



# Central Coast Chapter CRFG May 2020 Newsletter by CRFG CC Chapter Members



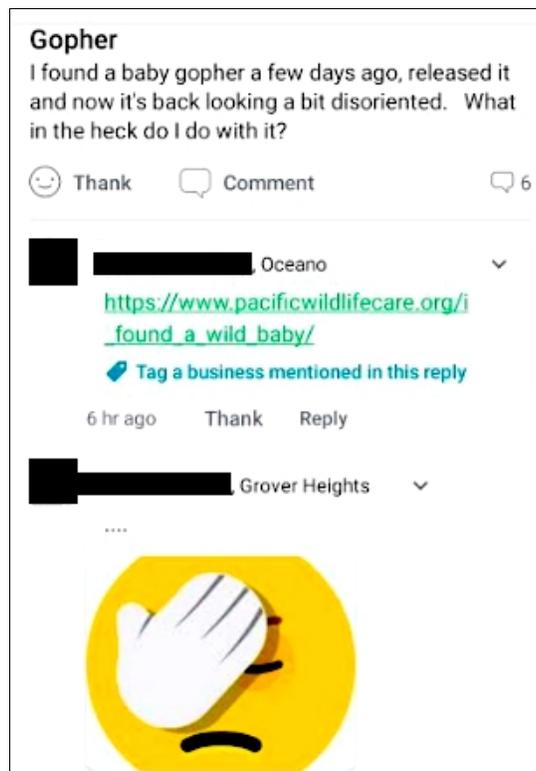
## Dear Friends of the Fruit Tree:

Last month we put out a call to all members to share their “stay-at-home” gardening stories for May's newsletter. A big thank you to everyone who contributed! Here are their stories and tips.

Didn't have time to get your story in? Please consider contributing to the June 2020 Newsletter. Your story can be a few sentences or span several pages. Send it and your pictures to [crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com). The deadline is midnight on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. We are eager to see what you've been up to!

---

My neighbors held this conversation on the Nextdoor app recently:



# Updates

## The New Website Is Up!



I (Dara) finished the new Central Coast Chapter website. You'll find it at the same location: [www.crfg-central.org](http://www.crfg-central.org)

I hope you like the new design!

Here are several items I'd like to mention:

- If you have old 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.
- The "[Orchard](#)" webpage now contains an "Orchard Wishlist" and "Orchard Work List." The former requests donations for items needed in the orchard. The latter lists jobs that need to be done, just in case you have a hankering to get outside. The orchard is a beautiful place to be, and an easy one to practice social distancing.

### Orchard Wishlist

Are you able to donate any of these items to the Orchard?

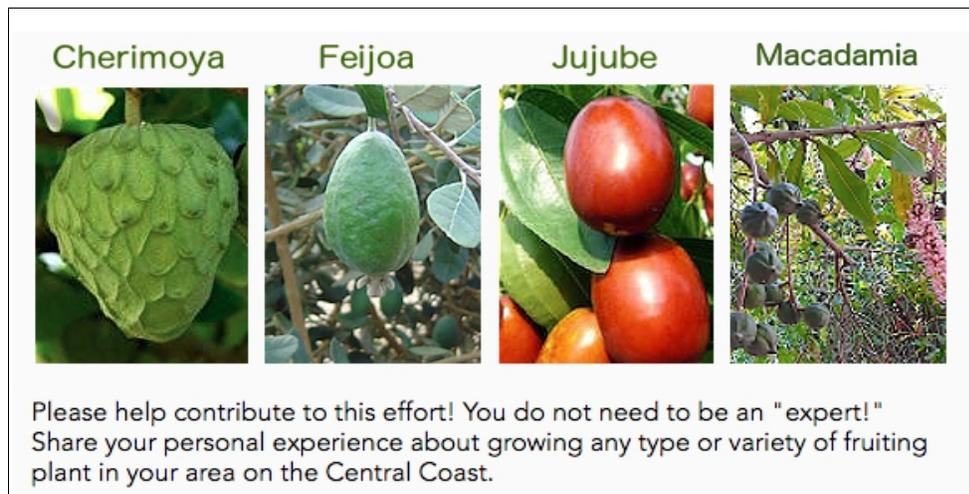
- Known varieties of guava trees
- Star fruit tree
- Post hole digger in good condition
- Wheelbarrow handles

### Orchard Work List

Updated May 2017:

- Reroof Kiosk (Orchard co-managers have "new" roofing tiles)
- Rehang fallen tree identification signs
- Put new wheel on old wheelbarrow (we'll need to grind off the rusted screws/nuts that are holding the old one in place).

