



Limette

Newsletter Citrus Friends Europe

Issue 6

Historical Ornamental Citrus Varieties

Historical Background

Citrus was a fruit of high demand in the western countries during the time of the 17. and 18. century. The fruit was available on the market, but the prices were too high for the common people so only was found at the tables of the honoured people.

As the fruit moved onto the silk and salt routes from India and China to the mediterranean, the honoured people found, that those plants would be an ornamental green jewel for their rare plant collections. So their gardeners moved to the plant markets, traveled the long dangerous distances to the mediterranean countries to obtain plants for the collections. They get in competition about who may have to most unusual or most ornamental citrus tree in the collection. The trees were not selected by their fruit quality as today, more for extraordinary shaped leaf or fruit, or by unusual coloration. During the competition, large storage houses for the winter times, the so called orangeries or limonaies were built and set long in service. gardeners kept their knowledge in Citrus care as valuable treasure, as the rare citrus trees were often kept secure as the most expensive treasure. Many famous artists during the time gave us descriptions and paintings of this collected fruits, as the publication of padre Ferrari in Italy, or the books of the German master gardener Johann Christoph Volkamer. The later one was also the first one, who wrote a book about citrus, how to obtain, to transport and how to care for those trees and so gave a guideline for many other collectors. Volkamer is still mentioned today in questions of citrus care in orangeries. So the text of this newsletter issue depends on the work of Johann Christoph Volkamer.

The collections

As Volkamer wrote in his books 'Nuernbergische Hesperides' he maintained as master gardener over hundred citrus trees of unusual shape and fruit form. Some of the fruits he described he got from other collectors in Germany or from the growers at the lake Garda in Italy, or the mediterranean basin.

But unfortunately many of those collections got lost during world war two, were the orangeries were used as command office of the allied forces and freezes killed the outplanted trees.

So today collections, as in Paris 'Jardin de Luxembourg' or in the manor of the Medici family in Italian Tuscany region some collections had survived. But if we take a deep look in the books of Volkamer we find out, that many varieties Volkamer describes seem to be lost today.

But the increased interest in reestablishment of these collections lead to discoveries into the citrus growing regions of

this world, to find the mentioned and described varieties.

Today the citrus varieties collections do not really hold such varieties, because many of these collections operate as budwood sources for the commercial citrus industry, were ornamental citrus with unusual shaped fruit, leaf or of-type coloration are often discarded or not included.

But it seems, that within the increasing interest in ornamental citrus, these collections should start to include such 'off-type' varieties, which do not have any value for the fruit market, but may have for the ornamental market.

Today research

As a word before, there is no today research. Some citrus collectors made themselves the effort, to compare the given descriptions of the historical varieties with today varieties. But unfortunately we can not be sure, that any of the results made by this comparisons are really true.

So sometimes the author himself gave a hint, which variety today may be the variety the author described. Maybe a sport or chimera described 'off-type' fruit could also be a fruit the historical author had once described. Volkamer described lemon fruits, which maybe disshaped by bud-mite feeding. So it is really a speculative work, to give any suggestion if the original varieties are not present for a plant to plant comparison.

After long discussions with other collectors this issue of the Citrus Friends Europe Newsletter Limette should explain, which of the today selections maybe the variety most possible once described by Volkamer even if this was only possible for some varieties Volkamer mentioned. But there is a deep guess, that with more effort and research more varieties described in historical scripts can be found still in today collections.

A first step was done: The flower island Mainau in Germany established a citrus tree collection, basing onto historical mentioned varieties. Together with the Sicilian nursery of Giuseppe Messina the varieties were selected and propagated. This collection represents only one possibility and may hold some very unusual trees, but unfortunately no today varieties names are given, as many of the today botanical names seem to be labeled incorrect.

The suggest

Here now the suggests, depending onto Volkamer's books and the discussion, many thanks to Dieter Hach for his help, which lead to the suggests.

Volkamer's 'Aranzo con foglia rizza' maybe to today known Citrus aurantium 'Bouquet'. And the fruit Volkamer described as 'Cedro con pigolo' maybe the variety today known as Citrus limonimeditica 'Etrog'. Also the suggest is close, that Volkamer's 'Lima dolce' may be the Citrus limetta 'Mediterran', but there are many Limettas present today, but the variety 'Mediterran' is closely related to the mediterranean and Italian citrus growing area, so the suggest is very close that this may be the variety Volkamer knew and described. Volkamer also described a variety, called

'Cedro di sugo docle' and there are many citron varieties present today, but in the mediterranean region there is mainly the Citrus medica 'Corsican' present, which will fit to Volkamers description. Unfortunately he describes this variety without a picture, so the 'Corsican' citron is only the closest guess.

