

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter



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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

“Satsuma Sky”

Photo by Joe Sabol

Editor’s Note: Members of the Central Coast Chapter CRFG or those on our courtesy mailing list receive this newsletter. If you would like to unsubscribe, please e-mail: handynana@hortons.us. Thanks to electronic distribution, newsletter costs are kept to a minimum. We have well over 100 names on our e-mail list. Please keep membership coordinator, **Dick Pottratz**, updated on your current e-mail address. Contact Dick at: Pottratz@sbcglobal.net

Beginning with this edition, we hope to make this a monthly newsletter. That should make the information in it timelier. Chapter members are encouraged to submit articles of interest. You may e-mail me at the above address or send by snail mail to: Lennette Horton, 265 Rim Rock Road, Nipomo, CA, 93444.

2004...Year of the Berry The Golden Berry Solanaceae Physalis peruviana

Golden Berry, Cape Gooseberry, Husk Cherry, Peruvian Ground Cherry, Poha Berry---by whatever name you call it---is an interesting fruit and one that seems well suited for growing on the Central Coast. It is also rather rare here, and possibly something you’d like to consider growing as a crop to sell at Farmer’s Markets or other similar venues. As it is labor intensive to harvest, it is not often grown commercially, which makes it great for the small-scale gardener! The flavor is described as a blend of pineapple and strawberry. It has a high pectin content making it perfect for jam or other

preserves. It is also delicious eaten fresh or added to salads. Pie is another appetizing alternative method of preparing them. How about trying these beautiful little gems dipped in chocolate? Oh, yum! Besides being tasty, it is high in Vitamin C and A.

Description: The plant has heart-shaped, velvety, sage green leaves about 6 inches long. It bears star-shaped, slightly bell like, yellow flowers with a purple blotch in the center and with a large calyx behind. Fruit forms in the calyx and can take 70-80 days to mature. The ripe fruit is a lovely, waxy, orange ball, encased in a straw-colored calyx. Mature fruit falls from the plant and finishes ripening on the ground or it can be picked when orange and dried on trays. It may take some experience for you to learn when the fruit is really ripe, but properly cared for, it can last for some months. (**Unripe** fruit may be poisonous to some people, as are ingested leaves and stems. Remember, this plant is a close relative of the tomato and the potato—part of the nightshade family!)

Propagation and Growing: The best plants come from seed, which should be planted in early winter and protected from frost until they are set out in their permanent location. High humidity is required for good germination. Plants can also be air layered or rooted from cuttings, but the seed-grown plants seem to be more vigorous. They are self-pollinating, but do benefit from occasional water spraying or shaking of the plant. A growing area that is in full-sun, yet protected from the wind, well-drained soil, and plenty of water seem to be the plant's main needs. Higher yields are produced where no fertilizer is added. If the soil is too rich the plant will put on plenty of leafy growth, but very little fruit. The plants are frost tender and are killed at temperatures of about 30° F. Protected from frost, they are short-lived (3-years) perennials.

Pests and Diseases: About the only bad news regarding this plant is that the Golden Berry is bothered by several diseases, including powdery mildew (just like tomatoes). The plants can be prone to root rots and viruses when grown on poorly drained soil. Then there are the insect pests that enjoy munching away: cut worm, stem borer, leaf borer, fruit moth, Colorado potato beetle, flea beetle and striped cucumber beetle, and the ever lovely white fly and aphid!

Note: I will hand out small packets of Golden Berry seeds at the January meeting to any of you who wish to grow some trial plants. For more information on these berries, go to the **CRFG** website. (Lennette Horton)

Recent Happenings

November Meeting—Ultimate Gopher Getting Workshop—John & Sandra Pirghaibi's Avocado Ranch: A real downpour didn't appear to daunt the 50 plus members and guests who squeezed into John and Sandra's garage in the Nipomo Hills on Saturday, November 8. A flag salute led by two veterans got us off to an early start in observing Veteran's Day. In Joe Sabol's absence, Art DeKline held a brief business meeting. (Dr. Joe was at the State Board Meeting.) Then, it was on to the gopher getting! Due to the rain, we couldn't go outside for "field testing", but there were plenty of demonstrations on how to use various traps, tricks, and tools to attempt eradication of these prolific pests!