- The "[Orchard Memorials](#)" webpage contains pictures of the plaques and trees, and memories of those CRFG members who have passed. I recently asked some people for their memories of Patty Schober, and was delighted by the response. So please peruse this page, and if you have memories that you think should be included for any of these people, please let me know at [crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com). Thank you!
- We have a "[FAQ & Tips](#)" webpage that includes information about chill hours, low chill fruit trees, the "Peach Leaf Curl" and "A New Take on Vermacomposting at Home" articles written for last month's newsletter by Lori Bright, and more. There is also a "[Plants in the Central Coast Area](#)" section that contains information contributed by Larry Hollis, Marv Daniels, Alisha Taff, Jack Swords and Lori Bright about these fruiting plants:



If you have any knowledge or observations you'd like to share about fruiting plants in your area of the Central Coast, please send them to [crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:crfgccnewsletter@gmail.com).

## This Month In The Orchard



### Three New Trees!

Larry Hollis donated three trees to the orchard, and Manny Magaña and Dara Manker planted them on May 6. They are a Russian Quince, a guava, and a paw paw. We'd been needing a 2<sup>nd</sup> paw paw for a mate to the existing paw paw tree. Now they are planted side by side.

### Weeds Whacked & Drip Lines Fixed

Manny and Dara arrived to wack the weeds in the orchard, and found that Mark Woelfe had arrived earlier in the week and mowed down the middle of the rows, greatly reducing the amount of work they needed to do! Needless to say, they were very happy and thankful for his help.



*Before*

Jesse Englert and his kids were there thinning fruit. Practicing social distancing, we temporarily lifted the drip lines into the trees. Manny and Dara mowed and weed whacked around the trees, then fixed split drip lines and broken emitters.

Jesse and his family are regulars in the orchard. You saw pictures of them in last month's newsletter. At least once a week Jesse is there pruning, thinning fruit, and keeping an eye on things. We greatly appreciate all the work he has been doing over the last few years. Because he is in the orchard on a regular basis and has been such a great help, we asked Jesse to be our third orchard co-manager.

### **New Entrance Gate Post!**

Mark replaced the old, rotting fence post that was barely holding up the entrance gate. Thanks to Mark the gate now has a sturdy new post!



Mark measures the gate height



New post installed!

### **New Wheelbarrow Wheel!**

After coaxing off rusted screws and bolts with wrenches, lots of *PB Blaster* and a hammer, Manny and Dara replaced a flat tire on an orchard wheelbarrow. It now has a new airless wheel.



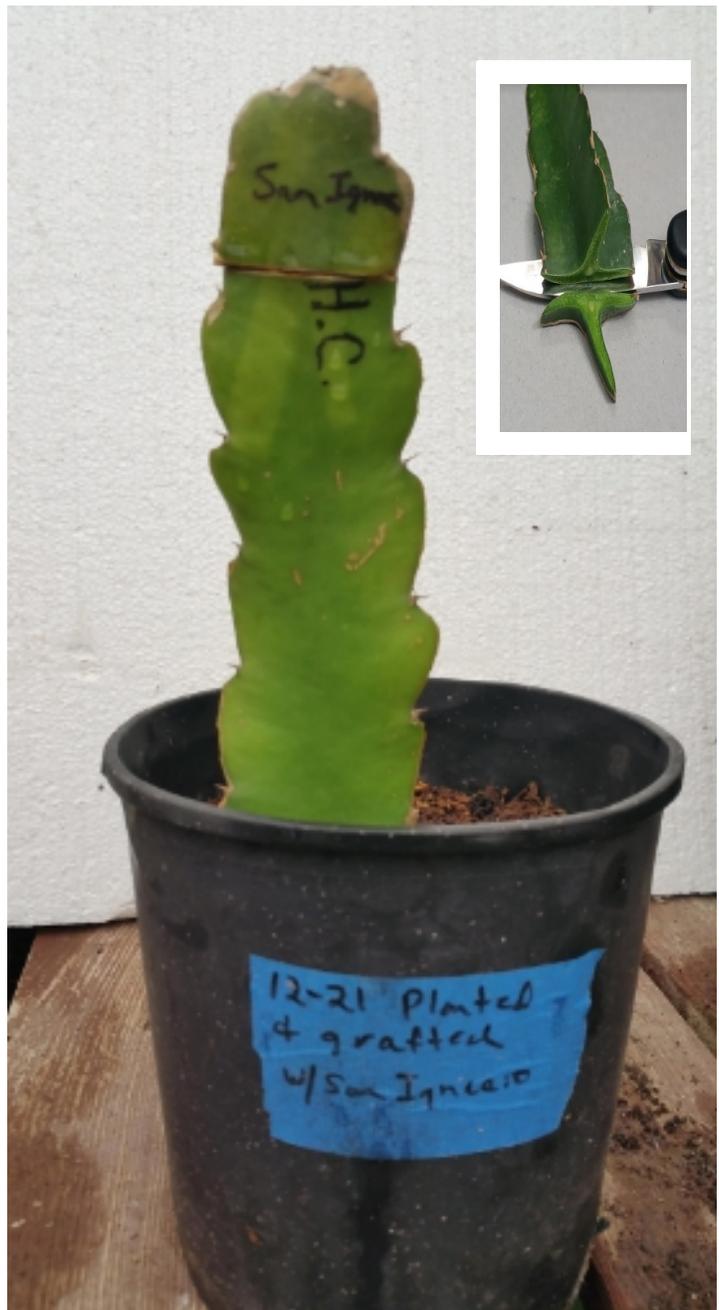
---

## Grafting Dragon Fruit And Figs by Larry Hollis

For the March meeting I initially planned to demonstrate how to graft dragon fruit. A multi-grafted plant would allow someone that only had room for one plant to have more than one variety of fruit and help with pollination. As I thought more about the topic it occurred to me that growing and grafting dragon fruit might not have as wide appeal as some other propagation topics. I have been adding fig varieties to my fig trees lately, and multi-grafting newly propagated trees. I thought others might like to do the same. I picked up several varieties of fig scion wood at the exchange and got several more from John Crowe. When I finished my fig grafting I rooted the leftover scions, another useful propagation technique. I thought fig grafting might be new to some of our members and that they might also be interested in some of the tips and tricks to rooting fig cuttings.

There are three ways of grafting dragon fruit that I'm aware of, top working or top grafting, chip budding, and cleft grafting. My limited experience showed that the first two of those techniques work pretty well, but that the cleft graft is unnecessarily involved, less elegant, and leaves a more messy graft union. Therefore I chose to demonstrate the first two.

Top grafting is simply stacking one variety on top of another and matching the internal core or "stem", which is the vascular material, and roughly matching the size and shape of the dragon fruit branch. Tape, such as masking tape, can be used to hold the grafted material onto the underlying plant while the graft union forms.



Chip budding, on the other hand, requires removing a bud from the plant that is being grafted and replacing it with a bud from another variety. This is done by removing a "V" shaped chip from the edge of the dragon fruit branch that includes the thorn-bearing bud and replacing it with a bud removed from another variety. The tool that is used to cut or punch out the buds so that they are the same size and shape, is a "V" shaped chisel. I actually made mine since I didn't have one and couldn't find one locally. Since dragon fruit branches come in a variety of shapes and thicknesses some effort has to be made to match the bud shape and thickness, not just side profile.



