

FRUITY TALK

MACKAY BRANCH R.F.A. inc.

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NEWSLETTER.
September 2012

Editor: Shirley Kerle, Ph. (07) 4954 0825

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Next Meeting: Sunday 7th October 2012 @ 1pm

Venue: Property of Victor Jordon & Alyth Tweedie,
70 Van Houweninges Road, Finch Hatton Gorge.

Schedule: BYO picnic lunch from 11.30am followed by General Meeting at 1pm;
Fruit Tasting; Raffle and tree auction; Orchard tour.

Directions: Take the road to Eungella, turn into Finch Hatton Gorge Road. After crossing the causeway turn left into Van Houweninges Road. Go past Olivers Road, cross another causeway and look for No 70 and the branch sign.

Please remember to bring your own chair, plate, cup etc.

Dates for Diary

Sunday 4th December Dumbleton Rural Fire Brigade Shed. Final meeting for 2012.

Sunday 28th April 2013 The Mackay branch will be celebrating it's **30th birthday** with a free barbecue lunch at the Dumbleton Rural Fire Brigade Shed. All past and present members are invited to join the celebration. Drinks will be provided.

The Fruit and Prepared Food Competition.

Prize winners for August 2012 Meeting: Judge- Alyth Tweedie

Most interesting rare fruit: 1 Chinese Yam - Joe Camilleri

2 Bixa - Percy Abela

3 Nutmeg - Percy Abela

Best tasting fruit: 1 Ticazo - Jeremy Robinson.

2 Carambola - Jeremy Robinson

3 Soursop - Jeremy Robinson

Best prepared food: 1 Canistel Guacamole on Carambola stars - Jeremy Robinson

2 Tomato Sauce - Juliana Harvie

3 Soursop Cheesecake - Jeremy Robinson

PRIZE WINNING RECIPES

t/s = teaspoon **D/S** = dessertspoon **T/S** = tablespoon **cm** = centimetre
S R = self raising **lt** = litre **ml** = millilitre **oz** = ounce
kg = kilogram **g** = gram **pkt** = packet

Canistel Guacamole on Carambola stars

Carambolas 2 Thai coriander leaves, chopped juice of 1 lime
2 canistel 1 large chilli, chopped salt to taste
3 cloves garlic, crushed

Method

Slice carambolas cross wise to form stars then mash the canistel pulp with the rest of the ingredients. Spoon or pipe the canistel mix onto the stars.

Jeremy Robinson

Grans Tomato Sauce

5 lb tomatoes, roughly chopped 2 T/S salt
2 ½ lb green apples, peeled, cored and roughly chopped 1 T/S peppercorns
1 lb onions, peeled and chopped finely ½ t/s ground ginger
3 ½ cups sugar 6g allspice
2 ½ cups vinegar

Method

Boil ingredients for 2 hours then push through a sieve. Put into hot sterilised jars/ bottles.

Juliana Harvie

Soursop Cheesecake

Crust

250 g Scotch Finger biscuits, crumbed 125g unsalted butter at room temperature

Method

Mix together and press into a flan dish.

Filling

1 cup soursop juice 100g condensed milk 80ml boiling water
250g cream cheese juice 2 small kaffir limes 2 t/s gelatine
pulp of 2 passionfruit

Method

Blend soursop, cream cheese & condensed milk together then mix in the lime juice. Put the gelatine in the boiled water and stir until dissolved then allow it to cool. Add this to the cream cheese mix and pour into the crust then refrigerate. Cover with passionfruit when ready to serve.

Jeremy Robinson

How to juice a soursop

We generally only use the soursop "juice". I skin the fruit and then put it in a mouli (a colander type thing with rotating disc and handle) to press out the juice. I am left with pulp and seeds in the mouli and juice comes out the bottom. Before we had the mouli we just got chule (strong mosquito netting) and wrapped the skinned fruit in that and massaged and squeezed till all the juice came out.

Jeremy Robinson.

NAGAMI CUMQUAT

The Nagami cumquat bears sweet-tasting, oval, thin-skinned fruit which can be made into preserves or



eaten fresh. When eaten fresh, eat the skin too as the sweetness lies in the skin – unlike the round type which is quite tart. The plant becomes an attractive tree and looks quite ornamental when grown as a potted plant.