Dawn King gave an overview of gophers, mainly to let us know what we are up against as growers. She said that if you have one pair of gophers on one acre of your property on January 1, by December 31, you could have as many as 300! Females have a 13 day gestation period, have litters of about 13, and have as many as three litters a year! Gophers are solitary creatures (except when breeding) whose young are sent from their nests as soon as they can burrow. These voracious eaters stay mainly underground, although they do come out at night and occasionally during the day. Their four front incisors grow constantly—about 11 ½" per year—so they need to constantly use them. Tunnels have been found as deep as 5-6', although the gophers seem to prefer to keep them about 18-24" deep. Dawn mainly uses box traps for gopher control, but she uses the *enticement* of fresh carrots, parsley, or onions to lure the gopher's to their demise! Another one of her "tricks" is to cover the hole she has dug for the trap with a flower pot.

Chuck Atlee demonstrated a box trap. Wiring the trap to a heavy stick or rod is very important because other animals, such as cats and coyotes are notorious for removing the gopher, trap and all. Chuck finds the gopher's tunnel with a probe, digs down, and then sets a box trap each way in the tunnel. In one of his first jobs, he had to maintain an experimental citrus orchard on 5-acres. He caught 1100 gophers on that property in one year! Chuck also told several stories of how gophers devastate crops all over the world. One method farmers in Spain seemed to have good success in trapping gophers with was by cutting the tops off of liter-sized plastic bottles, digging a hole and putting the bottles in the hole so that the top is at ground level, and putting fresh vegetables at the bottom of the bottle. The gophers go for the vegetables, fall in, and can't get out. When asked how land could finally be free from the gopher scourge, Chuck replied, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance!"

Al King gave a serious demonstration of various kinds of box traps, as well as some rather “exotic” traps he uses when “gophers aren’t responding properly” to his box traps. His favorite trap is a box style with two “killing” prongs, followed by the Santa Barbara steel box trap. He showed us how to set the traps properly and mentioned that for those dedicated trappers among us, we could go to www.northwesttrappers.com to get the variety of traps he had! Al, too, mentioned the importance of staking your traps, as well as using little flags to help you find them.

Bernie Horton brought his t-bar tool and poison granules. He maintains he has had excellent results over the years in many types of soil, by baiting the gopher tunnels with poison granules. Although one can’t actually get a “body count” with using poison, results are exhibited by the fact that the gopher isn’t digging new tunnels or destroying plants. The same holds true for the carbon monoxide method of putting a garden hose on your car exhaust with an attachment and letting the engine run for 10-15 minutes. Bernie had brought one of the exhaust attachments and **John Pirghaibi** had one that he showed us already attached to a hose. There were several stories told about success, or lack of it, using car exhaust. Bernie and others also talked about the effectiveness of “gopher bombs” which are not poisonous gas, but rather designed to replace the oxygen in the tunnels with sulfur which suffocates the gopher/gophers in the area.

John Pirghaibi gave a book on controlling pests—including gophers—to the chapter for our library.

Al Kelly told us briefly of a method he doesn’t suggest using—oxygen and propane, which blows fire down the tunnel, and sometimes out the tunnel! His gopher “bombing” caught the grass at his vineyard on fire and three fire trucks responded to put the fire out. He felt very embarrassed, but thankful that worse damage wasn’t done—and really grateful to the fireman who didn’t give him a ticket!

Doug Allen brought the eaten-off end of his prized plum tree to show the damage a gopher can do above ground. What made Doug’s story even more amazing was when he showed us the hole the gopher had chewed through the 5-gallon can that the tree was planted in! Doug had been a proponent of wire cages or baskets for protecting his plants, but grew frustrated when the baskets deteriorated after only a short time in the ground. After some experimentation, he has come up with a very interesting solution to that problem—he has made concrete grids that don’t deteriorate, are cost effective, and that gophers can’t eat through! He may have a real winner there and a million-dollar business! Contact him for more on his innovative design.

Everyone seemed to have a “gopher story” to share and we had some good laughs. There were as many ways to kill a gopher demonstrated as there were personality types wanting to get rid of the pests! **Art DeKline** summed it all up pretty well when he said, “If you find something that works for you, go-pher it!”

Thanks again, **John and Sandra**, for being such gracious hosts!