The future

Further research may lead to more suggestions, but first a market for ornamental citrus must be established. Those trees must have the same quality as the trees for the commercial fruit production, and the propagation material must have the same certification scheme. So the budwood source trees must be included into the budwood source collections and a better labeling system for the customer must be established. With the increasing demand of ornamental citrus trees, more varieties can be found out and lead back to the historical varieties. But only quality, the possibility to buy correct labeled varieties and the possibility to obtain true ornamental citrus trees will lead to discovery of the lost varieties, which may have rested somewhere in Cinderellas sleep. Included into the citrus varieties collections, they may be available for all citrus producing nurseries, so can be obtained by the customer demand.

Club News

After the meet at Mr. Billigs Home many things have been changed. The contact between the Netherlands Coordinator and several German members get closer. Also the German members were impressed from the knowledge of some Netherlands members. Some visits had been done soon after the meet. Unfortunately it seems that some contacts have been lost after this meet.

The Netherlands member consider to order again budwood from the budwood foundation grove at Corsica. Members who consider to join this order, should contact the author for infos.

The budwood foundation grove (Citrus Varieties Collection) at Corsica provides first quality budwood in quantities for homeusers as well. The quantities will not exceed 10 budeyes per variety, only if more budeyes are requested. The price depends on the number of persons who join the cooperative order. The price per budeye is fixed by the French budwood foundation grove staff, only the transportation cost is somewhat variable, but will be shared among the persons who ordered. So price can be kept acceptable. The budwood is first quality propagation material, indexed for viral and bacterial diseases, genetical tested and true to type. As reported from the Netherlands Head Coordinator also the budwood seem to unite with the rootstock much better than any other propagation material, which is not from budwood suppliers. Trees from such budwood exceed often the quality from 'ready-to-buy' plants available in garden centers. Plants propagated with such budwood are of selected varieties and have a known phytosanitary status, which also increases the plant quality.

In spring/summer the botanical garden of Munich has planned a citrus exhibition. Unfortunately no date or exhibition program is available yet. The CFE chapter Germany got a help request from the French chapter for further addresses and help. So helpful addresses were sent to the botanical garden staff, and the French chapter also provided help, in establishing contact with the French town of citrus, the city of Menton. So maybe the members may ask the botanical garden for exhibition programs.

Also it may be possible that the botanical garden of Mannheim, called Luisenpark may build a Citrus Garden, where the plants from the last exhibition will be placed. Guess is close. This may

again a possibility were some members can provide informations and help to the visitors. But since yet, this is only a guess and a little patience is needed till all projects ensure this.

Limette No. 9 is prereleased, because it is seen as balance after three years of existence of the community, also as it should help new members the consideration to join or not to join the community.

It is ready to download from the Limette Homepage:
<http://members.tripod.de/Reichel/Citrus/lime.html>

Printed copies will be sent out at official publication date, fall 2002. The prereleased copy is available for members, if they send a request to the author. If donation is not used up, this copy will be sent as printed matter to the members who request, other members should send the official price for a copy to the author or download the issue from the mentioned homepage. Limette No. 9 is prereleased, because I felt necessary to remember the members about the community cooperation.

It is planned, to establish a chapter page on these homepages, so that new members may find their country coordinator and have a direct contact in their own language, without any translation mistakes. But for this we first need country coordinators, who will take the effort to coordinate a country group. The Netherlands chapter is the example how this may work, and there it works good.

As now mentioned, the Limette issues 7-9 have been finished and will be published just in time:

Limette No. 7 'Phytophthora Disease' in Fall 2001
 Limette No. 8 'Cold Hardy Citrus Hybrids' in Spring 2002
 and finally for 2002:
 Limette No. 9 'CFE Members' in Fall 2002

Planned for 2003:
 Limette No. 10 'Citrus Fertilisation'
 Limette No. 11 'Citrus and Lime'

and planned for 2004 as first issue:
 Limette No. 12 'Citrus Irrigation'

Further issues are planned, but they do not have any theme right now. Theme wishes and theme requests may be sent to the author, to evaluate the further themes for the Limette.