you are through with your centerpiece, you can eat the bulbs. Beets and turnips will be just as firm as when you bought them. The onions, however, will be a bit squishy.



Acros-Pit by Chris Carrdus

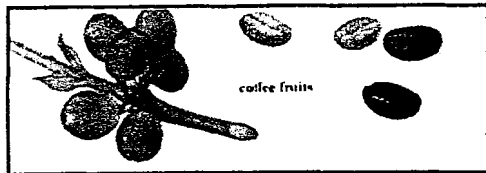
	1I		2T	3H	4P	5K	6A	7B	8Y	9Q	10X	11W		12A		13D	14Y	15X
16Z		17Y	18I		19X	20B	21O	22V	23Y		24B	25O	26U	27K		28E	29G	30H
31K	32O	33N		34A	35T	36M	37X	38E	39V	40Q	41L		42R	43Z		44A		45A
46D	47O	48I	49L	50U	51J		52D	53S	54C	55L	56A	57E	58N	59K		60K	61M	62V
63S	64P	65U		66C	67U	68N		69P	70A	71N	72S	73Q	74W	75F	76B	77O	78R	79M
80E		81P	82L	83N		84G	85M	86K	87L	88P	89N		90N	91W	92L		93L	94O
95R	96C	97S		98S	99Q	100P	101K	102D	103F	104J	105I		106P	107Y		108M		109P
110F		111T	112I		113T	114F	115H		116T	117M	118U	119H	120C	121L	122W	123F	124Q	125V
126G	127K	128Y		129D	130Z		131R	132H	133G		134W	135E	136B	137H	138X		139X	
140Z	141C		142F	143B	144Z	145J	146P		147Q	148H		149W	150J	151Z	152B			

To solve this puzzle, guess as many as you can of the 26 clues below. They are not quite as complex as the clues in the NY Times magazine, so try this one even if you've got stuck on a Times acrostic. Quite a few clues are plant-related. Write the letters of the words you have guessed in the corresponding spaces in the above grid, and you may see hints that help you guess remaining letters. For example, a 3-letter word "--H--" is almost certainly THE, or a word with 'g' as last letter probably ends in "ing." When you have finished, the above grid will give a quotation from a recent (and very good) garden book. The initial letters of the 26 clue answers give the name of the author and title of the book. Answer in next issue. (There are 2 words your feeble minded editor found so difficult that the answers are hidden in another part of the newsletter. Happy hunting)

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| A) Apple of David's eye | <u>34</u> <u>6</u> <u>70</u> <u>44</u> <u>85</u> <u>45</u> <u>12</u> <u>56</u> | N) Hates the quizzes? | <u>33</u> <u>89</u> <u>71</u> <u>68</u> <u>58</u> <u>90</u> <u>83</u> |
| B) Pits 101 | <u>20</u> <u>7</u> <u>136</u> <u>76</u> <u>24</u> <u>152</u> <u>143</u> | O) Happy pit-hunting place | <u>25</u> <u>94</u> <u>47</u> <u>21</u> <u>32</u> <u>77</u> |
| C) Mound within castle | <u>141</u> <u>120</u> <u>66</u> <u>54</u> <u>96</u> | P) Mythical ash | <u>81</u> <u>146</u> <u>100</u> <u>109</u> <u>64</u> <u>106</u> <u>4</u> <u>69</u> <u>88</u> |
| D) Monastic C.E.O | <u>46</u> <u>52</u> <u>13</u> <u>129</u> <u>102</u> | Q) Cave or cavern | <u>40</u> <u>9</u> <u>99</u> <u>147</u> <u>124</u> <u>73</u> |
| E) Capital with volutes | <u>57</u> <u>135</u> <u>80</u> <u>38</u> <u>28</u> | R) Charge for francs & lire | <u>131</u> <u>95</u> <u>78</u> <u>42</u> |
| F) Bird sounds like train | <u>123</u> <u>114</u> <u>110</u> <u>75</u> <u>142</u> <u>103</u> | S) Haley's magnum opus | <u>72</u> <u>63</u> <u>53</u> <u>98</u> <u>97</u> |
| G) --- sprach Zarathustra | <u>29</u> <u>133</u> <u>84</u> <u>126</u> | T) "I agree with Rush" | <u>2</u> <u>116</u> <u>111</u> <u>113</u> <u>35</u> |
| H) Prairie comedian | <u>137</u> <u>115</u> <u>3</u> <u>30</u> <u>132</u> <u>148</u> <u>119</u> | U) Anesthetic gas | <u>65</u> <u>118</u> <u>67</u> <u>26</u> <u>50</u> |
| I) Tickled by pianist | <u>1</u> <u>48</u> <u>112</u> <u>105</u> <u>18</u> | V) Number to muse on | <u>62</u> <u>125</u> <u>39</u> <u>22</u> |
| J) Baking requirement? | <u>145</u> <u>150</u> <u>104</u> <u>51</u> | W) Hand of enlightenment | <u>134</u> <u>122</u> <u>11</u> <u>74</u> <u>91</u> <u>149</u> |
| K) Pit that isn't lace | <u>5</u> <u>86</u> <u>127</u> <u>60</u> <u>27</u> <u>59</u> <u>101</u> <u>31</u> | X) Superfluous, useless | <u>19</u> <u>37</u> <u>139</u> <u>15</u> <u>138</u> <u>10</u> |
| L) Bought off vegetarian? | <u>49</u> <u>93</u> <u>87</u> <u>92</u> <u>55</u> <u>41</u> <u>82</u> <u>121</u> | Y) Unduly interest | <u>14</u> <u>17</u> <u>128</u> <u>8</u> <u>23</u> <u>107</u> |
| M) Very valuable bar | <u>108</u> <u>117</u> <u>61</u> <u>79</u> <u>36</u> | Z) Lime aka <i>Citrus hystrix</i> | <u>16</u> <u>151</u> <u>130</u> <u>43</u> <u>144</u> <u>140</u> |