December Meeting, Potluck, and Plant Exchange: (Reported by Joe Sabol) Sixty-five people gathered at the PG&E Facility off San Luis Bay Drive for this event. The meeting was called to order by co-chair, **Art DeKleine**, who introduced guest speaker, **Ellen Ruehr**, Food Program Manager at Cal Poly’s Children’s Center. Ellen gave an interesting and informative 12-minute illustrated talk on “Holiday Foods” and then answered many questions. She promised to give us some recipes by email. Art gave her a CRFG hat as a gift of appreciation. Thanks Ellen!

Art also agreed to provide leadership for our CRFG Chapter in the planting of several fruit trees in the Children’s Center garden. (Report on this in February Newsletter.)

Then we ate! The potluck included lots of wonderful foods brought by members, with several of them explaining what that food was. Thanks to all of you for the delicious repast! There were boxes of apples and persimmons from **Art DeKleine** who encouraged members to take what they could use. Thanks again, Art!

After the meal, rootstock orders were taken for the February Meeting. The January meeting at the Crops Unit at Cal Poly was mentioned and members and guests were encouraged to bring their loppers, clippers, or pruning shears and follow the directions given by our guest pruner as we prune our Community Orchard that day!

Members were encouraged to check their membership with **Dick Pottratz** and pay their dues for the year/years ahead. (A list of members who need to pay their dues is included with this newsletter.)

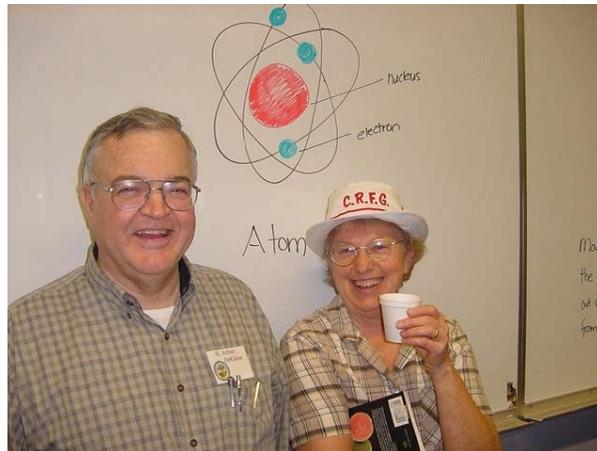
Art DeKleine then read a nice article about **Joe Sabol**, recipient of a National FFA award presented recently in Louisville, KY. (See more on this in “Announcements.”)

Doug Allen gave us a short demonstration of his "concrete gopher wall" and donated a full set to the plant raffle. He also alerted us to a strawberry planter that might be available for members in the near future.

Pet Daniels explained the Plant Exchange where members brought their "quality fruit trees" and met the standards of the committee. She then quickly conducted the Exchange using playing cards for the order of selection.

The meeting was then adjourned so we could go outside to the Plant Raffle. **Doug Allen** (Santa) reported over \$140 was collected for this annual event. He then conducted the exciting, fast moving, and fun raffle. A big thanks to all who brought plants for this special event, especially **Robert and Carol Scott** who brought a "truckload" of high quality plants, all with holiday labels to help members and guest to know what they were selecting!

Thanks, **Marv Daniels**, for lining up the PG&E facility and for supervising the clean-up of the meeting room.



Art DeKleine and Ellen Ruehr

Raised Beds for Trees

By Joe Sabol

Raised beds for vegetables and flowers have been around for a long time, as long ago as 300 BC!!! If you are planting bare root fruit trees this winter, you might consider planting them in a raised bed.

What is a raised bed? Anything that you do to increase the level of soil above the surrounding soil is a raised bed. The most basic raised bed would be a simple mound of soil. Additional steps might include some sort of structure or containment so the increased level of soil will stay that way. You might use rocks, blocks, bricks, or lumber.

Why a raised bed might be desirable? First, if you have shallow soil, a raised bed will give your tree roots an additional 6 or 8 or 12 inches of soil. Second, if your soil is poorly drained, a raised bed will drain much better than your native soil. Most fruit trees do not enjoy poorly drained soils. If your soil is rocky, steep, easily compacted or just plain "poor soil," you should consider a raised bed!!! A raised bed will warm the roots faster in the spring. And, finally, gopher control may be easier initially!!

