

*The Codiaeum Connection*

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1

January 2008

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**





## A Message to the Members:

The heat and humidity of Florida's summer are now a distant memory and the winter is upon us. Inside this issue are several articles which will help you to care for your plants and keep them looking great.

This year, the society has made a tremendous first by participating in the fall sale at Tropic Flora. Members Scott Ayers, Cindy Kinard and Terri Seeley had an exciting three days introducing and representing the Croton Society. Terry Seeley (The Croton Connection) provided hundreds of Crotons, many varieties that the Sarasota/Bradenton area has never seen. We applaud these members who volunteered for this event.

As in years past, Phil Stager has given numerous Croton talks and demonstrations on the use and care of crotons to the general public and garden clubs. Ray Hernandez has also joined the list of Croton collectors who are willing to educate the public on Croton culture and care.

Many thanks to all of the members who hosted Croton Society meetings at their homes. The beauty of these home environments greatly enhanced our meetings by offering new Croton gardening ideas. These meetings also provided many new opportunities for people to communicate with each other about Crotons.

Again, we placed 2nd at the Florida State Fair and are striving for 1st place in 2008.

A very happy and successful growing year to all our Croton enthusiasts!



Pictured on the left, is the cover and back page of Ben S. Vergara's new book on Crotons in the Philippines. Any member interested in purchasing this book should contact Connie Hoerstgen at 813-968-9689 or email: [choerstg@verizon.net](mailto:choerstg@verizon.net). The cost of the book is \$20.00 plus shipping.

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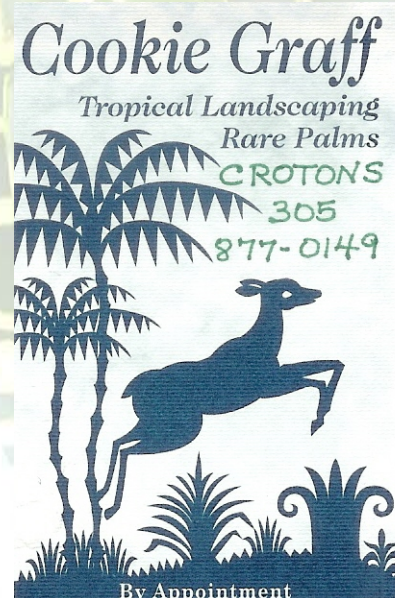
## FLORIDA STATE FAIR

February 7—18, 2008

### Family Living Competition

The Croton Society, once again, has the opportunity to participate in the Florida State Fair Horticulture display competition. We need **YOU** to volunteer for this creative challenge. Please call or email us **BEFORE January 15, 2008** if interested. You can call Nancy Herz at 813-431-8293 or email: [Nancy@Herz-USA.com](mailto:Nancy@Herz-USA.com)

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## Newsletter Articles

The Society needs your input and experiences with Crotons for our quarterly newsletter. Please submit articles to The Croton Society, P.O. Box 24892, Tampa, FL 33623-4892 by the following dates listed below:

March Newsletter, articles are needed by February 10th

June Newsletter, articles are needed by May 10th

September Newsletter, articles are needed by August 10th

December Newsletter, articles are needed by November 10th

**ON THE COVER:** Codiaeum Collage created by Harold Lee

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Robert Horne—Sebastian, FL  
Chris Lutz—Dana Point, CA  
Justin & Jenny Murphy—Orlando, FL  
Sue Powers—Dover, FL  
Nyssa Raymond—St. Pete, FL  
Robert Salzlein—Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Cecile Sanchez—Key Biscayne, FL

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"MANY VARIETIES OF CROTONS"

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# 10th Annual Croton Fiesta



Society Members: (left to right)  
Nancy Herz, Barry Schwartz, Ray Hernandez, Jim & Judy Glock.  
(bottom) Phil Stager, Connie Hoerstgen





During the Croton Fiesta, the Croton Society raffled off the first cutting of a Long Leaf Eburneum (Splash). This rare Croton was imported from friends in Australia, propagated by Lee and donated to this event.

Cindy Kinard's name was drawn from the many entries that were received. This is the beginning of the distribution of this rare Croton to other society members of fulfilling our mission of finding, propagating and distributing Codiaeums.

Congratulations Cindy on becoming the first society member to own Splash.



**Cindy Kinard  
with "Splash"**





## ***Best in Show***

Gerald Crosby-Jacksonville, FL

I've always been interested in plants. I became interested in crotons after reading an article in Jacksonville's Florida Times Union about the many unusual samples of the plant. Lately, I've enjoyed reading about them in the Croton Society publications.