Unlike the top working graft where the central stem is visible in cross-section and therefore reasonably easily aligned with the scion, the stems that connect the buds to the central stem are much less defined, but they can be assumed to connect at something like a 45-degree angle downward from the bud to the stem. Therefore, effort needs to be made to replace the new bud with one taken at a similar angle from its stem. Sometimes the path of the internal stem is evident by a light bulge or ridge on the surface. To get your new variety to push and form a new leader it is probably best to graft it near the top of the segment, and you will have to trim off any buds that push first or you can remove all but your newly grafted bud to assure that it is the only one that can push. You may wish to do that when you know your graft has taken.

Grafting figs is easy, and similar to grafting other fruit trees. I have chip budded, cleft grafted, whip-and-tongue grafted, and grafted with an omega-type grafting tool and all seem to work pretty well. I have grafted in the fall when the trees were actively growing and in the winter when the trees were dormant, and the take rate was only slightly better on the winter grafts. I have used recently grown scion wood, previous season's wood, and older wood, and all will work, though the dormant



buds on the older wood take longer to push. My experience is that 1/4" to 1/2" diameter terminal-end scions work well and push quickly. I suggest that you wrap the entire scion with parafilm, especially if you use actively growing scion wood. I also suggest that you match the caliper or diameter of the scion to the branch it is being grafted to. My failures, so far, are with chip buds budded lower down on taller, vertical, central leaders. The buds take but are reluctant to push and I haven't wanted to remove the tops of the trees to force them to push. I have one 5' tree in a pot with several dormant chip buds and I may lay it down to see if I can entice them to push. Chip buds that I have placed on the top side of lateral branches have done better.



Figs are usually propagated by rooting cuttings. There is a lot of information on-line about the various ways to do that, see [figs4fun.com](http://figs4fun.com). When you prune your tree in winter you can place some hardwood cuttings wrapped in damp paper towels in a Ziploc and put them on top of your fridge and they will likely show roots in about a month. You can also plant them in a pot or in the ground and if they don't dry out first will probably root and grow. Since figs can leaf out and appear to be growing even when they have not rooted, I like to root them in a clear container of vermiculite so that I can see the roots before I bother to pot them up. This works well if you are doing small quantities of cuttings. If you are doing larger quantities you can root dozens in a 5-gallon bucket or plastic bin. The take-rate is improved if the humidity can be kept high, and rooting is speeded up with bottom heat or if done in a warm location.

---

## **A New CRFG Member Learns To Graft And Has Two Questions For You** **by Peggy Burhenn**

Hello CRFG New Friends;

I am a new CRFG member (just joined at the last scion exchange). I am also a master gardener, graduating in 2018. In master gardener class we grafted apple trees with Joe, such a fun experience and one of my grafted trees survived and is going strong. So... feeling confident from that experience I came to the 2020 scion exchange and picked up some exciting new scions. I bought one apple root stock at the exchange and grafted a low chill Hawaii scion onto it. The scion was long, and feeling exhilarated by the scion exchange, I took a leap and grafted another piece onto an existing Honey Crisp apple tree in my yard. This, to me, is amazing that you can graft onto an existing tree (you all of course know this, but to a novice this just seems like magic).

I love avocados, so the lure of avocado scions at the exchange was strong...took home Stewart and Kona, secured a few rootstocks and grafted away.

So now 2 months later here are my results from a novice grafter. Let me thank my new friends at CRFG for the demonstrations in the parking lot at the exchange, those was very helpful to reinforce what I needed to do.

I made my cuts with careful anticipation and wrapped them with rubber bands and added sealer and hoped for the best.



*Bud leafing out*

The apple graft on the Honey Crisp was the first to emerge, what a thrill I felt as the graft actually took!!! Me of little faith... so excited! I am sure you all know the feeling but this was new to me. So even though the Honey Crisp is not leafed out yet, the new little Hawaii is leafing nicely, as you can see in this first picture.

The grafted apple onto rootstock has a little bud leaf and the root stock is full of leaves so it is clearly alive. Yay!

Now for the two avocados that were grafted. Both rootstocks are leafing out.



**Questions for my more experienced grafters:** both scions are green but no leaves. Is this normal?



**Update:** I think maybe I spoke too soon. After I sent that picture, now the tip is starting to die back: should I trim it off the dead part and see if that revives it or just let it go?

As a new member I look forward to meeting you all someday in person when we can get back together again. In the meantime, I would love to learn from your collective experience and any advice you have please let me know.

Cheers and stay safe,

Peggy Burhenn  
[peggysueburhenn@gmail.com](mailto:peggysueburhenn@gmail.com)

## Pakistani Mulberry Scions Grafted to a Persian Mulberry Rootstock by Manny Magaña

The story begins last year around May or June when a gopher ate the roots of the Persian Mulberry tree that Dara had in her front yard. In order to save the tree, we planted it in a 5 gallon plastic pot, leaving the inch and a half width tree only a foot above the soil and with two small branches on its trunk. The tree not only survived, but thrived in the pot and by late February of this year, she had a beautiful healthy growing tree with two branches.

I had scions in my refrigerator from this January that came from a Pakistani Mulberry tree growing in my backyard. I decided to experiment and see if these scions could be grafted onto Dara's Persian Mulberry tree. End of February, I grafted 5 of these Pakistani Mulberry scions to the Persian Mulberry tree. One to each of the branches and three to the trunk of the tree.



Four of the scions grew. One of the branches was smaller than the other branch and the top bud of that

scion is now 14 inches in length (3 buds, 1 grew). The scion on the other slightly thicker branch has two buds growing, the top bud 6 inches long and the 2nd bud 1 inch long (3 buds, 2 grew). On the trunk, one of the scions has two buds growing, top bud is 14 inches long and 2nd bud 2 inches (3 buds, 2 grew).

Another scion on the trunk is also growing two buds, top bud is 2 inches long with the 2nd bud 7 inches long (3 buds, 2 grew). One scion on the trunk died. All the scions put out fruit right away. Some people say that you are supposed to pick off the green fruit on these new branches and throw it away. I left the fruit, it is maturing and I'm eating it. Delicious!

Conclusion: Pakistani Mulberry scions will grow beautifully on Persian Mulberry rootstock.



Delicious Fruit! Chomp! 😊

---

## **Delicious Green Plum Tree Created by Manny Magaña**

Let me say up front that I have never been a fan of plums. Some are ok, but for the most part, I don't care for them. Until...I tasted the plum that my next door neighbor planted on the front yard between our houses. It is a small, round, inch long green plum that turns slightly yellow when ripe. One of my friends likes plums and he would come over, pick them and offer me some. After refusing a few times, I finally ate a couple and loved them. I enjoyed them so much that on the 4th Saturday of February, on our CRFG scion exchange, I decided to buy a rootstock to create my own plum tree.



*The neighbor's coveted plum tree*

I took many scions from my neighbor's plum tree in early February and placed them in the refrigerator (I should mention that my neighbor planted the trees and said I can eat any of the fruit they produce). The rootstock I bought had four small branches and I decided to put a scion on all four branches. They all grew! Shocked me to no end! The tree had been growing in a 1 gallon pot for two-and-one-half months and has been planted in the ground for two days now. As you can see from the pictures it is happy and healthy. Hopefully next year I will have some plums in my backyard.



*My very own plum tree*

---

## Spring Has Come To Los Osos by Steve Marsden

Spring has come to Los Osos, or as much Spring as we usually get. My property is fairly small and there is no place to park so a real garden tour would not be very practical, but while you're sheltering in place, perhaps a virtual tour?



This is more or less the Google Street view, post sewer project. Except for a fig, a macadamia, and a test mango, all trees are multi-planted with 2,3 or 4 to a group. From the driveway:



(rear: Macadamia, Avocados, White Sapotes, Cherimoyas)

(front: Feijoa, Tropical Guava, Fig, Mango)

You can perhaps tell that I like to keep my trees ladder-free. The property is riddled with mole tunnels and there is no safe ground to stand a ladder on. One bad fall was all the convincing I needed. The sapotes are my most aggressive trees, requiring much trimming. That's probably why they are so stingy with fruit. You might wonder about the tropical guavas. There are two trees, one a seedling and one (I assume) grown from a cutting. The cutting-grown tree does bear good fruit, but both trees look like hell. Not sure about what is the issue. Climate, certainly, but some people down the street have one in their front yard and it looks much better—and bears no fruit 😊

There's a sort of side-yard area which heats up quite a bit during the first part of the day and there I espaliered a pawpaw, pomegranate, and persimmon. The pawpaw is just starting to leaf out now, while the other two have been going at it for months.



