



Ohio Pawpaw Growers Association

PAWPAW

PICKIN'S

Volume 6, Issue 1

Spring 2006

2006 OPGA Spring Workshop

and

Annual Meeting

to be held in

Wooster, Ohio on April 22.

This year's Workshop will be hosted by Ken Cochran, Curator of Secrest Arboretum, Wooster, OH and Gene Pouly, E. F. Pouly Co., Orville, OH. An exciting and informative workshop has been planned with several speakers, a tour of the Arboretum, scion wood exchange, and a grafting demonstration. The cost is \$10 and includes a box lunch. Make your checks payable to **Secrest Arboretum** and mail to **Ken Cochran, Secrest Arboretum, OARDC, 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, OH 44691-4096** (Ken's phone number is 330-263-3761).

The OPGA Annual Meeting will be also held in conjunction with the Workshop. The Meeting will be held during lunch because of the tight program schedule. If you have any items that you wish placed on the meeting agenda, please inform Ron or Terry Powell of your agenda item(s) by April 18. You must be a member in good standing to vote at the annual meeting or place any item on the agenda.

Directions to OARDC/Secrest Arboretum

From Interstate 71, go east on St. Rt. 30 toward Wooster. Take St. Rt. 83 south exit to the end. At the end of Rt. 83, turn left on St. Rt. 250. The entrance to OARDC is about 1 mile on the right, 1680 Madison Ave. Turn left on Payne Dr. and go to the large stone building with the tower. This is the Administration building. Park in the parking area.

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Membership benefits

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| * Annual meetings | * Educational displays for members |
| * Annual grafting workshop & tours | * Informational flyers on pawpaws |
| * Scion wood exchange | * Network with other pawpaw enthusiasts |
| * Member voting privileges | * Opportunities to volunteer |
| * OPGA Newsletter - "Pawpaw Pickin's" | |

2006

8th Annual

Ohio Pawpaw Festival

Lake Snowden near Albany, OH

September 16 (Saturday)

10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

September 17 (Sunday)

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

President's Patch

Since my letter to the OPGA members in December 2005, much has happened. We did not merge with another organization as several BOD members proposed. After we explored the possibility of merging, it became apparent that only individuals that were enthusiastic about pawpaws could be the most effective in promoting and educating the public about pawpaws. The Executive Committee is continuing to move forward with new programs and activities while keeping the best of the old.

Chris Chmiel has also explored the possibility of identifying another non-profit organization to "take over" the Ohio Pawpaw Festival. He has identified a firm that is willing to sponsor the Festival. This appears to be the best possible choice. Chris has indicated to me that he would be a consultant and work with the new sponsor. The sponsor will be voted on at the Annual Meeting in Wooster on April 22.

The OPGA has new Executive Officers and is in need of new Board members. If you are interested in serving on the BOD, please contact Ron or Terry Powell. The OPGA also needs you to renew your membership, volunteer to help your organization, and to help your organization promote pawpaws. Your membership renewal will guarantee your continued voting privileges, OPGA Newsletter, publishing of pawpaw pamphlets, and scion wood at the Workshop.

I want to express my regrets that Chris resigned as BOD President and then as Treasurer. Chris founded the OPGA and has given a huge amount of time, energy, and personal resources over the last few years to guarantee the success of OPGA and the Festival. We will miss Chris' enthusiasm and his entrepreneur spirit. We do appreciate all of your hard work - thanks Chris.

I also want to recognize several other members whom have contributed to the education and recruitment for the OPGA in 2005. The first is Dave Simpson who took the OPGA educational display to the Rural Action Landowners Conference, the National Network of Forest Practitioners Workshop, a SOFA meeting, and displayed to a number of visitors to his farm. The second is Richard Glaser who has been able to establish pawpaw plantings at two colleges (Wilmington College and Chatfield College) in southern Ohio, placed our educational display at the Great Outdoor Weekend at Krohn Conservatory, and worked with me on the OPGA Workshop. Many other OPGA members have worked at the Festival for many years and if I attempted to list the names, I would more than likely forget one! If you have promoted pawpaws, let Terry know so that we can recognize you for the work that you are doing.

Mission Statement proposal

I would like to propose a mission statement for OPGA for your consideration: **OPGA is an organization of pawpaw enthusiasts and pawpaw growers, small and large, dedicated to promoting the superior traits of the pawpaw, developing a pawpaw industry and marketing plan, and preserving and studying the wild pawpaw genetics in Ohio.** Let me hear from you as what you think about the proposed OPGA Mission Statement

Ohio Pawpaw Overview

by Dr. Ron Powell

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) produces a uniquely flavored fruit that is a favorite in many Ohio kitchens. Each year, Ohio consumers use pounds of pawpaw pulp in cookies, cakes, ice cream and drink products. The current level of pawpaw production is supported by the collection and processing of fruit from wild pawpaw trees. During the fall, rural residents harvest fruit by hand and deliver the fruit to farmer's markets, restaurants, a few festivals, and a limited number of buying stations across southern Ohio and the native range of the pawpaw. An unknown quantity of fresh ripe pawpaw fruit sells from two to eight dollars a pound. Since fresh ripe pawpaws have a short shelf life, some pulp is used in ice cream and frozen pulp for sale at a later time.