11.11.22. 22/11/22
 Chris Carrdus

FRESH COFFEE BEANS



We have a boatyard neighbor, Jim Healy, who is the proud owner of a 25 year old coffee tree. Somehow the topic of pits came up when he and Dr. John were painting their boats for the season. (Pits are never far from Dr. John's mind) i Would we like some seed?j Yes!!!

There is a very nice story behind Jim's tree. Small seedlings were given as presents at a bridal shower for his wife. Jim took one and it grew and grew. It is the only plant Jim has ever grown successfully, many have died along the way. The tree has been moved from house to house as the young Healy family grew.

This year Jim had a bumper crop and delivered no less than 50 cherries to me. Coffee cherries are bright red fruits about the size of a small olive. Within the flesh there are two 1/2" seeds. These have a very limited vitality. Ideally they should be removed from the flesh, cleaned and potted immediately. I have just cleaned all the cherries and have about 100 seeds. These are stored in moist sphagnum and should maintain their vitality for another month. If you want some, send \$1.00 and a self addressed envelope to Deborah Peterson, Rare Pit & Plant Council, 17 Circuit Ave, Scituate MA 02066. Make sure it is a sturdy envelope. I will mail them in sphagnum, wrapped in plastic. They are ready to plant.

From Pit to Pot

Coffee is a rapidly growing, carefree plant that will flower and fruit in the home with only a modest amount of trouble. Most coffee plants grow about 1 foot a year and

begin to flower in their third year, and fruit in their fourth.

How to grow:

1. Sow the seeds in individual pots or community flats. Cover loosely with clear plastic wrap to insure humidity.
2. Give gentle bottom heat.
3. When the seedlings have 3-6 pairs of leaves, transplant to a 4" pot. (Coffee trees should be "moved on" to larger containers as they grow; eventually ending up in a 3 gallon container)
4. Keep the soil evenly moist at all times, but not soggy and never let the plant sit in water.
5. Coffee requires medium light and can be grown in a 4 tube fluorescent light unit or on a bright window sill. The ideal location is a cool sun porch. When you put the plants out for the summer, place them in filtered light. Direct sun will scorch the leaves.

6. Coffee is not a heavy feeder. Use 1/4 dilute fertilizer every month, except when the plant is resting in the winter.

7. Coffee trees are large house plants and should be allowed to grow to 3-5' if you want them to bloom and fruit. When they reach this height, you can nip the central leader (trunk) and heavily prune the side branches.

Harvesting:

A mature home-grown coffee tree will yield about 1 pound of cherries, enough for a cup, but hardly a threat to the industry. Clean and wash the seeds and place them in a shallow baking pan. Roast at 350 degrees, turning frequently until the seeds have turned a deep rich brown. The house smells heavenly when you roast the beans, unfortunately, the coffee that is produced on the windowsill is pretty dreadful.

