

Rivers End Nursery & Farm

The Valley Nursery with World-Wide Appeal

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Winter 2010

Open every Friday & Saturday
10AM to 5PM or by Appointment

Event Schedule

Walking Tours take place about every 6 weeks Spring into Fall. This 1 to 2 hour Ramble through our Orchard is an opportunity to see mature exotic fruit trees along with many of the flowering trees in our collection. The cost is \$3 per person and each ticket does entitle you to 10% off your first tree purchase that day.

Saturday, March 20, 2010	10 AM
Saturday, May 1, 2010	9 AM
Saturday, June 12, 2010	9 AM
Saturday, September 4, 2010	9 AM
Saturday, October 16, 2010	9 AM

Mango Festival will be happening late July.

What a year this has been. The new shadehouse built to replace the one we lost in Dolly was just one of several building projects we completed this year. We continue to add to our collections with new plantings in the orchard. We have this great new logo and will soon have some revisions to our web site uploaded. And of course, even our chickens have seen some changes.

We have had a year of first in our orchard also—several of the Coconut Palms produced coconuts this year, our Mabola or Velvet Apple also fruited. The 2 trees we have in the orchard are special to us—they are seedlings we grew from fruit we enjoyed while visiting the orchard of one of the originals in the Tropical Fruit world of Florida and it turned out we had both a male and a female tree.

Our Jelly and Jam lines have expanded along with the availability of our Fruit Breads. With our products you get more of the real fruit taste and less of the sugar). Our Passion Fruit has been the big hit this year and we will be introducing our Sea Plum Jelly soon.

Many of you used our Taste of the Tropics Gift Fruit Boxes during the Holidays but we do offer Fruit Boxes just about year round. We can make up a small or large box with whatever fruit we are harvesting or do a variety box for you that includes a jar of one of our Tropical Fruit Jellies.

Our Annual Spring Propagation Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, February 13. As always it includes hands-on grafting practice as well as other propagation techniques. Make sure you reserve a spot for this program. A grafting or budding knife is required. There are a limited number available for sale at the Nursery.

As always we wish you a fruit for all seasons.

Ed & Kathy Pechacek

Were You Prepared?

This is the year they predicted a wetter and colder winter for the Valley and it appears they were right. As we have had such warm winters since the snow of 2004, many of us have gotten a bit lax on protecting our tropical plants

There are two kinds of freeze events—frost and wind borne freeze. Frost usually develops during cold fronts with clear skies and no wind movement. Frost occurs when the dewpoint of the air is reached at freezing temperatures. The water vapor in the air changes to ice crystals on exposed surfaces. Wind borne freezes are an invasion of a large, very cold air mass. The wind speed is usually in excess of 5 mph, clouds are commonly present during much of this event and the air is usually quite dry.

Cold injury can also take place even when the temperature does not reach freezing. Some tropical plants can not even survive temperatures that dip below 50°. For other plants, the colder temperatures can kill forming buds like those Mango blooms that formed in December or injure roots of plants in exposed containers.

Healthy plants are more resistant to cold than plants weakened by disease, insect damage or nematode damage. Plants grown with optimal levels and balance of nutrients will tolerate cold temperatures better and recover from injury faster than plants with suboptimal or imbalanced nutrition.

It is really important NOT to begin pruning back cold damage plants. This can encourage sprouting and if we have another round of near freezing temperatures it could be fatal to the plant. Be patient, it will be Spring soon and once the trees begin to sprout out you will be able to see just how far back any pruning should be.

"If you don't like the weather here in paradise, wait 15 minutes and it will change"

It is critical that all your plants get fed this spring. In most years it is not unusual for fruit trees especially to experience a transient shortage of some of the micronutrients. Following a cold event like we had this January, the shortage will be greater than normal. Whether you use organic fertilizers or synthetic, it is very important that you feed your plants well once Spring has sprung.

Is My Fruit Ripe? Or What Difference a Day Makes

If you ever tried a certain fruit and it was all you could do to keep from spitting it out? Or perhaps there is the fruit that you taste that you were sure was the most wonderful taste in the world. For many tropical fruits they can taste terrible today, but absolutely delicious tomorrow. That may seem strange, after all the fruits at chain grocery stores sit there for days and I've never eaten apple that made a lot of difference whether I ate today or next week.

Fruits that are called Sapotes and the avocados are called climacteric and are generally picked while they are still hard and then allowed to finish ripening on the counter. There are certain changes in color or texture that signal the fruit is mature but it needs to finish aging before you can enjoy their true flavor. The Chico Sapote and Black Sapote are two such fruits that we are enjoying now.

Food for Your Plants

When it comes to feeding those you love whether its your family or your plants, you want to make sure that you are providing all their nutritional requirements. And just we have the food pyramid, plants also require certain nutrients in differing amounts. The three we always hear about, Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium (N-P-K) are considered the major elements because they typically make up the bulk (by volume) of nutritional needs. The micronutrients, things like Magnesium (Mg), Calcium (Ca), Iron (Fe), Sulfur (S), Zinc (Zn) along with 10 other elements are also a critical part of feeding your plants. If any one of them is not present in sufficient amounts, the reactions that take place inside the plant cells are affected and your plant can not grow and thrive correctly— no matter how much nitrogen is present.

Here in South Texas, the alkalinity (saltiness) of our soil frequently binds up the micronutrients so they are not able to be absorbed by the plants. An easy way to overcome this limitation is to apply the nutrients directly to the leaves. Using a liquid spray you can readily overcome deficiencies in many of the minor elements to maximize the growth potential of your plants.

Talk to us about some of the choices you have in making sure your plants have a full plate.

There is more alphabet to this soup than N-P-K. They are the vitamins for your plants.

And Some Kitchen Door Food for You

Chaya (*Cnidocolus chayamansa*) is a native shrub from Mexico that produces large quantities of dark green, nutritious leaves. It is considered a tasty vegetable and is exceptionally high in protein, calcium, iron and vitamin A that thrives in dry climates with little water but it even more prolific with good amounts of water. Easily propagated by cuttings and well adapted to full sun, the edible leaves get even larger and more tender when planted under the light shade of a mesquite or royal Poinciana. Do not eat Chaya leaves uncooked as it the raw leaves contain toxic substances. To prepare for eating boil the leaves for a few minutes, pour off that water and replace with fresh water to continue cooking to remove the toxicity!

Moringa (*Moringa oleifera* & *stenopetala*), also called Malunggay, Benzolive tree and Drumstick tree is entirely edible. The leaves are outstanding as a source of vitamin A and when raw, vitamin C. They are also a good source of B vitamins and among the best plant sources of minerals being high in calcium and iron. Moringa is a rich source of sulfur containing amino acids methionine and cystine which are often lacking. Being an excellent source of protein and a low source of fat and carbohydrates the leaves are one of the best plant foods that can be found. This wonder-plant is used in impoverished countries more and more to supplement the nutrition deficiencies of women and children. Leaves are commonly used a spinach is and can be dried, pulverized and as a powder added to other food to enhance nutrition levels. The flowers are used in stir-fry dishes and the seed pods (drumsticks) are eaten like green beans.