

TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS

Winter 2019, Jeff Wasielewski, Commercial Tropical Fruit Extension Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County

Hello Tropical Fruit Lovers,

This quarterly newsletter will have information on what tropical fruit is in season, weather data, upcoming workshops and events, as well as articles on topics such as planting, pruning, propagation, different tropical fruit, specific plant diseases, and more.

Enjoy,



What's Fruiting in South Florida?

South Florida is a tropical paradise where orchids bloom amongst dark green aroids and luscious tropical fruit. Fruit ripening within the months of November to February include: avocados, bananas, cimitos, carambolas (starfruit), dragon fruit (pitaya), guava, jackfruit, papaya, passion fruit, and sapodilla.

You can find these tasty homegrown fruits at your local farmers markets, straight from the growers themselves, and at various grocery stores that stock local products.

The Carambola, a Tropical Fruit Workhorse

The carambola, *Averrhoa carambola*, is an easily managed tropical fruit tree that will often produce two full crops per year without missing a beat. This tree fruits from June through February, with heavier fruiting from August to September, or December to February depending on the cultivar.



Carambolas ready to be shipped. Photo credit: Jeff Wasielewski

Cultivars may be tart or sweet and you should choose the cultivar you plant based on what your clients will demand. For a full list of cultivars and tips on how to care for carambola trees, be sure to [read the EDIS document](#), "Carambola Growing in the Home Landscape", by Dr. Jonathan Crane, Tropical Fruit Specialist for [UF/IFAS TREC](#).

Carambolas are also called starfruit due to their unique shape. When cut, the fruit will be the shape of a star and are a great addition to salads or other



TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS

dishes as decoration. The fruit are often eaten out of hand, but will not continue to ripen once picked, so make sure the fruit have begun to color before they are picked. Waiting for the fruit to completely turn yellow is often too late and will result in off flavors.

The tree can be easily maintained at 8 to 10 feet tall and 14 to 16 feet wide through selective pruning. Pruning should take place after harvest and should not remove more than a third of the tree's canopy. Encourage lateral branches by leaving them in place and removing vigorous upright shoots that would eventually allow the tree to become too tall to easily pick the fruit. Small dead branches, a hallmark of this fruit, should also be removed as this will encourage new growth and flowering.



Minor element deficiencies on new leaves. Photo credit: Jeff Wasielewski

The carambola is susceptible to wind and salt damage, so they should be planted in protected

areas if possible. Make sure the area they are planted also has full sunlight for a large portion of the day. Many commercial growers build wind screens using shade cloth or windbreaks to protect their fruit and get a higher yield. Carambolas can suffer from nutritional deficiencies, especially in the cooler, dryer times of the year. A minor element nutritional program should be in place during the growing season (May through September) to prepare the carambola to go through the cooler months in good health.

Overall, the carambola is a fantastic tree for backyard growers, and has good potential as a commercial crop, as it can produce large amounts of fruit throughout the year in a very limited space. Cultivars to consider are 'Arkin', 'Fwang Tung', 'B-10', 'Kary', and 'Sri Kembangan'. Be sure to [read the EDIS document](#) listed above for a list of different cultivars and their characteristics.

Weather Update

As hurricane season begins to wind down, we can look back and be thankful that Hurricane Dorian spared us from her Category 5 wrath. The Bahamas took the brunt of the storm and I hope everyone was able to donate to help their struggling community. They can still use help, so please seek out any way you can to continue to provide aid.

The total rainfall and average temperature for June was 7.74 inches and 81 degrees (high 95.92/low 71.58), July 7.11 inches and 81.88 degrees (high 95.05/low 72.30), August 6.38 inches and 81.45 (high 93.06/low 72.10), and September 2.51 inches and 81.66 degrees (high 93.13/low 65.88). This



TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS

data was compiled using the Florida Automated Weather Network or [FAWN database](#). FAWN allows you to pull weather data, as well as, to find up to date weather information from several weather stations in South Florida. This data was pulled from the station at UF/IFAS TREC in Homestead.

We are now entering the dry season, so look for monthly rainfall to decrease and temperatures to begin to lower. The dry season is typically November through April.

Find Great Information on EDIS

The UF/IFAS Electronic Data Information Source ([EDIS](#)) contains peer reviewed publications on topics such as tropical fruit, agriculture, horticulture, the environment, and 4-H, as well as, family and consumer info.

Tropical Fruit Information

Find information on packing houses, pruning, propagation, chemical and fertilizer companies, and much more on the UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County's [Tropical Fruit Production webpage](#).

Contact Information

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Upcoming Workshops

Tropical Fruit Growers Open Forum A New Mango Reality

When: Monday, October 7, 4:15 to 5:15 PM
Where: 18710 SW 288 Street, Homestead, FL
Cost: Free

Tropical Fruit Freeze Protection Workshop

When: Wednesday, October 9, 2:00 to 4:00 PM
Where: 18710 SW 288 Street, Homestead, FL
Cost: Free

Core Pesticide Class

When: Wednesday, October 16,
Where: 18710 SW 288 Street, Homestead, FL
Cost: \$150.00

[More info and registration](#)

Redland GrowFest

When: Saturday and Sunday, October 19 and 20,
9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Where: Fruit and Spice Park, 24801 SW 187 Ave,
Homestead, FL

Cost: \$7.00

[More information](#)

Planting Your Tropical Fruit Tree in Five Easy Steps

When: Saturday, October 19, 10:30 to 11:15 AM

Where: Fruit and Spice Park, 24801 SW 187 Ave,
Homestead, FL

Cost: \$7.00 for the GrowFest event

[More information](#)