A friend of mine from church works with the Jacksonville Agricultural Fair. She encouraged me to enter some of my plants in the horticultural competition. I hesitantly took one plant. But when the organizers saw that one plant, they begged me to go home and get more. As it ended up, six of my crotons won blue ribbons. Two went on up in the competition, and one of them won "Best in Show" - the Zanzibar, which I have owned for about a year. The idea that one of my plants beat out over 700 other plants still amazes me.



Zanzibar



Yellow Duke of Windsor



Goldfinger



Mammie



Franklin Roosevelt



## From The Australian Corner:

### *Insect Pests in Oz.*

Australia is still firmly in the grip of what is being described as the worst drought seen in the country since the first settlers arrived in 1788.

In our state of Queensland, severe water restrictions are in place in the south east area where the majority of the state's population reside and the restrictions are tipped to become even harsher and the cost of water will skyrocket.

Serious gardeners are battling to keep their plants alive (a lot have given up and many nurseries, both wholesale and retail have closed their doors).

The dry weather has also brought another unforeseen problem – the increase of many insect pests in the garden. Plants are weak from lack of water and are easy targets for insects seeking some moisture so they may feed and breed.

Crotons are suffering more than their fair share – Ants are making their homes around the roots of the plants. With the ants come Mealy bugs. These insects suck into the sap of the plant and secrete Honeydew – the ants favourite snack food.

Throughout the warmer months, looper caterpillars are common on crotons. Loopers are the caterpillars of some members of the Lepidoptera family of moths. They are called loopers because as they move they arch up the middle part of

their body in an inverted u or loop. The adult (moth) is brown with a metallic sheen. The female moth can lay up to 1000 eggs. The looper caterpillars can defoliate young crotons in a very short time (sometimes overnight).



Possibly the worst pest found on crotons in our area is an Australian native – the Fruitspotting Bug (*Amblypelta nitida*). The adult bugs are elongated in shape and about 15mm long (5/8 inch). The young insects are dark with a reddish abdomen. The



Fruitspotting Bug is a very cunning insect, when they know you have spotted them, they will hide under leaves or behind stems. These pests attack the

growing points of crotons. The attacked stem will die.

Areas attacked should be cut off as the die back may continue down the stem. It is easy to see when these pests are active the new growth is wilted.



Weakened

plants may die from an attack by Fruitspotting bugs.

Ants may be controlled by the laying of ant granules around the base of the plants.

We use a spray for chewing insects to combat the loopers.

Some degree of control for the Fruitspotting Bug is obtained by the regular use of a systemic insecticide. But what we really need is regular rainfall to bring our plants back to health again.

# USE *PEROXIDE* ON MY CROTONS? ARE YOU SERIOUS???

By Perry Edge



In a word, yes. It's another common household item which can help make your crotons grow better. So how does it work? Without getting too technical, the chemical formula of peroxide is  $H_2O_2$ , meaning it contains one more atom of oxygen than water ( $H_2O$ ). Rainwater is much more effective than tap water on plants, partly because it contains hydrogen peroxide. But you can't always depend on rainwater to be available when you need your plants watered. In addition, rainwater can be stripped of its peroxide by pollution particulates and other nasty stuff in the atmosphere.

Peroxide is unstable, and as it breaks down, it releases oxygen. Although it might seem strange, plant roots need oxygen for healthy growth. Using a peroxide solution to water plants can kill bad root material and bacteria, while it oxygenates the roots as well. Over watering plants is one of the most common sins committed by gardeners, resulting in depletion of oxygen (hypoxia), but peroxide can help restore the balance. Treating potting soil with peroxide before planting can kick-start your seedlings, rooted cuttings and air layers. In addition, USDA has approved spraying plants with  $H_2O_2$  to control microbial pests, bacteria, and fungi. Anecdotal reports indicate that there may be additional growth benefits that peroxide can provide, including controlling small insects.

A typical over the counter bottle of peroxide is a 3% solution. But it may not be very cost effective to use that if you have a lot of plants (see mixing instructions below). Peroxide is available in much stronger solutions, if you are willing to do a bit of searching. It is used by food services as a disinfectant and by beauticians to lighten hair color. Some beauty salon suppliers will sell it to the public, usually in 35% or 40% strength. I was able to purchase the 40% from a local beauty salon supplier. The brand name was Clairoxide 40.



**WARNING!** Peroxide in strengths substantially greater than 3% to 5% can be very dangerous if it gets on your skin, in your eyes or is inhaled or swallowed. Wear heavy gloves and hold the bottle as far away from you as possible while opening and pouring the solution. Needless to say, it could wreak havoc on your clothing as well.

## MIXING INSTRUCTIONS

To use over the counter 3% peroxide, add ½ cup to 1 gallon of water

To make an insecticide spray, mix 8 oz. white sugar with 4-8 oz of 3% peroxide in 1 gallon water  
(Note: 2 tablespoons = 1 oz)

To make a solution from 40% peroxide, use 3 teaspoons in 2 gallons of water.