The pomegranate (Angel Red) has been something of a disappointment, only producing a few small (good!) fruit. The persimmon (Hachiya) is my fourth try and this one seems to be doing well, producing fruit last year which was quite good. I hope to graft Fuyu onto the top two tiers eventually.

A small patio structure sits over our old septic tank which (it has been cleaned!) we use to collect rain water to supplement the avocados. Water restrictions in Los Osos are pretty draconian and I confess we do exceed our limit in the dry season, as if we were three people instead of two. And we pay for it. This seemed like a good place to finally plant my fuzzy kiwis where—I have imagined—the inquisitive roots of these thirsty plants might eventually find their way into the tank and take a much-needed drink. The female matured early (don't they always?) and blooms regularly. The male has yet to reach puberty... Last year the female set some virgin-birth fruit about the size of golf balls. They were edible!



People walking by often ask about the two structures: the high tunnel and the little greenhouse:





The high tunnel requires a lot of cross-cabing to enable it to withstand our winds, so it's a bit of a pain to work inside. You can see the American Beauty dragon fruit and the manila mango, post severe haircut. Inside the actual "greenhouse" I have espaliered a Glenn mango and also grow potted pineapples. Both do well and produce good fruit, but I do have to keep an eye on the mango for mealy bugs, etc. Confounded ants.... If you're wondering about heat in the winter, we live just a short walk away from Sweet Springs (the nature preserve, not the saloon, although that's close enough) and the back bay, so although we dip into the 30's at times, just a string of C9 lights seems sufficient in the little greenhouse (only 6'x6') to keep the Glenn mango safe. I'm hoping to phase out the high tunnel. It requires a lot of maintenance and the mango quickly outgrows it, requiring a lot of pruning which affects yield. Also, mealy bugs (ANTS!!!!) are a real problem inside. They actually killed my passion fruit vine last year after many years of copious fruit. So I've planted a second manila mango outside. It grows VERY slowly, but it does bloom. If I can get that going I will remove the high tunnel and restart the passion and dragon fruits on new trellises. Maybe chop down the old mango. Here's a shot of the high tunnel mango



in better days. You can see it's worth pursuing, but the whole pest issue and cramped quarters in the high tunnel has made it a problem to be solved rather than a tree to enjoy.

The back yard contains deciduous fruits as well as citrus, vegetables and flowers.



The trees you can see at the south end are also planted in clusters of 4. The rear row is apricot, [removed cherries], and plums/pluots (here the apricots and pluots are the most difficult to keep down to size). I've started Asian pears this year to replace the cherries, aka cracked bird food. The front row is European pears, apples and peaches/nectarines. All do well. You can ask our local possums and raccoons. By the way, you can order Lime-Sulfur from Chewy.com. It's used as a pet dip and is the same concentration as the agricultural chemical. My previous source in Georgia stopped shipping to California, but this year I tried Chewy and the order went through. A 16 oz. bottle is all I need for a season, maybe two. Timing in Los Osos is still very difficult and I didn't do so well this year as each tree in the cluster blooms at a different time and the rains were off and on (but much needed).