So how do you build a raised bed? After you select your material to contain the bed, you might cultivate (dig up!) the native soil where your bed will go. Place your lumber or other containment material where your bed will be located and fill the box or circle with compost!!! If you are short of compost, add any good quality soil you can, and mix thoroughly. I also like to add some sand to improve the drainage. Fill the new "container" to the brim and plant your bare root tree and water thoroughly! Stand back because this tree will start to grow, and it will thank you!!!

Other tips for planting fruit trees in a raised bed:

1. Water trees more frequently than you normally would. Remember, this container will drain well, and your tree will really grow!!
2. Consider starting your first scaffold branches 6 or 8 inches lower. This will help to keep the fruit within reach, especially if your tree is on a "standard" rootstock (non-dwarfing).
3. Add more compost as the bed settles this spring and mulch the top of the bed every year. This will help control the weeds as well as nourish your tree.
4. Put a layer of chicken wire over the native soil before you add your compost to slow those gophers down. Tree roots will grow through chicken wire.

5. When building a raised bed with lumber, be sure to use galvanized nails, screws, lag screws or bolts. I have tried several methods of fastening the lumber in my beds. I like lag screws the best.
6. Construction grade Redwood is probably the most readily available un-treated lumber for construction in our area. It is not cheap but will last more than 10 or 15 years.
7. Go to the internet, search for "raised beds" and then read the lively debate on using pressure treated wood or railroad ties for your bed container!!

Is Worm Poo for You?

By Lennette Horton

An article written by George Hahn in the November/December issue of *Fruit Gardener* magazine really captured my interest. I'll admit that I might not have read the article, "Worm Castings Can Provide Insect Repellency," if I hadn't been trapped in a car for an hour with nothing else to read while I waited for my grand-daughter at her gymnastics class. Once I had read it, though, I kept thinking about it and even went on an internet search to learn more about worm castings.

If you are a member of our State organization, you will have the *Fruit Gardener* magazine and you can read all the technical details there of George's research or you can go on-line to www.wormgold.com to learn more about what makes worm castings work as an insect repellent. You'll read words there like "chitin-degrading organisms" and learn how many cfu/dwg the castings had, and a whole lot more stuff I don't pretend to understand. Basically, worm castings have a high degree of chitinase, which whiteflies and other insects find repellent. So they leave! And, what I want to tell you is that it does work!

My own un-scientific experiment began because I've been plagued by whitefly and aphids. I used to live in a part of California where it got cold enough in the winter to kill off any of those pests that might have gotten a foothold on my plants, but there were also some plants I couldn't grow at that elevation, in particular, fuchsias. Thirteen years ago, when we moved to Pismo Beach with its mild climate, I went crazy buying fuchsias. Then I found out about whiteflies! After trying all the soaps and sprays on the market, to no avail, I simply gave up on attempting to grow fuchsias.

This past June, we moved to our current home in Nipomo. There were some lovely hibiscus plants, roses, and citrus trees in the yard, but it wasn't long before I realized they were infested with aphids and whitefly, plus black mold. Again, I tried a few of the milder remedies, which barely made a dent in the population. Not wanting to cause any harm to the hummingbirds and butterflies I was working to attract, I was about at my wit's end over what to do. Then I read the article on "worm poo" with the amazing assertion that a completely non-toxic, non-smelly, and very plant-beneficial product could rid infected plants of whitefly and aphids!

I found that the product, **Wormgold**, could be purchased by the bag locally at Miner's Hardware, or at Farm Supply. After buying two bags at Miner's, I took them home and spread them an inch thick (suggested for insect repellency) around two of my potted hibiscus plants. Experimentation by others suggested it would take about three weeks to a month for all the infestation to be gone, but my plants were free of insects in about two weeks! Not only that, they look great, thanks to the fertilization properties of the castings. I'm sold! However, I have so many plants to cover that I want to spray them with the liquid **Wormgold** and plan to contact Jim Davis of Tracy, California at jdavis@davisgp.com who is a distributor of the liquid. (Spray is the preferred method of treating commercial crops, especially orchards and vineyards.) Does this remedy sound too good to be true? I thought so, but now I'm convinced. Give it a try yourself!

