

# TROPICAL FERN AND EXOTIC PLANT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 7

October 2019

## **AUCTION REMINDER •**

Monday, October 28, 2019 at 7:30 pm in the Garden House

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

### **Greetings members & friends of TFEPS!**

If we haven't met yet, my name is Kristin Cadavieco, and I will be in charge of our auction this year with the assistance of the wonderful, Marnie Valent. Although I am a fairly "green" member, I am absolutely delighted to be a part of TFEPS with you all and am very excited to help put this together. Your help and presence at the auction would mean so much, and only with your help can we make it a great one!

**What: TFEPS Annual Auction**

**When: Monday, October 28th 7:30 pm**

**Where: Garden House**

**at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden**

As I have come to learn through Marnie's guidance, the annual auction is absolutely vital to help sustain the society financially, and all of it would not be possible without your participation, your generous food and plant donations and precious time - we really need it. We are so grateful to Jeff Searle, who will be our auctioneer, along with the assistance of his son Travis. We thank Craig Morell, who will help us get the correct plant IDs if need be.

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## Thank you to all of our volunteers as follows:

- Runners: Ralph Hernandez & Lenny Goldstein
- Check-in & Paddles: Sherrin Smith & Kristin Cadavieco
- Cashier & Recorder: Bob Benaim & Jodi Domke
- Holding: Skye Palmer & Will Domke
- Banners: Gerry Valent & Paul Marcellini
- Hospitality: Emalyl Israel, Vivian Waddell & Martha Kent (bartender)

We are requesting that you bring forth your exquisite culinary skills for the buffet table - we've got the beer and wine covered!

Please contact Emalyl Isreal as soon as possible and let her know which delicious dish you will be bringing so she can coordinate. Desserts, appetizers, salads and the like are always a crowd pleaser.

### **You can reach Emalyl at 786-877-6921.**

We also ask our members to please donate your well-rooted and established plants. We welcome donations from friends and family as well. If you or anyone you know is in the plant industry, please let them know they can donate plants and include their contact information along with it, as it would also be a great opportunity for some free advertising. **We are hoping to see you at the auction on October 28th at 7:30 pm!** We had such a great turnout at the Show and Sale, and I'm sure we all witnessed the superb variety of beautiful plants provided by our very own members, so I think it's safe to say we can all anticipate to add some unique specimens to our collections! If you would like to help in any way or need to contact me for any reason, my phone number is 305-934-5990.

Best regards,

Kristin 305-934-5990 & Marnie 305-233-5929

# TFEPS

## September 23, 2019 General Meeting

Attendance: 42

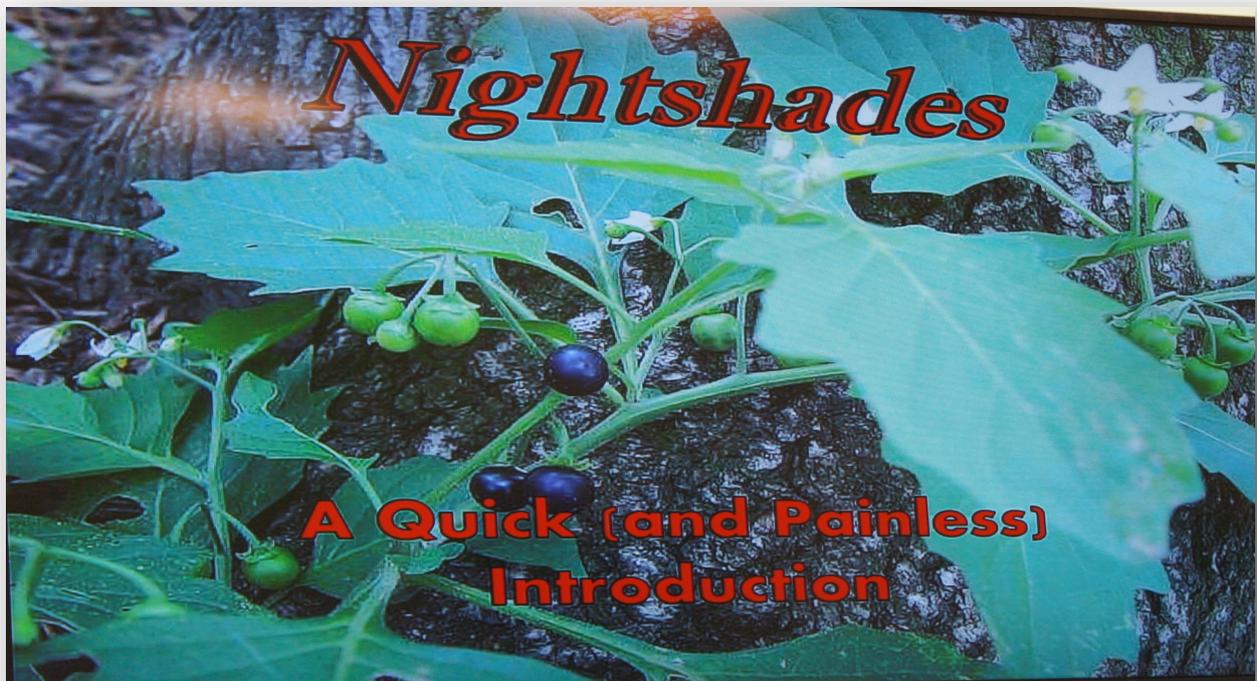
Treasury report: \$16,576.44

Raffle Table presented by: **David Hernandez (Leafgardens)**

**Paul Marcellini, and Garrett Yebernetsky**

Program: **Mike Heckart**

**“Solanaceae — Nightshades: A Quick (and Painless) Introduction”**



Trust your reporter: Even though the speaker is widely known as Wicked Mike, he did not foment a pre-Halloween freak-out. Instead, he enlightened and entertained a rowdy crowd about one of the more intriguing plant families.

Mike Heckart grew up on a 27-acre farm and developed an early interest in food and food crops. Despite the role some of the Solanaceae have played in concocting potions, other members of the family — tomato, potato, eggplant, and pepper — are popular food crops.

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**Mike Heckart**  
a/k/a **Wicked Mike**

Mike provided a comprehensive survey of the family. First he debunked the widely-held belief that heirloom tomatoes can't be grown in southern Florida. The key is to cultivate them in containers to help avoid the devastation nematodes can cause; large pots provide better control (Container growing, he added, is advisable across the board with Solanaceae.) Mike then offered another important tip: Since Solanaceae cross readily, the best ways to preserve the purity of tomato cultivars are to grow them in isolation or reproduce them via cuttings.

The cultivar *Solanum lycopersicum* 'Paul Robeson,' named for the famed singer, actor, civil rights activist, and athlete, is among the best heirloom tomatoes. Among newer cultivars that hold promise is 'Brad's Atomic Grape,' an elongated fruit that comes replete with lavender and purple striping.

The Wicked One then introduced an array of Solanaceae that were new to most of the audience members:

*S.quitoense*, from northwestern South America, looks like an armed eggplant. Fortunately, the spines tend to break off. Its fruit is tart and citrusy, along with other flavors, including pineapple and passionfruit.

*S. sessiliflorum* and *S. stramonifolium*, also from northwestern South America, both possess peach-tomato flavoring according to some.

*S. sisymbriifolium*, a/k/a Lychee Tomato or Sour Cherry, is widely distributed in South America. Like most thorny Solanaceae, it has a tomatoey taste.

*S. melanocerasum*, from Africa, is awful-tasting when eaten raw, but develops a grape-blueberry flavor when cooked.

*S. betaceum*, from the Andes, is often compared with Kiwi tomato and others.

*S. muricatum*, widely distributed in South America, is a bit difficult to grow here, since it prefers the cooler weather that comes with elevation.

*S. nigrum* ‘Otricoli Orange Berry,’ from Umbria, Italy, is an exception to the ordinary *S. nigrum*. Tart and sweet, it has a vague tomatoey taste.

*S. uporo*, from the Fiji Islands, commonly known as the Cannibal Tomato, tastes better raw. It has an eggplant-pepper consistency.

*S. caripense*, from South America, is one of Mike’s favorites. Its striped fruit possesses a melon-pear-citrus flavor, though it is more tart. It is better grown as a winter crop in southern Florida because of its preference for cooler temperatures. This species will volunteer.

*Withania somnifera*, from India, has mediocre fruit, but an extract from its root is used to ease insomnia.

*Physalis philadelphica*, from Mexico, commonly known as Tomatillo, is used to prepare salsa verde. All of its parts but the fruit are poisonous.

*P. peruviana*, from the mountains of South America, contains antioxidants. Commonly called Golden Berry or Incan Berry, it tastes good with yogurt and granola. Like the Tomatillo, its fruit is its only nonpoisonous part. This fruit can be bought in southern Florida, but is high-priced.

Mike then posed the question, Nightshade: Friend or Foe? The answer really depends on the plant. The foes include Belladonna, Mandrake, and Angel’s Trumpet. The culprit there is solanine, an alkaloid. This chemical is actually present in potatoes, but normally at harmless levels. (However, a green cast to a potato is a bad sign.) Fortunately, heat causes solanine to break down.

The great irony of the Solanaceae is that they may be edible, toxic, or medicinal — or some combination of those traits! For example, atropine extracted from Belladonna can be a lifesaver as an antidote to nerve agent or pesticide poisoning.

Wicked Mike then addressed his longtime specialty, the genus *Capsicum*, home to chili peppers. He now grows an astounding 2,000 varieties, including wild species not cultivated by humans. (There are five *Capsicum* species cultivated by humans, with another 18 --20 argued about. But there are tens of thousands of cultivated varieties, and lots of breeding is going on.) The pungency, or heat, exerted by peppers and other spicy foods is expressed via the Scoville scale, the invention of pharmacist Wilbur Scoville in 1912.

A cultivar called '7 Pot Brain Strain (Red)' is among the hottest peppers in the world; it registers above 2,000,000 Scoville Heat Units (SHU). By way of contrast, the much-feared Scotch Bonnet comes in at a paltry 150,000 — 200,000 SHU.

**7 Pot  
Brainstrain  
Red**



The source of the heat in peppers is capsaicin, the most common of a class of compounds called capsaicinoids. However, only mammals feel an effect from it; birds, reptiles, and fish are not fazed. That trait is beneficial to the distribution of *Capsicum* seeds, because birds readily eat the fruit, and the seeds pass through their bodies intact.

Despite the pain it can cause humans, capsaicin doesn't actually harm one's body. In fact, it provides many benefits: Its anti-bacterial properties help seal gastric ulcers.

Capsaicin also contains lots of Vitamin C and other anti-oxidants. Moreover, it is an anti-inflammatory, and since it also speeds metabolism, it helps keep one fit. There is even the possibility that capsaicin plays a role in preventing prostate cancer.

The pungency of chilies is not felt in the same place in one's mouth. Capsaisinoids affect different areas of the mouth. What can you do about the heat? **Rule #1 is not to drink water!** Instead, use anything that has fat content: cheese or milk work well. Some folks also suggest rice or bread.

Mike told the audience that there are even peppers for someone who can't stand the heat, one is 'New Mex Suave Orange,' a habanero type that rings up a mere 50 SHU. By way of comparison, a jalapeño registers 1,500 SHU. Or, there is the '*Aji cachuca*' a member of the *Capsicum chinense* group. It's sweet, sugary, and fruity, unlike Bell, the so-called sweet pepper.

In his final comments, Mike reinforced his earlier remarks about the importance of growing Solanaceae in containers. Planting them in the ground entices nematodes, invites drainage problems, and shortens the life of the plant.

L.G.



*C. baccatum* 'Aji Fantasy White' is not often seen in the U.S. It is common in South America and less common in Central America. Generally registering in the 30,000 – 40,000 SHU range, these peppers are very good for flavoring; some even have no heat.



**Raffle Table**

**Buying Raffle Tickets**





## TFEPS 2019 Show & Sale

Photographs this page and next by Lester Kallus



## Save the Date

The TFEPS holiday party is on December 9th. Once again we are asking for your cooking skills—the society provides the turkey and ham. We ask that you help with either an appetizer, a salad, a side dish or a dessert.

This is a fun evening to socialize with other members.

## Happenings at Fairchild Garden

Friday October 25, 2019 5:00—8:00 pm

### Friendly Creatures of the Night

Bring a flashlight and learn about the night creatures within the garden and our backyards.



Sunday, October 25, 2019 9:30—4:30 pm

### Trunk 'n Treat

Cars in the garden - Trick or Treat through the cars



Car Parade  
at 4:00 pm

### **2019 OFFICERS:**

President: **Arielle Simon (305) 588-5026**

Vice President: **Mike Twyford (305) 525-7405**

Secretary: **Leonard Goldstein (305) 667-4609**

Treasurer: **Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755**

### **2018-2019 DIRECTORS at LARGE:**

**Ellis Brown (305) 484-7997**

**Paul Marcellini (305) 299-0690**

### **2019-2020 DIRECTORS at LARGE:**

**Chad Husby (321) 474-2753**

**Martha Kent (305) 667-3197**

### **IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:**

**Marni Valent (305) 233-5929**

### **2019 DIRECTORS:**

The 2019 TFEPS Board of Directors consists of TFEPS officers, the Immediate Past President, and the Directors at Large.

### **2019 COMMITTEES:**

#### **Hospitality:**

**Emalyl Israel (305) 235-0886**

#### **Newsletter Editor:**

**Janet Reed (305) 510-3891**

#### **Membership:**

**Sherrin Smith (305) 213-2598**

#### **Raffle Table:**

**Ralph Hernandez (786) 261-4856**

#### **Special Sales:**

**Marie Nock (305) 232-2257**

#### **Show & Sales:**

**Vivian Waddell (305) 665-5168**

#### **Webmaster:**

**Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755**



## Membership Application - 2019

YEARLY DUES ARE FOR CALENDAR YEAR JANUARY—DECEMBER

We offer 4 different memberships options:

- Yearly: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 15.00 for individual  
          \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 17.00 for two members at the same address  
Lifetime: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 125.00 for individual  
           \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 150.00 for two members at the same address

This is for a New Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ or for Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Print**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: H or C: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: H or C: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code + 4: \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

**H = Home Phone C = Cell Phone**

Enclose check payable to: TFEPS

Please mail to: TFEPS – Membership

P.O. Box 902094

Homestead, Florida 33090-2094