



Fruit Tree Paradise



Central Florida
Fruit Society

Orlando, FL
March 19, 2018





Sabara jaboticaba, *Myrciaria jaboticaba*

SweetSong Groves, my 2-acre tropical fruit farm in north Sarasota County





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.





Josh Starry, co-creator

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. Foliar sprays are fast-acting and easy to control, a perfect counter-balance to mulch fertility. Fish emulsion and liquid kelp are excellent.

Free mulch from the local tree pruners



Other Advice

1. Remove fruit from young grafted trees, so they can spend their energy growing, not making a few fruit.
2. Don't let fallen fruit stay on the ground.
3. Consider thinning fruit from mature trees, loquats, longans, stone fruit.
4. Free and perhaps prune the roots when you plant.
5. Plant on mounds ----->
6. Invest in irrigation if you possibly can.
7. Unless you are a very devoted grower and not short on space, avoid species that have drawbacks:
 - temperamental fruiters (lychees, annonas)
 - poorly-adapted temperate-climate or dry-climate fruits (stone fruits, pomegranates, pears, apples)
 - pest and disease-prone species (citrus, guava, peaches)
 - cold-intolerant species (for Southwest Florida jakfruit, coconuts, soursop, ...).



Orlando Special Edition –
Under-utilized Fruits for Cooler Climates

1. Loquat
2. White Sapote
3. Jujube
4. Jaboticaba, Persimmon
5. Sapodilla?

Loquats



1. Very cold tolerant, but not flood tolerant. Fairly drought tolerant, but need sufficient water when fruiting.

2. Thinning young fruit improves fruit quality, and seems essential for clean, market quality fruit. Pinch off small fruit to leave as few as five or six fruit per panicle, preferably not touching each other.

3. Prune to keep the interior open, and work toward a vase shape.

4. Some varieties (such as Big Jim) must reach a deep orange color to achieve full sweetness. Others are sweet when they are fully yellow.



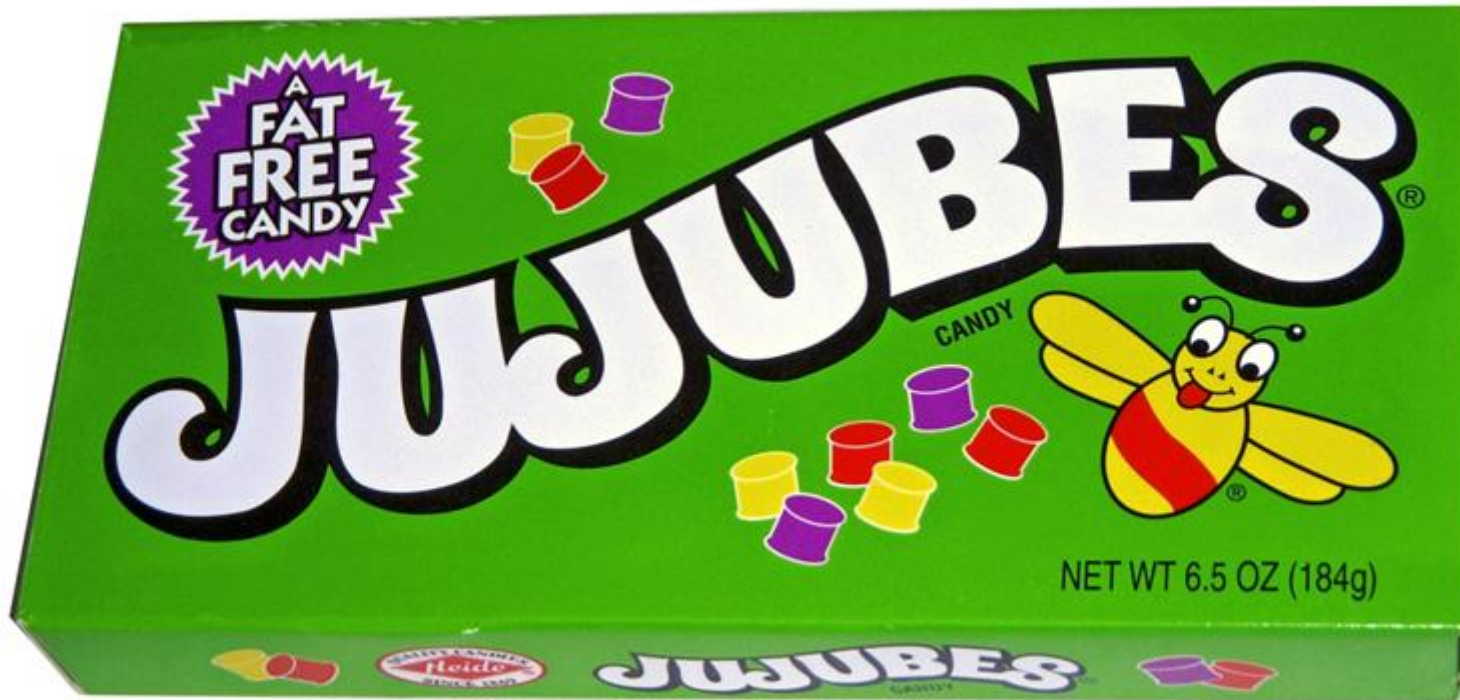
White Sapote

1. Very cold tolerant, but not flood tolerant.
2. Some people are white sapote “tasters”--- they have a mutation that makes the fruit taste very bitter.
3. Pollination can be an issue. Consider multiple varieties, multigrafts.

4. Varieties: Suebelle is often recommended but seems to be a poor performer on the southwest coast. Redland is highly recommended. McDill and Densler (may be difficult to obtain in Florida) are said to have very good to excellent flavor and large fruit (11-12 ounces).



Younghans white sapote multigrafted with McDill and Densler.



Corn Syrup, Sugar, Modified Food Starch (Potato),
White Mineral Oil (Adds a Trivial Amount of Fat), Carnauba Wax,
Natural and Artificial Flavor,
Artificial Colors (Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1).

Jujube



1. Everything-tolerant. An extremely hardy, vigorous tree.
2. Not a landscape tree--- sprawling, not very attractive.
3. Has some thorns, but fairly easy to work on.
4. Extremely fast-growing. Prune it super-aggressively.

5. The most popular southwest Florida variety is Giant Thai. Eaten fresh when full-size and still green, it tastes like a Granny Smith apple, but sweeter.

Jaboticaba – Ask Adam!

Persimmon – Ask anybody but me!

Sapodilla – More cold-tolerant than mangos, also flood tolerant, a tough and very productive tree. Fruit is tasty and a good seller.