I planted my first Nagami cumquat tree in a large pot. It thrived and in no time at all it was covered with an abundance of fruit. I had one stake in the pot to support the weight of the fruit. However, one night, a very strong wind blew from a different direction and snapped the whole graft clean off the root stock.

I tried to buy another tree and the only one I managed to find was in very poor condition. I planted this one in the ground in an open and sunny spot.

Before planting I added Dolomite to the soil to counteract deficiencies of Calcium (leaves were turning under) and Magnesium (leaves were yellowish).

I then applied a complete fertilizer to supply the necessary Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium. The tree also showed signs of Iron deficiency (yellow leaves with green veins), Zinc deficiency (very small leaves) and Copper deficiency (reddish-brown gum on the trunk).

I took 10g Iron Chelates, 30g Zinc Sulphate and 30g Copper Sulphate mixed them in a watering can filled with water and drenched the soil around the tree. After several weeks the tree thrived. I staked it on four sides so that my earlier experience didn't happen again.

As the new leaves grew I had a problem with leaf miner. I found it necessary to spray for this each time new leaves appeared. First, I tried spraying with Ecopestoil but this had no effect on the problem so I resorted to using Diazamin – which had the desired effect. I also had to spray for sooty mould caused by Scale. For this I used white oil mixed with Malathon. After a few months I had a healthy looking tree loaded with fruit. When they were nearly ripe a few dropped to the ground. On inspection I realised they had been stung by Fruit Piercing Moth.

Came the day when I could harvest my crop. What a disappointment it was when I found that my beautiful fruit had no juice. I should have given the tree some boron. However I still managed to make a batch of beautiful marmalade with the help of the juice of two oranges.

Maybe a good application of Trace Element Mix in the first place would have solved **all** the problems.

This article and photo was contributed by Pauline Trappes

Thanks very much Pauline, it's really good to have some new contributors to Fruity Talk. (Editor).

The winning photo on the Brag Board for August 2012.

Wine Jelly Palm by Joe Camilleri



***Butia capitata*, Wine jelly palm**

The ripe plump fruit with a small seed tastes similar to an apricot and it's stringless. Fruit develop much better in a year with a good wet season or if you give the palm plenty of water. In a dry year the fruit can be woody. In the last three years there have only been two good years of fruit. The palm gets four to five bunches of fruit (like in the photo) once a year.

Text by Heather Camilleri

Thanks Joe & Heather, it's a really lovely photo (Editor).

Response to Nick Cronin's article on dragon fruit problems in May 2012 Fruity Talk.

Any treated timber (eg pine logs, hardwood or whatever) are not suitable as a growing support for pitaya (or staghorns, elkhorns, orchids etc). The chemicals in the wood will definitely not sustain healthy growth, and in all probability will eventually kill the plant. Treated timber is sold with an imprinted number and, from memory, the higher the number the more potent and long-lasting are the chemicals in it. That's fine if you're using the timber for garden edging or retaining walls. For more information, check with your local timber merchant or hardware shop.

I've found untreated hardwood works well and is reasonably resistant to termites and decay. Mature pitaya growth can be quite heavy, so don't stint on the structure's strength – a typical country-style post-and-rail fence style works quite well, especially if L-shaped for additional strength, and can be extended later if required. It need be only chest high.

If you plant pitaya on a tree, it will eventually grow as high as the tree-top, usually without flowering, then topple over the upper branches to begin flowering and fruiting. Pitaya like growing on trees, their natural habitat, but there are obvious disadvantages for growers. If you're into tree climbing like Tarzan and Jane to harvest your fruit then trees are for you; alternatively select something a bit closer to the ground.

Star pickets are OK, but as I've discovered to my dismay, can collapse with the weight of mature pitaya or during a decent breeze - so be warned. If you're using star pickets, or some other metal support, wrap and tie old hessian bags or rags around the growing areas, to provide support and a source of nourishment for the root systems.

Like paw paws, pitaya seem to enjoy the company of cement. I have heard of growers wrapping cement-soaked bags on their pitaya trellises, with good results. Some have grown pitaya on old concrete posts, also with good results.

A regular light spray of diluted fish-based fertiliser (Barra is good, or Charlie Carp) seems to promote healthy growth, and seaweed-based fertiliser would probably be just as beneficial.

We mostly grow the red-flesh fruit, which tastes great chilled and with a dash of lime juice or some passionfruit, or in a fresh fruit salad. We also grow the smaller yellow-flesh variety, which tastes different but is quite delicious – though the skin is covered with a fearsome array of spikes ... so wear gloves! We do not grow the white-flesh variety which seems so popular in restaurants in Asia, as it tastes pretty bland.

We don't hand-pollinate the beautiful trumpet-shaped flowers, which bloom overnight and begin to wilt by dawn. Nature, or insects, apparently take care of that. We give the pitaya a splash of water during the dry season, and as the fruit develops, but they're pretty hardy.

If you're just starting out, be sure you acquire pitaya that definitely produce fruit (maybe from a trusted friend). I've seen some that grow well and flower magnificently yet never produce any fruit, ever. When planting, I suggest putting two per support post – it doubles your crop potential.

I suggest that Nick should either remove his dragon fruit from the pine logs, or shield them with scrap timber, bags or whatever. I wish him success!

Contributed by Allan Small, Kewarra Beach, Qld

Allan sent me the above in response to Nick Cronan's article on pitaya in the May 2012 Fruity Talk. I asked Allan's permission to print it in the July newsletter and he happily gave his consent.

When I did the July newsletter I completely forgot about it so here it is now. **Many thanks to Allan** for taking the time to respond with all this handy information and **I humbly apologise** for my lapse of memory.

I also forgot to mention in the June 2012 meeting report that Ray Johnson, from the Hinkler Branch, attended the meeting. It's always good to welcome visitors to our meeting, especially if they are from another RFA branch. I hope Ray enjoyed the meeting and I apologise for my tardy memory.

Editor - Shirley Kerle

Report for meeting on Sunday 5th August.

Jeremy & Kim Robinson were the hosts for our August meeting. Because I had never seen this property I was really looking forward to the experience. It was a beautiful sunny day and much warmer than it had been for awhile. It was good to catch up with lots of the regular members as well as Loc who lives in the Proserpine area. There were numerous visitors including Jeremy's parents, Myra & Rex who also live in the area. Rex told me that Jeremy and Kim bought the 160 acre property about 8 years ago. Over the years there have been lots of weekend working bees to get the road to the house and the creek crossings built. Definitely not your average drive way.

The business side of the meeting was dealt with efficiently by Nick, Paul & Alyth. Heather was very busy with the fruit & prepared food table and Carol has volunteered to assist her at future meetings. Heather gave a little talk about the Chinese yam and mentioned that it needed a trellis to grow on and you can use the tubers like you would use potato, that is boiled & mashed or made into chips. Jeremy said that it's best, when using yam for chips, not to have the oil too hot. He also said that he has grown yams in half a 44 gallon drum then knocked the drum over when the vine died back. This makes harvesting very easy. He mentioned that when grown in the ground it can travel under rocks and you have to work like a palaeontologist to harvest it.

There was a really impressive array of fruit and prepared food and I'm sure that there was something to suit all taste buds. After the marathon, also known as the auction, Jeremy took us on a guided tour of his beloved fruit trees. The trees, that Jeremy has planted, are spread around over a large area and in some places they're growing in amongst the natural bush. He mentioned that the plants he acquires need to be very tough and hardy as he will only molly coddle a plant if he really likes the fruit.

I set up the audio recorder and Jeremy changed his shirt especially to accommodate the recorder in a pocket. Unfortunately I didn't set the recorder up correctly and that night I discovered that nothing that Jeremy had said, while showing us around his place, was recorded. I have since asked Paul for the instruction sheet that came with the recorder. I later emailed Jeremy and he sent me a list of the plants (and the part used) that he most likely would have shown us.