## Our Croton Heritage

Over the last few years we have attempted to locate many varieties of Crotons considered “lost”. As we work together, each of us attempt to find different varieties and have located many Crotons we were not sure we would ever see again. Many varieties present themselves to us as “unidentified.” This is an area requiring good reference books, and more importantly photographic documentation that are useful in our search to identify plants that are worth cultivation.

Many times, the plants go to fellow collectors without proper identification, hoping to secure a final identification later. A good example recently was “Antilla”, found in many collections but we were fortunate to have a member who located a labeled plant, solving the identification status as an original Coppinger seedling.

It is fortunate for us to share information we have in print or in photographs with each other. Sometimes a member assigns a *temporary name* on a Croton of merit, *planning to correct it once a proper identification is found*.

Good news is on the horizon as more documentation surfaces. Our goal is always to locate and distribute these plants that have an authentic history of Florida horticulture.

My opinion in the area of assigning “temporary” names is to keep them as such. As many Croton identifications are presenting themselves, it would be a shame and a disservice to the Croton breeders before us not to recognize and honor them, once an original plant identification is verified.

*Robert C. Alonzo*

*Editor's Note: The Crotons pictured here have been given the following temporary names.*





## Croton Cold Damage Summary – Winter 2006/2007

By: Ray Hernandez

Anyone growing crotons in central Florida will tell you that cold weather is the most serious threat posed by Mother Nature. For being one species in one genus, the seemingly endless number of cultivars reacts radically differently to the invasion of cold, dry, arctic wind.

For the second consecutive year, Old Man Winter saved his “best” for last. After cruising through December and January with no real cold to speak of, February came in and went out like a lion. The week of February 11-17 was again, for the second year in a row, the coldest of the season by far. My coldest morning was February 17<sup>th</sup> when the temperature bottomed out at 36.9°F. There was also a thin layer of rooftop frost that fortunately stayed away from any vegetation. None of these conditions are too terribly unusual for West Central Florida, but typically first present themselves in mid/late December or early January. It is almost unprecedented to have such a long stretch of warm weather culminated by such an anti climactic event. The list of expletives I used to describe the cold snap cannot be listed here, but have surely been in your vernacular, too.

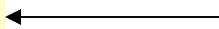
A late season cold snap is never timely, but rarely has any dramatic effects on plants already hardened by winter’s chill. This year, with no prior cold, the plants were a bit “shocked” by nature’s reality check. It might as well have been a cold snap just after Halloween, when *Codiaeum variegatum* is still relishing the heat and growing with a vengeance.

The following is a compilation of crotons sustaining some cold damage. It is ironic that in many instances the plant growing next to the damaged one escaped the cold un-phased. I will not include plants with state names – i.e. “Super California” and “Florida Selecta”, as these have proven nearly impossible outdoors in Central Florida winters.

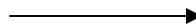
### Pruning Winter Damaged Croton (Sticks)



Does your Croton look like this?  
***Got Sticks??!!***  
**Don’t dig it up! It is NOT dead!!**



Remove the dead leaves and fertilize with a good acidic fertilizer. At each node, you will have a new head or set of leaves that will give you back your beautiful Croton specimen. In a few weeks, your croton will look like this





## Croton Cold Damage Summary (continued)

Finally, the results here may not match results in your garden. Many factors, such as plant location within the garden, individual specimen genetics and overall plant health before the cold snap, affect the ultimate plant cold tolerance.

Plant Name	Extent of Damage	Location
Aucubaefolium	Complete defoliation	Under palm canopy
Madame Butterfly	25% defoliation	East wall, morning sun
Superba (Picasso's Paintbrush)	25% defoliation	East wall, morning sun
Jungle Queen	50% defoliation	Full morning/midday sun
Dormannianum	25% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Veitchii	75% defoliation	Under oak canopy
Caribbean Star	50% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Fordii	25% defoliation	Under palm canopy
AFD #5	50% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Mosaic	75% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Bogoriensis	10% defoliation	East wall, morning sun
Yellow Bravo	Complete defoliation	East wall, morning sun
Rainbow Starlite	50% defoliation	Under oak canopy
Chrysophyllum	50% defoliation	Under oak canopy
President Reagan	75% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Charmer	10% defoliation	Under palm canopy
Delicatissima	25% defoliation	East wall, morning sun
Raphael	10% defoliation	Under oak canopy
Cutler's Gulfstream	50% defoliation	Under palm canopy



**Jungle Queen**



**AFD #5**



**Raphael**



**Mosaic**



**Madame Butterfly**



**Bogoriensis**





*African Bell*



*Norwood Beauty*