



Dear Friends of the Fruit Tree:

A few weeks ago we put out a call to all members to share their stories for April's newsletter. A big thank you to everyone who contributed! Here are the stories and tips, essentially in the order received.

Didn't have time to get your story in? Send it to crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com and we'll make sure it gets into the May 2020 Newsletter!

New Website Coming Soon!

The Central Coast CRFG webpage will be moving to a new web host sometime this coming week. I hope you will like the new design!

The website URL will still be **www.crfg-central.org**

However if you have bookmarks to specific website pages, such as the calendar or the newsletter, those bookmarks will no longer work. You'll need to go to the main webpage and then use the menu to navigate to the page of interest.

Poppies!

by Terri Monell

Hi all,

Well, I think the poppies have done all of the work even though I am out in the garden daily getting rid of the competitors- WEEDS! I think I am winning!

This was my picture sent to friends and family wishing everyone a very happy Easter! Enjoy!



An Easter In the Orchard by Jesse Englert

I wanted to send you a note about some fun that happened at the orchard this morning. I successfully lured my family into a mini work day with an Easter Egg hunt. I figured no one would be there and we really needed to get out of the house. The kids had a blast hunting for eggs hidden in the trees. Afterward we did a few hours of work picking up debris and thinning peaches & nectarines.



Good news is there appears to be a heavy crop of apricots, peaches, & nectarines. A few pluots and plums are growing but seems less than last year.

Bad news is the weeds are taking over (wish I had a gas weed wacker) and the back fence to the citrus grove has fallen down. The fence was too heavy for us to pick up :-)

There will be lots of work to do when the pandemic is over but in the mean time we're chipping away at some of the work every Saturday morning.



Temporary Fix for the Orchard Fence by Dara Manker

Thank you Jesse for letting Manny and me know that part of the CRFG Orchard fence was down!

Manny, Adela, and I went to Cal Poly to check it out. We found that the post holding up the large gate by the Lemon Grove had rotted out.

We notified Cal Poly, who already knew about it. Unfortunately, they have limited staff right now due to the coronavirus. They said it could be awhile before they could fix it.



As a temporary solution, we grabbed a roll of fencing that I'd bought years ago but we'd never put up. That turned out to be a good thing, because it was just what we needed for a temporary fix. We found some makeshift posts, installed them, and zip-tied the fence to the posts. Done for now!

Peach Leaf Curl

by Lori Bright

Well it's a **Fabulous Year For A Fungus!** Yes, if you are a fungus this is the year for you. Late rains with warming temperatures are a fungus' best friend. I don't know about you but *Taprina deformans* is running amok in my orchard. That's Peach Leaf Curl to us non-fungans.

Peach Leaf Curl is generally going to run its course and be only cosmetic. For those really bad infections and especially if you have Peach Leaf Curl year after year, it can in fact, weaken your tree. If you have a really bad infection, you might see russetting of your fruit. Did I mention that Peach Leaf Curl only affects Peaches and Nectarines? If you have other trees with curly leaves you should look elsewhere for your diagnosis. From the Chuck Ingels book **The Home Orchard**, "*The fungus overwinters as spores on the surface of twigs and buds. When the buds begin to grow in spring, the spores grow into the developing tissue. The fungus grows between cells just under the leaf, fruit, or shoot surface, causing abnormal cell growth in young plant tissue that results in the characteristic distortion.*" Don't Pick Those Leaves! Any leaf is a good leaf, even if it's ugly. Let those ugly leaves make food for the tree until they drop and become replaced with healthy leaves.



What to do, what to do. Well applying dormant spray is the time tested method to avoid Peach Leaf Curl but there is a catch. You must do it while the tree is Dormant and you must use it at the right time, and you must find a product that will do the trick! Let's break that down. The best sprays are Copper and oil or lime-sulfur and oil. Copper or lime-sulfur act as your fungicide the oil component works to kill any hidden insects that might carry a pathogen to the otherwise uninfected tree. Easy Peasy? Not so much, lime-sulfur is restricted and the copper we buy in our garden centers has a low level of copper in it. Where we once

sprayed with a 40-50 percent solution of copper, we are lucky to find a 10 percent solution in our products today. So working with what is available we spray the tree. We once sprayed the tree on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Super Bowl Sunday. Three applications. What we know now is that two appropriately timed applications works best. The first application (based on your immaculately kept records from previous years) should be approximately three weeks before bud break. The second application, at popcorn stage. Popcorn stage is pretty much just as it sounds, it is bud break with some added swelling. If the flowers open fully and you apply, you will impair pollination. Yes, this takes some close attention, but what else do you have to do in your garden on those gloomy days before Spring? Be sure to coat the tree completely, that includes the trunk.

But that's great for next year you exclaim, what do I do now? So just as heavy applications of Nitrogen in Winter might push your tree to grow too rapidly, (possibly exacerbating the happy pathogen) once the climatic conditions have passed, adding that extra Nitrogen might help to push new uninfected leaves to the forefront. Our best course of action today is to wait until we are reasonably sure that the rains have passed and apply some nice organic fertilizer that's heavy on the Nitrogen end. The granular products are fine (Dr. Earth "Fruit Tree" or Espoma "Tree-tone") but there are faster products. I like Fish Fertilizer or Blood meal. Fish Fertilizer is a liquid so a couple/few applications would be best.

There are some Peach and Nectarine varieties that tout Peach Leaf Curl Resistance. Resistance, mind you, not imperviousness. Check out [Dave Wilson Nursery's](#) Peach and Nectarine varieties if you like, they have several resistant possibilities.

Most important I think, is to keep your trees healthy. Water and prune as needed, monitor pests, mulch and keep weeds down. A stressed tree is a susceptible tree. Give your tree love throughout the year and he will be better prepared for these seasonal bumps-in-the-road such as Peach Leaf Curl.

Repotting Anthuriums by Steve Johnson

Aloha All-

First, some background. Ruth and I live in SLO and I participate in the CRFG activities regularly. Since Ruth is from Kauai we try to be in the islands in the spring while the weather is comfortable.



Every couple of years I repot the anthuriums. They need to be trimmed, cleaned up and moved to medium containers. They seem to like close quarters. They also produce baby offshoots in each pot. Called keki in Hawaii. When I find several keki they form a new smaller pot. The soil mixture is about a third bark and lava cinders. Then perlite, peat moss, potting soil and time release fertilizer. I'll have about forty plants total this year. It keeps me busy and I enjoy giving the plants away to neighbors and friends.

Aloha,
Steve and Ruth Johnson

**New Pear Tree
by Dr. Barry Dorfman**

Comice Pear scion on Old Home x Farmingdale 333 Pear Rootstock – OHxF 333
Thanks Alisha.

Dr. Barry Dorfman
Pismo Beach



An Old Orchard Revived **by Sally Newland**

Almost two years ago, my husband and I bought four acres just outside SLO city limit in the banana belt climate area. The property included an orchard, and it was obvious that the previous owners loved fruit trees. The trees were numerous, and exotic. Reluctantly, as the owners aged, the trees were neglected.

When we became the new owners, we were thrilled by the property, and eager to jump in and try to restore the orchard. Although we have been avid gardeners for decades, we have no experience with fruit trees, so we sought advice from our gardening network. We kept hearing over, and over again....'You need to talk to Joe Sabol!' Seriously, everybody seemed to know this 'Joe' person! Finally, Paul Schmidt, a friend of ours, set up a meeting.



Paul and Joe came up and identified all of the mysterious trees. They brought grafting tools and showed us how to graft multiple tree varieties on one tree. We were in awe! Joe looked at an ancient apple tree that was completely dead and explained that we could cut the

tree down and graft the suckers. So, out came the saw, followed by the grafting tools, and now we have a vibrant Fuji apple tree! It is magic!

Joe knew the former owners, and shared stories that were endearing and enlightening.

Over the past two years, we think of the former owners often as we continually discover their obvious love for the property, and we feel honored as we wash the same soil off of our hands at the end of the day.

Our thanks go to Joe for grafting our trees, and our hearts.



Loquat tree full of fruit!



Mango tree in bloom



The 'Winter Banana' apple is the first graft that George and I tried on our own this year. We are still amazed that it is blooming!! We check it, and our other first time graft successes almost daily, like proud new parents!



Granddaughter's FFA Project by Elaine Rathbun

When you have a big job to do bring in the professional weed eaters!



Emily has been raising sheep and rabbits for several years, first as a 4-H member, now in the FFA in Tranquillity. The principal at her school decided that she didn't want animals on the school farm so my daughter and her husband (Emily's parents) moved Emily's 4 ewes, 4 lambs, 32 rabbits, plus a rooster, 2 hens and a chick that belonged to the school over here last week. Emily is living with me now and taking care of the animals, including two of the lambs have to be bottle fed. We have raised sheep over the years but I thought I was pretty much out of the sheep 'business' but they have lots of personality and are fun to have during our 'lockdown'. =)

Self isolation instead of attending CRFG meetings in person?

by Joe Sabol

We are self isolated at home. We have a big garden and orchard with many chores to do including grafting, weeding, pruning and playing with dahlias and sweet peas. Joe has grafted dozens of apple rootstock that was headed to high schools for their grafting. We should have plenty of grafted apple trees to sell at "Arbor Day" "Harvest Festival" and the "Tomato Extravaganza" if we are invited to participate this spring. See photo... Joe with the grafted trees, wearing a protective mask that was made by Jill.



A New Take on Vermacomposting at Home

by Lori Bright

What to do with Worms:

I, like many garden geeks bought one of those worm condominiums. Yeah, it works ok but I'm always trying to improve upon a good thing. So let me introduce you to a couple of really fun inventions that I like even better.

The first one is something I fandangoed from things I saw on the internet and some of my own silliness. This is a Worm Bag. So the idea here is that because worms always 1) Stay where it's dark and 2) Eat their way from their wormy waste to new fresh food sources I decided that this Worm Bag method would be just what I needed. First you throw some decent soil into the bag. This will fall to the semi-transparent bottom portion of the bag. Worms avoid this area because of the light. Next as you do with all Vermiculture Ventures you add green waste and carbony substances. The worms do their work in the darkened area of the bag and the golden castings build up on top of the original soil that you put in the bag. After the bag is close to full you simply open up the bottom of the bag with your handy dandy draw string pull. Let out half of the bag at this first use, as you will have a mix of soil and castings together.



After that first release all the material released from the worm bag will be pure castings. The biggest drawbacks to this method are a) Where to place the bag?. Ideally you want the bag positioned up high enough to make the casting release from below easy but low enough that adding the worm fodder to the top is accessible. 2) This is an item you would make yourself. So you would need to be a bit industrious

and then when you have your design and are ready to go you still need to find quality materials that could go the distance.

Here is one that I'm really happy with. We'll call them Worm Tubes. This one works best if you use raised beds. You will need some PVC or ABS type pipe. Four, five or six inch would work. Cut your pipe so that a portion of this pipe will be above ground (6") and a foot or two will be below ground. In that portion that is below ground you will drill a multitude of holes. (This will allow the worms to come and go from the pipe) I used a 1/2" bit and placed the holes 2-3 inches apart. Knowing that worms have a delicate "skin" I softened the edges of the holes with a little sand paper. Now simply place your pipe at an interior corner of your raised bed. You can secure it with a little plumbers tape if you like. Voila! Feed your Worms in your Worm Tube. I rotate kitchen scraps with shredded paper. I love this one, I think you will too!



Sheri's Garden

by Sheri Thompson

First of all, I hope that everyone is doing well and keeping healthy and safe!! My garden is my favorite place to be. I have been spending all my time outside trying to get caught up on my projects: propagating, grafting, pulling weeds and cleaning my greenhouse!



Propagation: This is my propagation area where I am trying to root many different kinds of plants. I have everything from grapes, figs, mulberries, tomatoes, Virginia creeper, hydrangeas, lavender, salvia, geraniums, maple, Tamarix, Dawn Redwood, and Olallieberry. I am just having fun trying everything!



Grafting: Even though I have grafted for a while, since I have been a CRFG Member I have really stepped up my effort. This year I purchased about 25 rootstocks from the Scion exchange: apple, plum, cherry and pear. I have grafted all of them and have been very pleased with the number that are growing. I just learned to bud graft, so cut off about 5 that didn't make it through the heat. I was happy to get to practice bud grafting!



Garden: No garden is complete without veggies and flowers! Here I am hardening off my seedlings: different squashes, lots of beets, radishes, kale, carrots, tomatoes, marigolds, calendulas, bee balm, sunflowers, and a new thing for me this year, ground cherries.



Layering: Everywhere in my yard, you will see me trying to propagate different plants by simple layering. My yard wasn't enough, my neighbor invited me to go into his back yard and layer anything I wanted!! That was pretty fun! Come May, I am going to try my hand at air layering.



Project: My big project is cleaning out my greenhouse. It is getting done slowly as it is definitely not the most fun. However, when I am done, I will be able to get all my orchids, Epiphyllums, and cherished plants in here and they will be better protected!



Wouldn't be complete without pics of my outside friends. Lower branches of my Loquat are fair game for the chickens! Ducks, of course, just love water. Tortellini just loves calendulas!!