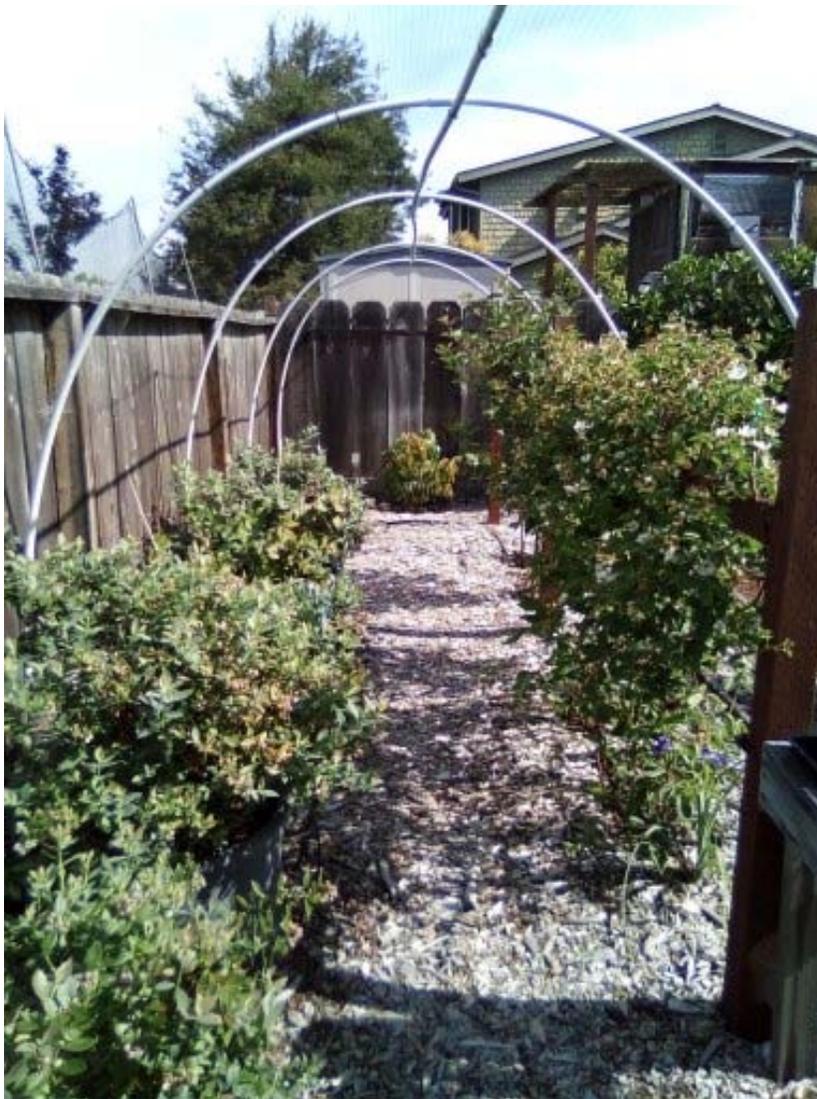
At the north end of the yard, against the fence, I have espaliered citrus: orange/grapefruit, mandarin, lemon/Bearrs and Mexican lime/Buddha's hand (sorry for the tomato towers in the way!).



At the west end of the yard there is a little room for some hardy kiwi and arctic kiwi espaliers and a net house for berries of various kinds.



I used to grow raspberries in containers in the net house but they never did all that well and required a lot of water. When the water restrictions were imposed many, many container plants went in the dumpster, the raspberries included. Now there are only blueberries in containers as well as trellised boysenberries and blackberries. At the far end of the nethouse is a litchi that I have moved around (in a container) for years, trying to find a place with enough shelter from wind and some heat. This seemed like the spot so I put it in the ground and it finally is starting to show signs of contentment, including a small bloom spike!



What is not visible is a 500 gal water tank, out of the way beneath the second story deck. This also collects rain water from the roof. We use laundry and dishwashing water as well to supplement our use of Los Osos water. It's all not enough, but it's what we have, so the plants just have to lump it. You might wonder why "all" the flowers, then. One does not live by fruit alone. There is also a need of food for the soul.

And so, I leave you with some flowers.

(Joe Sabol: I have a special love for dicentra, delphiniums and peonies. I can only successfully grow one of these, but there is another "d" plant in one of the beds, it just isn't large enough to see yet!)



Spring is best, before the water stress begins to show. Visitors are welcome if you're in the area (but bring a mask). Steve Marsden 805-528-4676