The continued reliance of the pawpaw industry on the hand harvest of wild seedling trees will not allow for future expansion of this fruit crop. The wild crop is inherently variable with wide swings in both production and fruit quality. This unpredictability of supply undermines the fledgling pawpaw industry to increase utilization. Increasing family incomes and a continuing population shift from rural to suburban areas is slowly eroding the availability of fruit collectors that have traditionally harvested wild seedling pawpaws. The future of the pawpaw industry lies in the establishment of pawpaw orchards of high quality and high yielding cultivars.

Since "Uncle Tom" was named as America's first pawpaw cultivar about 1896, cultivar development has proceeded haphazardly. Throughout the 20th Century, pawpaw enthusiasts discovered new cultivars in the wild or planted open pollinated seeds of previously named cultivars just to see what happens. Even at this slow pace of crop development, over 68 cultivars were named. Improvements in fruit size and fruit quality have

Ohio Pawpaw Overview cont.

not been enough to stimulate large-scale development of pawpaw orchards.

In recent years, there has been an initiative to systematically improve pawpaw as a fruit-producing tree. We can start this process by evaluating the horticultural characteristics of existing cultivars, striving to understand the key components that determine fruit yield and fruit quality. This work has also led us to develop key objectives for a systematic breeding effort to improve pawpaw as an orchard crop.

Designing and implementing a pawpaw orchard will require detailed cultivar information, enabling growers to choose productive cultivars adapted to their specific growing conditions. Key cultivar traits including: leafing date, flowering date, growth habit, disease resistance, insect resistance, precocity, productivity, fruit ripening date, fruit quality, skin color, skin thickness, shelf life of ripe fruit, number of seeds, etc. Many of the pawpaw cultivars available from nurseries have been selected based on traits determined by the collector. These traits include but are not limited to size of fruit, sweetness, taste, number of seeds, ripening date, and productivity. Very little data has been collected and made available on named cultivars so that decisions can be made as to which pawpaw cultivars are best suited for specific soil types, climate zones, and all the other variables mentioned above.

Peterson in 2003 stated that "the pawpaw is in the middle stages of domestication. Superior wild selections have been identified and propagated, small scale evaluations have been made, regional variety trials for the systematic evaluation of advanced selections initiated, controlled crosses and hybrids created.... However, to date no proven varieties have been released to the public (3 new varieties were released in 2004), no commercial orchards are in bearing, and no scientific breeding program based on hand-pollinated seedlings from controlled crosses with well-defined objectives using statistical methods and sound experimental design exists."

Peterson further says that the present pawpaw industry is "too small to fund university breeding programs. Thus breeding is likely up to the amateur." We "amateurs" can begin this process by: (a) determining the characteristics of a perfect pawpaw fruit; (b) take inventory of the characteristics of the varieties that we now have available to us and (c) continue to search the woodlands for other improved characteristics that we have identified as necessary for a superior pawpaw fruit.

References

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Calloway, M. Brett. "Current research for the commercial development of pawpaw." *Hort Science*, Vol. 27 (2), February 1991, pp. 190-191.

Little, J. A. A treatise on the pawpaw. 1905.

Peterson, Neal. "Pawpaw variety development: A history and future prospects." *Hort Technology*, Vol. 13 (3), July-Sept, 2003, pp. 449-454.

OPGA Activities for 2006

- Case for local foods, Columbus, OH (January) Rory Lewandowski and Ron & Terry Powell
- Vegetable and Fruit Growers Congress, Columbus, OH (January) Rory Lewandowski and Ron & Terry Powell
- CENTS Show, Columbus, OH (January) Mason Chambers & Richard Glaser
- Meeting with Ken Cochran, Gene Pouly, & Richard Glaser to select pawpaw planting site(s) and set program for the Workshop
- OPGA Spring Workshop and Annual Meeting, OARDC, Secrest Arboretum, Wooster, OH, April 22
- Grafting Workshop, Slow Foods USA, Cincinnati, OH, (May 7), Richard Glaser, and Ron & Terry Powell
- Tour of ACENet, Athens, OH (late July/early September)
- Ohio Pawpaw Festival, Lake Snowden, Albany, OH (September 16 & 17) OPGA members
- Great Outdoors Weekend, Cincinnati, OH, Richard Glaser (September)
- Pawpaw Weekend at Krohn Conservatory, Richard Glaser, (September/October)
- Farm Science Review, September, OPGA members

2006 Dues are due now

Annual:	Sponsorships:
Student - 5.00	Individual - \$35.00
Individual - \$15.00	Family - \$50.00
Family - \$20.00	Corporate - \$100.00
Lifetime - \$300.00	

Send your dues, payable to OPGA, to Ron Powell at 6549 Amelia Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45241.