State of the State

NOVEMBER 8 CRFG STATE BOARD MEETING:

1. Treasurer's Report. Our new publisher will save us a projected \$12,400 next year. Still, using May 2003 figures for estimated expenses, next year there is a predicted shortfall of about \$10,000 for a rather bare bones budget. A CRFG dues change was proposed to cover this. You will see more about this in the next *Fruit Gardener*.
2. The CRFG Festival of Fruit will be held at Cal Poly Pomona, hosted by the Los Angeles Chapter, June 18, 19, and 20, 2004. This is the "Year of the Berry". Registration forms have already been sent to chapter chairs.
3. More than half of all the CRFG members are not associated with local chapters. They do not attend or participate in any "local activities" for a variety of reasons, the biggest one being that they do not live near a chapter. There are even 130 foreign members.

4. There will be a MAJOR plant sale to benefit CRFG at the Huntington Library and Gardens on May 8 and 9 (Mother's Day). Profit from plants we sell will be split between CRFG and the Huntington. David Maislen, Board Member, and new resident of the Central Coast, is the lead person on this. We may sell 600 or 700 plants at this sale, which is open to the public. The trees will come mostly from commercial nurseries, and some from CRFG members/chapters. (Since David has now moved away from the South Coast Basin he is looking for someone closer to the Huntington to take the lead. Contact him at 805-474-4010, or at: dmaislen@charter.net)

5. Candidates for Election to the Board. Nominations are always welcome for new Directors, and Chapter Chairs are asked to give this special attention. Several individuals were recommended at the meeting, and Katie Wong subsequently agreed to run. She is the only candidate not now on the Board. The slate is now as follows: Sven Merten, 3 years; Charles Allen, 3 years; James Bathgate, 3 years; Herb Lee, 3 years; David Maislen, 2 years; Robert Vieth, 2 years; Katie Wong, 2 years.

After lunch there was a brainstorming session. Topics raised were:

1. Goods ordered from Amazon.com through the CRFG website earn us a small amount. It would be good to promote use of this option.

2. Goals for CRFG: Increase Membership! This was the only major goal discussed, and there seemed to be agreement that it was a worthy one not only for raising money, but also for the health of CRFG.

Back Issues Incentive: One chapter has a number of Fruit Gardener back issues, and new members are given a free copy of their choice as an incentive to join.

Two Years of Membership for the Price of One. This was proposed only for chapter members who are not yet CRFG members, and only for next January. Hopefully, many would become long-term members. Herb Lee, as President, has the option of implementing this proposal, and may do so.

3. Name change for CRFG, Inc. There was quite a bit of discussion of this proposal. The primary argument in favor was that the California in the name might be inhibiting formation of new chapters outside California.

Announcements

Join the State Association: Many of our chapter members are also members of the State association and those who aren't should consider joining. With state membership you receive a wonderful color magazine (*Fruit Gardener*) filled with all sorts of great articles, news, chapter activities and contacts. Yearly dues are \$30 as of January 2004. However, there is a **special 2 years for 1 price** for paid members of local chapters if you join in January. Applications are available from Joe Sabol.

Check out the Central Coast CRFG Website: If you haven't done so, visit our chapter website—it's great! Go to www.kcbx.net/~crfgslo/index.htm

Welcome New Members: Britton, Glenn A.; Darway, Chris A.; Fickes, James T.; Griffin, Mella; Lee, Alexandra; Pilj, Susan; Skinner, Mark; Snow, Darrell and Gloria; Zachary, Eileen.

Local Chapter Fees Due in January (If your name is on this list, please send your check for **\$6** to **CRFG** Treasurer, 2430 Leona Avenue, SLO, CA 93401): Ahearn, Sandy; Alberts, Evelyn; Ananda, Shachi; Aubuchon, Gary; Blakey, Ronald; Blayney, Tammy; Byrd, Tom; Cardoza, Mary; Carter, Dr. Lark; Cordes, Reo; DeVries, Dorothy; Earl, Larry; Eberhardt, Roger & Kathleen; Francis, Hunter; Freeling, Bill & Mary Ann; Frey, Norma; Frisch, Harold; Furtick, Bill & Anne; Galbraith, Brian & Cathy; Green, Charlotte; Gurney, David; Hauss, Linda; Henderson, Kay, Hoh, Mei; Hollis, Larry; Jamison, Mary; Johnson, Steve; Keck, Stanton; Malatesta, Joe; Metz, Mike & Joan; Meyer, Father Albert; Middlecamp, Betty; Muran, Tom; Nishida, Ronald; Odenbrett, Rev. Stephen; Openshaw, Dale; Pellemeier, Sheree; Philbin, D. K.; Rego, Liesa; Robbins, Gabrielle; Rose, Eric L.; Ross, George; Ruskey, Jay; Russ, Harold & Marie; Sabol, Joe; Santoyo, Larry; Scarbouough, Eunice W.; Schober, Patti A.; Seeley, Linda; Selkirk, Shirley; Shaw, George F.; Shimamoto, Mrs. Elsie; Shirakata, Norm & Loren; Smith, Kent D.; Tuchinsky, Hal; Walcher, Mary M.; Weaver, Jenny; Wiggin, Margaret.

