



Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter

June 2009

FESTIVAL OF FRUIT: The Year Of the Olive

Thanks to the great work of the Festival of Fruit planning committee, the 2009 "Year of the Olive" festival is coming together very nicely. The dates of the festival are August 12 through 15. Tours are scheduled on August 12, 13, and 14 and include wineries, nurseries, Wolfskill Ranch and Burbank Farm, and visits to members' home orchards. On the evening of August 14, there will be a round table discussion with Michael Phillips, author of *The Apple Grower: A Guide for the Organic Orchardist*. Saturday, August 15, will be devoted to an all-day symposium at Santa Rosa Junior College, with five tracks of speakers on various topics, as well as exhibitors, and fruit tasting, followed by a dinner at Santa Rosa J.C.'s Shone Farm, in Forestville.

In spite of the title, olives are only part of the program. Saturday's symposium includes presentations not only about growing and curing olives, but also on orchard care, citrus diseases and grafting, grape growing, home winemaking, and marketing, and growing subtropical

fruit. Speakers include Michael Phillips; author and "fruit detective" David Karp; Barbara Baer, publisher and writer about pomegranates; Frederique Lavoipierre of Sonoma J.C., specialist in beneficial insects; Drs. Jeff Moersfelder, David Ramming, and Malli Aradyia from Wolfskill Farm; legendary grafting expert Joe Real; and Tom Spellman and Ed Laivo of Dave Wilson Nursery.

Complete information about the festival, including a list of tours and the symposium schedule, are on the Festival of Fruit web site: <http://www.festivaloffruit.org>. Some of the tours require a fee and advance registration. Registration forms for the tours and symposium are in the May-June issue of the *Fruit Gardener* and can also be printed from the Festival of Fruit web site. If you can't obtain a form from the Internet or the *Fruit Gardener*, you can get one by calling (707) 241-5821. Early registration for the workshop (by July 15) is \$45.00 (\$35.00 for students); after July 15, the registration fee increases by \$10.00.

Vendors and Exhibitors Needed for Festival of Fruit

We're looking for vendors and exhibitors for the Festival. We have spaces available for groups whose focus is fruit, plants, gardening, and related issues on the symposium date, Saturday, August 15th, at the Santa Rosa Junior College campus.

Spaces are free to appropriate groups, and are 10-12' wide by 14' deep, but participants must provide their own tables, chairs and shade. Preregistration for the spaces is required. People interested should contact Kalia Kliban by email at vendors@festivaloffruit.org or by phone at (707)829-3478. More information about becoming an exhibitor or vendor can be found on the Festival web site, at <http://www.festivaloffruit.org/exhibitors.html>

JOE REAL AT MAIN STREET TREES

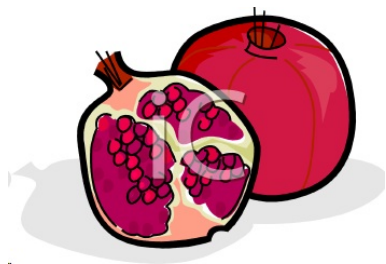
by Linda Robertson

Joe Real is something of a legend in CRFG. A few years ago, Mike Lee wrote a newsletter article about visiting Joe's home in Davis, where Joe had, among other wonders in a yard packed with fruit trees, a lemon grafted with 58 types of citrus. Since then, I'm told, the number of varieties grafted onto the tree has increased to about 80.

Joe, needless to say, is an expert at grafting.

On a rainy Saturday early in May, Joe gave a talk about grafting and demonstrated some of his techniques at Main Street Trees, in Napa. Main Street Trees deserves a mention in itself. It's a nursery on three acres hidden behind the houses of a residential neighborhood in the town of Napa. It specializes in California native trees, but Jean Wheeler, its owner, has also constructed a labyrinth here which spirals among oaks and evergreens. Visitors come to walk through it as a spiritual journey -- or, as I did, just for fun.

Joe's talk and demonstrations were filled with useful information, tips and advice, the products of Joe's years of research and personal experience. I took notes, but there was too much for me to write all of it down. Here is some of what I was able to catch (hopefully without too many mistakes):



Grafting in general:

Cut scions in the early morning. Cut the leaves off the scions before cutting the scions themselves, to minimize moisture loss.

Citrus scions store well because they are drought-tolerant. Apple scions can safely stored for two weeks, and avocados for a month. The best temperature for storage is 38 degrees. If you transport scions in a cooler, don't put them directly on ice. If you're grafting a scion that has been stored for awhile, cut off the bottom end and put it in water overnight.

In cleft or whip-and-tongue grafting, try to graft straight to straight twigs, and curved to curved. Joe first wraps the graft in parafilm tape down to an inch below the cut, to keep out infection. Then he wraps the area with a wide rubber band for stability, keeping some spaces for sunlight to penetrate. Then he wraps it with more parafilm, wrapping from bottom to top, to deflect rain. He covers the whole scion, either wrapping it entirely in parafilm or painting the exposed parts with grafting seal.

Don't place a graft where the new growth will be in the shade. Give a new graft sunlight, or the tree will prune it off by starving it of nutrients.

Don't prune or graft in the rain, because the rain carries contaminants. For apricots, wait until two weeks after the end of the rainy season to graft them.

Aftercare is essential to getting a graft to take well. Remove sprouts below the graft, or the graft is more likely to die.