Get involved in the 2006 Pawpaw Festival

OPGA members and potential members are welcome to get involved with the Festival. Help is needed in many areas of the Festival: OPGA membership and education booth, T-shirt sales, pawpaw beer booth, or helping with the many events taking place. You'll receive free admittance and a free T-shirt with 4 hours of volunteer help. What a deal!

Contact Ron or Terry at 513.777.8367 to sign up.



Pawpaw has Gone Uptown

By Terry Powell

This humble fruit with its tropical taste (reminiscent of banana, melon, and mango) has come from the forest and edges of farmers' fields to grace the menus of several upscale restaurants over the last several years—from the Sealbach Hilton in Louisville, KY to the Iron Horse Inn in Glendale, OH, and was even named Landscape Tree of the Year by Better Homes and Gardens in 1998. Although pawpaw seems to be the new kid on the block when talking about fruit, it has been around for centuries in eastern North America. The Indians cultivated the trees for their fruit, it sustained the Lewis & Clark expedition when they ran short of provisions, and until WW II was an important fruit for millions of rural Americans. Locally, the old WLW property in Mason, Ohio formerly contained a pawpaw orchard. After WW II, with the advent of refrigerated railcars, Americans were introduced to other, more exotic fruits from California and Florida, and the pawpaw was forgotten by all but the very old, the country people and farmers, and people who know the forest. It is surprising that even some of those folks don't realize pawpaws are edible! In the last decade, the pawpaw is making a comeback thanks mainly to the efforts of Chris Chmiel, an Athens, Ohio resident who rediscovered it when researching his "Sustainable Agriculture" thesis at Ohio University. He felt it would be a renewable resource and had the potential to replace tobacco as a cash crop. To promote the pawpaw he organized the Ohio Pawpaw Festival—held in Lake Snowden, Ohio (Athens County) in September—which attracts pawpaw enthusiasts from miles around. He also helped form the Ohio Pawpaw Growers Association. OPGA's mission is to help promote the pawpaw and is trying to form a grassroots effort to have pawpaw named Ohio's First Fruit.

What can you do with pawpaws? Not only is pawpaw an excellent fresh fruit, it can be made into preserves, wine, and is

OPGA Editor
6549 Amelia Dr.
Cincinnati, OH 45241

Phone: 513.777.8367
E-mail: botrytis@fuse.net

visit us at our web site:
www.ohiopawpaw.org

Pawpaw Pickins is published biannually by the OPGA, an organization dedicated to advancing education and knowledge of pawpaw culture, encouraging the planting of pawpaws, the management of native pawpaws, and perpetuating the utilization of all pawpaw products.

also using in cooking and baking, much the same way you would use pureed pumpkin or banana. Pawpaws lend themselves particularly well to ice cream and smoothies because the flesh is sweet yet has the consistency of avocados. Pawpaw trees are also a beautiful addition to any landscape. The tree is very hardy, has few pests, and no known diseases. In addition, the trees attract Zebra swallowtail butterflies and the foliage turns golden in autumn.

So why don't we see pawpaw fruit in supermarkets? The first reason is that not enough people of this generation, or even the last, know what pawpaws are. So a tremendous public awareness campaign needs to be mounted and there are few people to do that work. The second reason is that the pawpaw is in the middle stage of domestication, and that means that nearly all of the fruit must be picked from the woods where they grow, by hand. The fruit, like the banana, has a relatively short shelf life. In addition, wild stands of pawpaws are unidentified, there is no organized harvesting effort, and a cooperative needs to be formed for a fruit pipeline. Even in orchards, picking must be done by hand because the fruit does not lend itself to current mechanical fruit picking methods. Pawpaw domestication is underway with Kentucky State University researchers leading the way and many other institutions around the country are setting up test orchards. To date there are more than 50 named varieties of pawpaw.

How does one get a supply of pawpaws? Wild pawpaw fruit is usually available at some of the local Farmer's Markets and at the Ohio Pawpaw Festival near Athens, OH in September. Chris Chmiel is the only known supplier of frozen pawpaw pulp and processed pawpaw products or consider growing your own. Seedling trees are grown from selected (for the size or abundance of fruit) seed and will take about 7 years to bear fruit. "Grafted" trees are seedlings grafted with cuttings from a named variety tree and the fruit is generally superior. It will only take a grafted tree from 3 to 5 years to bear fruit because the grafted part came from an older tree.