Dr. Joe Sabol Receives National FFA Honor: At its recent convention in Louisville, KY, Calpoly Agriculture Education and Communication Professor Emeritus, Joe Sabol, received the VIP Commendation for his significant contributions to supporting the Future Farmers of America and its programs. This is the most prestigious award given by the FFA! Good job, Joe!

Cal Poly Continuing Education Offers Course on Citrus Production: The course, "California Citrus Production," is offered through Cal Poly Continuing Education (CPCE) this winter. The ten-session course will begin on January 13 and will meet Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. The fee to attend is \$300 and participants will receive 3 continuing education units upon successful completion of the course.

The instructor will focus on commercial citrus production practices and will include information regarding citrus species, varieties, rootstocks and propagation. Participants can also expect to learn about irrigation systems, soil management, weed control and appropriate fertilization of citrus crops. Additionally, issues pertaining to effective marketing, harvesting and packing will be discussed.

Cal Poly professor Dr. Robert McNeil will instruct the course. McNeil attended Rutgers State University of New Jersey and specializes in citrus and avocado production. He has taught numerous related courses at Cal Poly. For more information on this or any other courses offered by CPCE, please visit www.continuing-ed.calpoly.edu or call 756-2053.

Orchard Update

We'll see for ourselves on January, 10th!

Calendar of CRFG Meetings - 2004

January 10, 2004: Cal Poly. This is our annual CRFG Orchard Pruning Meeting and election of chapter officers. The meeting will begin in the double-wide Crops Lab/Classroom. While we nibble on our refreshments, we'll have a chance to purchase trees, vines, and fruits from Cal Poly students and Dr. McNeil and Launnie Ginn. Then, Tom Spellman, from Dave Wilson Nursery, will speak to our group on a few "pruning principles" before we head to our Community Orchard (a very short walk) and where he will give us a demonstration of his method of pruning deciduous trees. That's when the real fun begins! Members and guests are assigned to a tree and they will go to work on it, under Dave's watchful eye. As pruning is a challenge for most home gardeners, we generally get a good turn-out for this annual event--there were 140 attendees last year! It is also a great time for us to "recruit" new members and do some public relations.

An added bonus this year is that you may bring your dull pruning tools to the orchard and learn how to sharpen them! Contact Marv Daniels for details on tool sharpening. Please bring refreshments **A through H**.

February 14, 2004: 10th Annual Grafting Party and Scion Exchange. Todd Kennedy of San Francisco, a long time member and leader in CRFG, will be our guest speaker and grafter. He will demonstrate the classic Cleft Graft and discuss "Property Rights" in relation to patented varieties and propagating of the same. He is a well respected attorney. Todd is also a regular contributor to the *Fruit Gardener* magazine.

March 13, 2004: The home of Kit and John Long. Kit is a Cymbidium collector and a new member of our chapter. She will show us her Cymbidiums, give us tips on growing these special beauties, and demonstrate her "secret" transplanting techniques. We will have a plant raffle in their driveway. She lives on Rancho Drive in SLO.

April 10, 2004: Paso Robles to "Trees of Antiquity". This is a commercial nursery with 3-year-old plantings of heirloom fruit trees. The owners (partners) took over the Sonoma Antique Apple Nursery and moved it south to Paso Robles. Check their website at: www.treesofantiquity.com Our contact is Tom Linden.

PUT THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW: June 18, 19, 20 at **Cal Poly Pomona Bronco Student Center - 3801 W. Temple Ave. Pomona** for the Festival of Fruit, celebrating the "Year of the Berry." (There will be no local chapter meeting in June.) More details to follow.

Program Ideas for 2004: If you have any program ideas for 2004, please call Joe Sabol at 544-1056 or talk to any officer.

Please remember when attending program meetings to car-pool, bring extra chairs, and bring a friend!

