



Coconut Grove SPOTLIGHT

Thursday, June 29, 2023

Mango Season Is Here—in the Grove and at Fairchild on July 8 and 9



In Coconut Grove, mangoes are among the most plentiful trees that characterize our beautiful, canopied community. The months of June and July are the peak of mango season for Grovites, and one of the most important ways of celebrating mangoes is the annual Fairchild Tropical Garden Mango Festival. This year, it will be held on Saturday and Sunday, July 8 and 9. The Fairchild is especially dear to Grovites because David Fairchild, a leading naturalist worldwide in the early twentieth century, made his home in Coconut Grove at the Kampong. Today's story on the Fairchild Mango Festival was written by Matthew Wetcher, one of a group of FIU students working as part of a cooperative agreement between FIU's Lee Caplin School of Journalism & Media and the Spotlight. **To read the story, [click here](#).**

July 4: Miami Symphony Orchestra in Peacock Park, 7 p.m.

On Tuesday, July 4, the Coconut Grove Business Improvement District invites you to step back in time and experience a Plastic-Free Picnic Contest, a spectacular concert led by the Miami Symphony Orchestra (MISO), and a Drone Show at Peacock Park, all while embracing the historic heritage of Coconut Grove. The event will include a search for the best eco-friendly picnic setup. Showcase your creativity and sustainable practices for a chance to win exciting prizes.

When: Tuesday, July 4th, 2023

Time: 7 PM

Where: 2820 McFarlane Rd, Miami, FL 33133

Note: Seats are first come first served, no reservations available.

Learn more [here](#).

Miami's Mango Festival Returns to Fairchild Garden, Honoring a 30-Year Legacy of Fruitful Celebration

by Matthew Wetcher

South Florida's eagerly awaited annual Mango Festival returns to [Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden](#) on July 8 and 9, 2023, continuing a rich, 30-year history of the fruity extravaganza.



There will be an array of offerings including hundreds of tastings sourced directly from the Fairchild Farm in the Redland.

The festival emerged as a cornerstone event almost 30 years ago, offering a unique fusion of cultural celebration and culinary exploration. As a gateway to the tropical fruit's rich heritage, this festival will excite the taste buds and deepen our understanding and appreciation, making it a not-to-be-missed experience for locals and visitors alike.

"Of all of our events, it is the one that has the most human, emotional resonance," says Fairchild's Chief Operating Officer Nannette Zapata. "I can't tell you how often I've seen a family or a person walk up to a mango, and they just get this look in their eyes."

Zapata, 50, has 21 years of experience with Fairchild. She dedicates her work to reaching communities through managing Fairchild's operations, including retail, events, marketing, magazine publishing, website, social media, facilities, public relations, and more.

"Our reason for existence is to tell the world what it is that we do and to show the world how they, too, can do it," said Zapata.

The Mango Festival is a product of Fairchild's [Tropical Fruit Program](#) based in Redland.

"One of the tenets of botany is the utility of plants for humankind," says Zapata. "The Mango Festival's history is embedded in the roots of agriculture with the celebration of cultural and flavor diversity that mangoes represent."

Fairchild is home to the world's most extensive mango collection. Zapata says all the mangoes served at the festival are locally grown.

"I worked at about 20 Fairchild Mango Festivals in a row," says horticulturist Jeff Wasielewski. "And 2023 is an outstanding year for mangoes."

Wasielewski, 52, a professor of horticulture at Miami Dade College's Kendall Campus, previously worked at Fairchild with Richard J. Campbell, the director of horticulture and senior curator of tropical fruit at the garden. Today, Campbell praises his passion and commitment.

"He has always been passionate about horticulture and has applied this passion to tropical fruit," says Campbell. "He always brings in a core of excellent students that want to participate in all aspects of the botanical garden."

Wasielewski, a former Educational Outreach Specialist at Fairchild, continues to serve the garden as a volunteer during festivals.

"You go to certain festivals, and they give you the fruit and products, but the Fairchild Mango Festival teaches you as well," says Wasielewski. "There will be over 120 people in the crowd, and they will talk about pruning mangoes, planting mangoes, the different varieties, and caring for your own tree."

The festival pays homage to the cultural heritage associated with mangoes and will allow attendees the opportunity to learn about more mangoes than they ever imagined.

"The conditions lined up just right for mango season this year," says Wasielewski. "That will surely transfer over to a fantastic Mango Festival."

The Fairchild Mango Festival will be held Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The address is 10901 Old Cutler Road. Entry costs are \$24.95 for adults, \$17.95 for seniors, and \$11.95 for children, which will be available to purchase online. Fairchild members can attend the festival for free.

Matthew Wetcher is one of a group of FIU students working as part of a cooperative agreement between FIU's Lee Caplin School of Journalism & Media and the Spotlight.