



Fruit Tree Paradise



Treasure Coast
Rare Fruit Club

Port St. Lucie, FL
February 15, 2018





Sabara jaboticaba, *Myrciaria jaboticaba*

My Horticultural Philosophy

A fruit tree is an adaptive system with enormous imbedded intelligence, and will thrive in a rich ecology reasonably close to its native ecology. As long as it has a good root system.

Put differently:

Problems in fruit tree horticulture stem mostly from two causes:

1. bad ecologies

2. bad root systems

Fruit Tree Horticulture In Six Words

Prune aggressively,

mulch heavily,

fertilize conservatively.

Prune Aggressively

1. Control tree size.
2. Strengthen tree against wind, climbing animals, weight of fruit.
3. Open up the interior to light and air.
4. Increase the root-to-foliage ratio to promote new growth and provide energy for fruiting.

Prune Aggressively To Limit Size



Prune Aggressively To Limit Size



Tip Prune to Promote Branching



Tip Prune to Promote Branching



Prune To Develop Good Branch Architecture





Mulch Heavily and Fertilize Conservatively

1. The best fertilizer is MULCH. It breaks down slowly, adding nutrients while building the soil ecology to improve plant health and disease resistance. Also, it stabilizes soil temperature and moisture, prevents erosion, suppresses weeds, and interrupts the life cycles of some insect pests such as Sri Lankan weevils and diaprepes.
2. Minimize or even avoid nitrogen except perhaps on immature trees, and on bananas.
3. Among our favorite soil amendments: azomite, langbeinite (sul-po-mag), elemental sulfur (acidifies), crushed crabshell (supports the soil ecology), biochar (holds nutrients). Gypsum may be needed, eventually, to remedy the calcium-potassium imbalance of mulch.
4. An occasional foliar application of liquid kelp or other microelement-rich formulations seems to work wonders.

Free mulch from the local tree pruners



Other Advice

1. Unless you are a very devoted grower, avoid species that have drawbacks: temperamental fruiterers (lychees, annonas), poorly-adapted temperate-climate or dry-climate fruits (stone fruits, pomegranates, pears, apples), pest and disease-prone species (citrus, guava, peaches), freeze-intolerant species (jakfruit, coconuts, soursop, ...). Good choices include: mango, loquat, longan, starfruit, sapodilla, canistel, avocado, white sapote, black sapote, jaborcaba, mulberry.

2. Remove fruit from young grafted trees, so they can spend their energy growing, not making a few fruit.

3. Plant on mounds ----->

4. Free and perhaps prune the roots when you plant.

5. Consider thinning fruit from mature trees, especially starfruit, loquats, longans, stone fruit, wax jambu.

6. Invest in automatic irrigation if you possibly can.



SweetSong Groves





Josh Starry, co-creator of
SweetSong Groves



SweetSong Groves, LLC

- My small company SweetSong Groves LLC, was founded in 2016. It is dedicated to selling top-quality tropical fruit in our local region. Sales are getting started as trees reach production size.
- 2-acre residential property in north Sarasota County, eventually around 200 fruit trees, of which perhaps 150 will be “production” trees. Think commercial grove + botanical park.
- We are working on organic certification, but actually we grow *ecologically*, i. e. non-toxic methods far beyond organic standards.
- If things go well, I expect to recover my initial investment by 2065, when I will be 114. But luckily the purpose is not to make money, but rather to build the local tropical fruit market, produce healthy local food, support other growers both amateur and professional, and regenerate my land.
- A goal is for our website, sweetsonggroves.com, and in fact our entire enterprise, to become an educational resource for both consumers and growers.

Workshops and Tours

My 3-hour introductory class, the Fruit Tree Paradise Workshop, is taught in spring and in fall – **the handouts for the class are free downloads from my website.**

Also, there are free monthly tours during the cool season.



