

SOME GRAPEFRUIT TO KNOW AND GROW

Ralph E. Mitchell, Director/Horticulture Agent - Charlotte County UF/IFAS Extension Service

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While in the past two weeks I have highlighted the qualities of oranges and tangerines, it would not be fair to exclude grapefruits from our lineup of favorite backyard citrus. Grapefruits offer a very different flavor and have a history just as unique.

The grapefruit, as we know it today, is a mutation of the pummelo and originated in the West Indies. In fact, the grapefruit was first mentioned in Barbados in 1750, but it was not until 1814 in Jamaica that the word "grapefruit" was coined. The grapefruit next made its way into the United States in 1823 where it was first planted in Pinellas County. Since that time, a number of cultivars have been identified or developed including both white-fleshed and red-fleshed varieties.

The 'Duncan' grapefruit is one of the oldest types of grapefruit which originated in Florida in about 1830 from a chance seedling. Although seedy (up to 70 seeds per fruit) it is one of the best-tasting grapefruits. 'Duncan' is ripe and ready to harvest from December to May. 'Marsh' is another white-fleshed grapefruit discovered from another chance seedling in 1860 near Lakeland. Nearly seedless, 'Marsh' is ready to pick from November through May. Many mutations of our modern pink and red pigmented grapefruits were developed from 'Marsh'.

'Foster' is on record as being the first pink-fleshed grapefruit. However, it is very seedy - as seedy as the 'Duncan' grapefruit. An improvement appeared through a mutation on a 'Marsh' grapefruit. Called 'Pink Marsh' or 'Thompson', this sport appeared on a limb in Oneco sometime in the mid 1920s. 'Pink Marsh' was the first of the seedless pigmented grapefruits which was followed by varieties with increasingly red flesh coloration. Practically seedless, 'Pink Marsh' is available from December to May.

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Many of the red-fleshed mutations were discovered in Texas. 'Thompson' produced a sport mutation in 1930 called 'Redblush' a.k.a. 'Ruby' or 'Ruby Red'. This very popular pink to pale red-fleshed grapefruit is seedless and available from November to May. As its name implies, 'Redblush' even displays a pink blush to its peel. The red-flesh color continued to be enhanced with new mutations. 'Ray Ruby' has a darker flesh color and a pinker blush on the peel. A number of additional cultivars all possess varying degrees of red color including 'Flame', 'Rio Red' and 'Star Ruby'. It is interesting to note that 'Rio Red' and 'Star Ruby' resulted originally from irradiated seed and the subsequent mutations.

Not all of the varieties that I mentioned are readily available and may be hard to find. You may also find additional cultivars not mentioned that are continually being added to the selection. To find a particular variety to plant, check local garden centers and nurseries. An Internet search may also be in order to find some varieties. I have one grapefruit tree, a 'Ruby Red' in my yard which has produced abundantly over the years with lots of juice and fresh fruit. While grapefruits offer a delicious and nutritious tasty treat and are easily grown in your backyard, be aware that grapefruit juice can interact with some medications. Check with your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Turner, at 764.4351 or email Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com. Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

contact a
MASTER GARDENER
on the Plant Lifeline from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 764.4340 or by email Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com.

*You can also visit them at one of our many **Plant Clinics** around the county:
<http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/PlantClinics.pdf>*

Resource:

- Ferguson, J.J. (2002) *Your Dooryard Citrus Guide - Appendices, Definitions and Glossary*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Sauls, J.W. (1998) *Home Fruit Production - Grapefruit*. Texas Cooperative Extension Service.
- Tucker, D.P.H., Futch, S.H., Gmitter, F.G. & Kesinger, M.C. (1998) *Florida Citrus Varieties*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Turner, R.E. & Rampersaud, G.C. (2003) *Using Medications Safely: Interactions Between Grapefruit Juice and Prescription Drugs*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

Ralph Mitchell is the Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for Charlotte County UF/IFAS Extension Service. Ralph can be reached at 764-4344 or email Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com.



RALPH MITCHELL
Extension Director/Horticulture Agent
Ralph.Mitchell@CharlotteFL.com



CHARLOTTE COUNTY UF/IFAS EXTENSION SERVICE
25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3 - Port Charlotte, Florida 33980
941.764.4340 - 941.764.4343 (fax) - <http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu>