

# *Suncoast Tropical Fruit and Vegetable Club*

## *Meeting Notice*

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, February 12, 2014  
**Where:** Main Room Nokomis Community Center  
234 Nippino Trail East, Nokomis, FL 34275  
**Agenda:** 6:30 pm Chat and Tasting Table  
7:00 pm Introduction and Presentation  
8:30 pm Plant Raffle

**Speaker:** Erica Klopf, Florida Edible Landscaping

**Topic:** Edible Landscaping for the Home Garden  
plus  
The Grimal Grove, Big Pine Key, Florida

Our February meeting will be somewhat unique in that we will have one speaker covering two different yet related topics. With issues in the headlines such as the possibility of global food crisis and dwindling resources, perhaps you could say Erica Klopf is out to change the world one green space at a time through Florida Edible Landscaping. Erica creates landscape designs using almost entirely edible plants and trees. The underlying philosophy for everything she does comes from the Permaculture movement that began in Australia. It is an ecological system designed for sustainability which seeks to create abundant food production systems by emphasizing beneficial relationships between plants, animals and humans. While a student at Florida Gulf Coast University (where she now teaches), Erica tested her theories by taking a lead role in a student-led sustainability project known as the Food Forest, which brought national attention to the university. Erica completed internships with Chris Rollins at the Fruit and Spice Park in Homestead and also at the Naples Botanical Garden. She is certified as an Advanced Permaculture Designer. She has been active in and dedicated to the development of sustainable landscapes in South Florida.

### **Edible Landscaping for the Home Garden**

While landscaping allows us to beautify our lawns and properties, edible landscaping also allows us to beautify our plates. The whole idea is the implementation of edible foods into the landscape. Instead of just planting shrubs, trees, vines, grasses and ground covers, edible landscaping involves edible plants that add interest, color, texture and, of course, taste.

In her presentation, Erica will focus on understory development for tropical fruit trees. Understory development involves plants that can thrive in the environment under the canopy of trees. Topics will include:

- Understory edible greens, roots and spices;
- Nitrogen fixers and dynamic accumulators; and
- Pioneer species establishment.

## **The Grimal Grove, Big Pine Key, Florida**

The Grimal Grove may be one of our most precious and legendary gardens in continental North America. This bountiful grove of tropical fruit and scientific innovation recently was nearly unrecognizable due to neglect. Nature was prepared to erase its memory from the coral foundation of Big Pine Key, Florida.

From its inception, this two-acre piece of paradise in the Florida Keys was destined to defy conventional gardening wisdom through scientific precision. The man behind the myth is Adolf Grimal. He was as unique as he was often times reclusive, but his abilities and vision elevated him to a living legend.

Many attempts to grow tropical fruits in the Florida Keys have ended in failure because of the highly alkaline and rocky soils. But where others failed, Grimal succeeded. He spent thousands of dollars to purchase and transport low pH soil from the mainland. At each planting site, with only a pick and shovel, he single handedly dug out the solid rock to create deep holes, some up to 8 feet deep and 75 feet around. He then refilled these holes with black soil trucked in from upstate Florida.

To supplement infrequent rains, Grimal constructed large catchment basins to store water. His irrigation system, a labyrinth of underground piping, connected multiple cisterns, ponds and pools. He captured the humidity off of the leaves and rocks and funneled it into one of his many basins. He also experimented with creating microclimates for the various plants he acquired from his travels around the world. By separating the trees in their basins of rock, he could have trees growing side by side that required different watering schedules and pH soil levels.

Over time, Grimal became acclaimed for his achievements in working with tropical fruit, and thanks to the warmer, frost free climate, he had an edge over other tropical fruit tree growers on the Florida mainland.

He passed away in 1997 and over the next decade, the property was unused and fell into disrepair. Although clearly untended, the land still boasts rare fruit trees which still produce fruit annually and the cisterns still hold water. The superiority of the soil makes it an oasis for agricultural development.

Members of the Growing Hope Initiative have been working in a volunteer capacity to revitalize Grimal Grove and to re-establish its legacy restoring Grimal's achievements. Erica Klopf is one of the volunteers working to "Save the Grimal Grove" along with other organizations including Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens and the Fruit and Spice Park. Erica will present rare images of the historic tropical fruit collection at Grimal Grove.