

Collection Profile

Fullerton Arboretum Citrus Collection

Gregory Dymont

Fullerton Arboretum was founded in 1979 on the campus of the California State University, Fullerton in north Orange County as a joint project between the California State University system and the City of Fullerton Redevelopment Agency. The Arboretum was designed to occupy the land that once held the remnants of the Gilman Ranch and the location of the first commercial orange grove in the area.

Richard H. Gilman was an early pioneer who settled in the area in the late 1800s. In 1875, he planted an orange grove with Valencia oranges and named his farm the Semi-Tropic Fruit Ranch. Other farmers followed suit and planted the winter ripening Washington navels, which gave Orange County a year-round citrus industry and started what some called “California’s Second Gold Rush.”

Early on in the Arboretum’s development, it was decided that because of our connection to Orange County’s agricultural history and Gilman’s ranch, citrus would be a collection the Arboretum should hold. From that moment forward, our citrus trees have played an important role in telling visitors about Orange County’s rich agricultural past. But in 1979, the majority of the orange trees that once made up the Semi-Tropic Fruit Ranch were either dead or near death and were removed to make room for the Arboretum’s other collections.

Citrus Collection

Our citrus collection today contains the eight original healthy trees left from Gilman’s grove and an additional 40 that have been planted since the Arboretum opened representing 15 varieties. The collection is arranged in two different gardens and thus has two different garden designs.



Heritage House

Development of our first citrus collection began in the historical Gilman Ranch section behind the Arboretum’s Heritage House. Built in Fullerton by Dr. George C. Clark in 1894 to house his medical practice and his family, Heritage House was moved from Fullerton to the Arboretum in the mid 1970s before the Arboretum opened to the public. The home is furnished just as George and his wife would have decorated it, and docents dressed in period clothing give tours of the home and surrounding orchard. Behind the home in a garden reminiscent of a Victorian garden grows one of the original trees from the Gilman ranch. The citrus orchard surrounds this garden and is laid out much like any commercial orchard with trees planted 18 feet on center in rows that are 20 feet apart. The orchard contains the orange varieties that early Orange County farmers sent to Eastern markets including *Citrus sinensis* ‘Valencia’ grafted onto the Olinda budwood. These trees

were budded from the original tree in Olinda (less than five miles from the Arboretum), which was the source of budwood for much of the Orange County citrus industry from the late 1800s to the 1950s.

The Arboretum’s other citrus trees are located in the Rare Fruit Garden. These trees are arranged less formally and surround the Arboretum’s Orchard Lawn. The specimens in this area are less commonly known to the citrus industry and consumers today but provide examples of interesting and somewhat exotic fruits used in other parts of the world. *Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*, otherwise known as Buddha’s hand, is one example of a citrus that catches the eye of both children and adults. On this rather small tree, the fruit partially splits into finger-like segments, but because the fruit has little or no flesh, it has no real value as an edible fruit. However, the fruit is very fragrant and sometimes used as an air freshener, mostly in Asia. Other citrus highlighted in this part of



Above, *Citrus sinensis* 'Valencia' orchard. Right, *Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*.



the garden include *Citrus maxima* 'Chandler', a pummelo, and *Citrus sinensis* 'Sanguinelli', a blood orange that also captures the attention of visitors, especially when the fruit is ripe and ready to pick.

Education Mission

In keeping with the Arboretum's mission to promote botanical and historical education, we tell the story of Orange County's rich agricultural history through our Heritage House and our orchard. To help visitors understand the relevance of each collection, we employ several levels of interpretation. Fiberglass panels framed in aluminum provide direction to all our collections. At each collection is an interpretive panel that introduces the visitor to the specific collection and its relevance. In the case of the Citrus Collection, we emphasize the historical, agricultural, and economic impact of the citrus industry on our region from 1840, when the first citrus tree arrived in the area, to 1940, when 68,000 acres of Orange County were planted with citrus to today, when farmers have become land developers and replaced their orchards with homes and shopping malls. Finally, individual signs identify the specimen's name, both

common and scientific, and some interesting facts about the plant.

Our goal has always been to help visitors learn about Orange County's rich agricultural past while helping them understand that the resources that made this region prosper in the beginning are no longer as plentiful as they once were. Our educational and interpretive programs emphasize the importance of land and water conservation in Southern California as this once agricultural area becomes increasingly

urbanized. Most residential lots in Orange County today cannot accommodate more than one or two Valencia orange trees, and residents are encouraged to plant water wise gardens. As we add new varieties to our Citrus Collection, we want to demonstrate to visitors that the newer varieties are not as thirsty as earlier ones, are smaller in size and more suited for smaller lots, and yet still produce large, juicy edible fruit.

Because we felt that preserving the Citrus Collection was a priority for us and for the Orange County community, Fullerton Arboretum

applied to the North American Plant Collections Consortium for its designation as an NAPCC collection. The Arboretum was accepted into the program in 2000. The NAPCC designation helps to protect the collection and gives us the opportunity to help others see the collection's relevance and its role in the region's history. **TPG**

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Original tree *Citrus sinensis* 'Valencia' from Semi-Tropic Fruit Ranch behind Heritage House.