We started off close to the house where there was sweet leaf growing, it has leaves that can be used fresh or cooked. There were a couple of low growing leafy greens, plantain (*Plantago major*) and Brazil spinach (*Alternanthera sissoo*) which is best cooked as the leaves are fairly tough. Around this general area Jeremy picked and ate a good handful of the leaves from a cobbler peg bush. So next time you find yourself short of greens just go and raid the cobbler peg bush. Another leafy green that Jeremy grows is aibika which is a hibiscus relative.

There was an attractive plant covered with seed heads that Jeremy called a seeding type lemon grass and he's growing it for an ornamental screen. (see **photo above left**).



It was definitely different from the regular lemon grass that you use in Thai cooking and the aroma, of the leaves when crushed, wasn't as strong as the regular plant. I noticed that his turmeric plant still had some green leaves which I found a little strange as mine died back some time ago.

There were lots of pepper vines (*Piper nigrum*) and they were all loaded with immature berries. See **above photo** of pepper vine with fruit.

Another interesting tree was the toilet paper tree. See **photo on right**.

Supposedly you can use the leaves instead of the normal toilet issues. I'll think I'll stick with Sorbent toilet tissues. There were lots of interesting plants growing on this property and I don't intend to mention all of them as space wouldn't allow me. There was breadnut and breadfruit as well as a Maya breadfruit (*Brosimum alicastrum*) which so far hasn't produced any fruit.



Lots of jakfruit seedlings were planted along a bank with the purpose of stabilizing the bank. There's lots of Thai coriander growing wild in the "lawn" and you'll see that Jeremy used it in the Canistel Guacamole that we enjoyed earlier.

There was a *Chrysophyllum* species which is from the same genus as the star apple but the under part of the leaf isn't bronze. There were yellow & purple jaboticabas and a *Myrciaria Vexator* (blue grape) which produces a similar type of fruit to the jaboticaba. For all chocolate lovers please be aware that Jeremy is also growing the cocoa plant (*Theobroma grandiflorum*).

He has a variety of guavas including one called Guisaro which had lots of tiny fruit that looked a little like a feijoa and they are small, yellow and oval when ripe. I would really like to try this fruit when it's ripe as I like the majority of guavas that I have tasted over the years. Various palms like betel nut, peach palm and salak palm (which is flowering but no fruit as yet) are planted in amongst the natives and exotics. He also has durians, rambutan, a vanilla "vine" climbing over other plants and both red and white Shahtoot mulberries.

There was a Ticazo vine (*Plunkenetia volubilis*) and we had sampled the seeds from this earlier in the day. If I remember correctly they were very popular and I think Jeremy had processed them in some way but not sure how.

In the spice department there's cardamom (the real deal and the false one), cinnamon (Jeremy has processed the bark to make cinnamon quills) and Galangal. The **photo on the right** is the seed pods growing at the base of the real cardamom plant.

I feel very fortunately that, on the day, I was able to purchase a real cardamom plant as I have been looking for one for many years.

He has different varieties of costus and mentioned that all flowers are edible and you can cut the plants off low then use the new shoots as you would asparagus. He also said they were a bit slimy and not too tasty.



The Robinson's household is powered by solar panels and only occasionally backed up with a petrol generator. There's also has a composting toilet and I sincerely hope that they are happier with their's as I'm not very happy with ours and I'm sure that we have the same brand.

It was really good to look around the property and to see some exotic fruit trees that I haven't heard of before. It was a really good day and I would like to say a **big Thank you** to **Jeremy & Kim** for hosting the meeting and allowing us to view their wonderful collection of plants.

Report and photos contributed by Shirley Kerle

Weed Watch



Satinleaf; *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*

Satinleaf is a small tree of the Sapotaceae plant family and native to Central America, the Caribbean and south eastern Florida. It is occasionally planted as an ornamental tree in Eastern Australia, as well as by rare fruit enthusiast, and it's beginning to spread into near by bushland.

This species is relatively rare in cultivation in Australia, however it has been recorded becoming naturalised on a handful of occasions in recent years in south east Qld and north eastern NSW.

Peter Alden, Biosecurity officer Mackay, asked me to pass on this information to our members. If you have any questions please phone him on (07) 4967 602 or 0407 120104. Remember that birds spread seeds into bushland very easily. If you have this plant growing please consider the possible consequences.