Citrus grafting:

Citrus can be grafted by whip-and-tongue or cleft graft all year round. A longer wedge is better because it allows more contact of the cambium layers. Chip budding is okay in the winter, but in summer, when the bark is slipping, use a bark graft or a t-bud graft. Citrus can be grafted green wood to green wood or green wood to hardwood. If grafting onto hard wood, use a bark graft. T-bud graft only onto green wood, because hard wood will absorb the bud. Bud-grafted citrus can take a year or more to sprout

When t-budding citrus, use a bud from a scion of the same diameter as the stock, if possible. The best buds are from wood just below the current year's growth. When cutting the bud, pull the branch; don't push the knife. Have the knife parallel to the scion, but press the flat edge of the blade down and pull the scion along it. Cut the T before cutting the bud. If possible, cut the T on the flatter side of the stock, to maximize contact with the cambium of the bud. In wet climates, to keep rain out of the new graft, make an inverted T in the stock and cut the bud from above. Wrap the graft from the bottom up in parafilm. You can cover the bud, but leave the petiole exposed; it will die and fall off, and that will stimulate bud growth. Wait three weeks, and then, if the bud is still green, cut the stock about a half inch above it, if you want the bud to replace the branch.

Budwood from a fruiting branch will fruit right away, but the grafted branch will never grow large. For vigorous growth graft water sprout scions onto water sprout stock, ideally with a diameter of at least a third of an inch for both. They will take longer to fruit, but will grow larger.

T-bud grafts on citrus are very susceptible to contamination. To help prevent it, you can spray the graft area with rubbing alcohol or peroxide. Joe says 70 % rubbing alcohol is best because the water content slows evaporation of the alcohol so that it kills more germs. Sterilize your clippers and knife with alcohol or a flame. Brass also kills germs; some budding knives have brass beds for this reason.

Meyer lemon is a good stock to graft to. Eureka lemon does not produce good oranges unless you do an intermediate graft with a trifoliolate orange.

Among the easily available trifoliolate rootstock, Flying Dragon is slow growing. C-32 is hard to propagate except by cuttings. C-35 is good.

Other fruit:

Apples and pears can be grafted as late as late fall.

For persimmons, bark grafts are best; the best time to graft persimmons is when the leaves are pushing and the bark is slipping.

For avocados, the best stock and scion wood is the soft terminal wood, the latest year's growth. Graft first-year growth onto first-year growth. Pencil-sized branches are the best to graft onto. The best graft for avocados is a long cleft graft. Look for a long stem, so that you can make a long wedge. Bark grafts work on avocados, but only on new wood. The best time for grafting avocados is late spring to early summer.

For nuts and walnuts, the best graft is one Joe demonstrated, which he calls the banana graft, because it involves peeling the bark of the stock back in four strips like a banana. At the risk of oversimplifying it, the technique goes something like this: First, make four vertical cuts about 2-3 inches long through the bark of the stock and peel the bark back, like banana peel; snip off the piece of bare wood left inside. On the scion, make slices along it as if starting a wedge for a cleft graft, but make them on four sides, leaving some bark between the slices. Then put the sliced end of the scion inside the "peeled banana" of the stock, pull the bark pieces up around it and wrap it all thoroughly, stabilizing it with a splint. The point of this is that it creates a lot of cambium contact, maximizing the chance that the graft will take.

Reference:

A lot more information about grafting and growing citrus, including tutorials and postings by Joe Real, can be found on the Citrus Growers' Forum, <http://citrus.forumup.org>

For more about Main Street Trees (and an aerial photo of their labyrinth) check out their web site, <http://www.mainstreettrees.com/>.

RECIPE

Strawberry Muffins from Barbara
by Linda Robertson

This came in an e-mail from “Sally Strawberry” Carstensen, of Carstensen Farms in Petaluma. Although the recipe says it makes 12 muffins, both Sally and I found that it actually makes nine. It’s a good basic muffin recipe that would probably also work with other juicy summer fruits, such as raspberries, peaches, nectarines, and apricots. A teaspoon of vanilla or some spices might also be good, especially with apricots or peaches.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 cup chopped strawberries

Directions

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Oil 9 cups of a 12-cup muffin tin or spray the tin with baking spray, or use paper liners.

In a small bowl beat lightly the oil, milk, and the egg. In a large bowl mix flour, salt, baking powder and sugar. Mix wet and dry ingredients with a SPOON (it will stick to your beaters and not mix well). Add chopped berries and stir together.

Fill muffin tins or cups with batter to about 2/3 full. Bake at 375 for 25 minutes or until the tops are lightly golden brown and bounce back to the touch. Cool ten minutes before lifting from pans.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer Plant Sale: The RECRFG summer plant sale will be held on Saturday, July 18, at the Santa Rosa farmer’s market, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Come early; the good stuff – especially subtropicals – sells out fast.

The Santa Rosa farmer’s market is held in the parking lot of the Veteran’s Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, across Highway 12 from the fairgrounds.

Kendall-Jackson Tomato Festival: Saturday, September 12, 2009. Maile Pieri recommends this event, which features tastings of hundreds of varieties of tomatoes, lots of other food, and tomato products and heirloom tomato seeds for sale. It’s a benefit for the Sonoma County School Garden network. Admission is \$65.00 if you register by July 1, and \$75.00 afterward. You may also be able to get in free by volunteering to help at the festival. Information about it can be found on the web at <http://www.kj.com/events/tomato-festival/>.

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time flies like an arrow - fruit flies like a banana