

## BAREROOT SEASON BEGINS WITH JANUARY

By Tony Tomeo

UNITED STATES—Christmas trees and associated items are no imposition for nurseries. They are seasonal while not much else is appealing to a retail market. They occupy retail area that summer and autumn commodities relinquished earlier. Then, they relinquish their same space as bareroot stock becomes seasonable. The chronology is very coincidental-ly very efficient.

Bareroot season is not actually contingent on the end of Christmas tree season. It begins with winter dormancy of bareroot stock. This dormancy merely and fortuitously coincides with Christmas. It is as effective as anesthesia for surgery. Basically, dormant stock goes to sleep on a farm, and awakens in a new home garden. Timing of the process is critical.

Bareroot stock initially grows in the ground rather than within nursery cans. Separation of its roots from the soil they grew is harmless dur-

ing dormancy. Both roots and stems need simultaneous pruning. Then, stock is ready for transport without soil. Some gets packing of moist sawdust in plastic bags. Most awaits resale from bins of moist sand at nurseries.

Canned stock is more expensive and more cumbersome.

Bareroot stock has several advantages to more familiar canned nursery stock. It is much less expensive. It is also much less cumbersome. So, not only are more items affordable, but also, more fit into a car at the nursery. Their relatively small roots systems are easy to install. More importantly, without binding, their new roots disperse much more efficiently.

Deciduous fruit trees are the most popular bareroot stock. This includes stone fruits such as apricot, cherry, plum, prune, peach and nectarine. Also, it includes pomme fruits such as apple, pear and quince. Roses and cane berries

are likely the second most popular of bareroot stock. Persimmon, pomegranate, fig, mulberry, and nut trees are also available.

Some of the more unusual bareroot stock is available only from online catalogues. More variety seems to become available locally though. Elderberry has only been available in California for the past several years. Currant and gooseberry are variably available here. Artichoke, asparagus, rhubarb and strawberry are perennials that are available bareroot. Cultivars of blueberry and grapevines are available.

Highlight: Heath

Heaths, which are several species of Erica, derive their name from their natural habitats. They are endemic to shrublands of acidic and seasonally dry soil of inferior quality. Such ecosystems, or heaths, do not sustain many big trees or shrubbery. Species from heaths should be resilient to dry chaparral summers. However,

they dislike locally alkaline soils.

This is unfortunately why heaths are quite rare within gardens here. They are popular as blooming potted plants for winter, but become scarce afterward. Within planters of potting media, they may grow and bloom for many years. In the ground though, they are likely to languish without acidifying amendment. They prefer the company of coniferous species.

Heath blooms for winter or very early spring. Heather is a similar relation, but blooms for summer or autumn. Floral color ranges from white to pink to rustic purplish pink. Flowers are dinky but abundant. Comparably dinky evergreen leaves are like soft juniper scales. Almost all available heaths grow less than five feet high. Most grow less than a foot high.

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## BANANA YELLOW (92)

By Grady Miller

UNITED STATES—The honeymoon phase of the trip had lasted from Costa Rica, almost to the Nicaraguan border. It was buoyed by prospects of good pay in the country of great depths and deep ravines, where you could look down on the head of a condor and still see 1000 feet separating the condor from the jungle floor. From here to the land of preservatives, Uncle Sam's bargain basement.

There was a bounce in their step and a spark in their heart. You know how it is. We were counting our money like it had already been made, you know, and the joy was real as anything we could ever know, because we were already there, you see. You know well that when it all turns to sh\*t, you keep slogging through the sh\*t and it doesn't matter how you feel. It just doesn't matter. And your love life, you love it so much you could give it up easy as a used Kleenex.

Let it fall fall fall fall. There it sounds again, let it be. Some of the Blacks went barefoot through the swales of Canaveral grass, yellow moon, yellow like a bit of parmesan cheese. The afternoon had reached its apex, it would only get better now. The big cat mountain lions

prowled out there, one could show up at any time and claw their way any. Whatever is inside and looking out, is also outside looking in.

Like around 8:30 at night we were back in that crude town. In the main camp where all the Nicaraguan boys slept, a few lights were still on. "Bye bye, Nicas chochos!" "Hey, cartagoj watch out that the witch doesn't hurt you," they answered, recognizing the origins our voice.

Regional. When we looked over the provisions, we saw that Cabrera, when he threw the sack to the floor, had burst open some bags of rice and sugar. They got all mixed together in the bottom: sweet rice. The cause of this disaster calmly murmured:

"All the better we eat sweet rice, a la juerza."

"Well I can sign you up. Tomorrow you get to cook," Heraclito said.

"You told me to start with the housekeeping," Cabrera said. He tossed his hat onto the floor and added:

"If you have to bring provisions next Monday, I won't go with you."

This period we cooked. We got back to the camp at five, very tired and drenched by

sweat, and who was there at that hour had to do double duty in the kitchen, where it was hot and do battle with the fire and the large tin cans we prepared the dinner in. At the same time we left lunch ready for the following day, that we took to work in the paniques, to eat cold. The day that Heraclito cooked it was a treat. We ate early and well. These things took on great importance in the world of labor and life in the banana plantation camps.

Cabrera was a lightning bolt, si señor. We had a campfire that could have served to roast an ox. From the corridor we heard them fighting-shouting with the gallon tin cans, blowing air at the fire with a force that wanted to bring down the camp, that filled with heavy black clouds of smoke that made some choke. A moment later they were banging a spoon on the tabique, calling to the meal. He sat, squatted in the corridor and made the food disappear in two swallows, while he brushed off the sweat with his hair knuckles, that dripped down in rivulets down his soot-blackened face.

The day it was my turn to cook was a disaster, a calamity. Nobody could approach the kitchen. There I was trapped, trapped like a

tiger, grumbling with my eyes teary from the smoke, full of soot from the tip of my head. And with the finger chapped. After a day's slavery in the camp kitchen, I called everyone to eat. Cabrera grabbed his paniquin, sampled the food with his fingertips and, making a grimace of yuk, and exclaimed:

"Aghurr! So much to-do to make a ball of burnt rice."

I honestly had a notion to screw the can of rice to Cabrera's head.

Sometimes with the black, Felix had luck, we had a party with the piece of tepezcuintle spotted paca he gave to us. We saw him going by every night to the mountain, with a gangoche covering his back, a piece of cap without a visor and his old puttees tied with twine from the canillas. On his shoulder, he carried his most precious treasure: a shotgun with an eroded barrel and held to the pieces of rifle butt: beautiful but damaged hard wood.

If we heard a distance shot fired, we exclaimed, "There is meat for tomorrow." We smiled.

To be continued...

Grady is the Wizard of Fiction.

## IGNORING MEDICARE RULES COSTS AMERICANS MILLIONS IN PENALTIES!!

By Toni King

UNITED STATES—Toni: I need your help! I have discovered that my mother, who is 67, never enrolled in Medicare Part B or D. She was under the impression that if she did not go to the doctor, she did not need to pay the premium because she needed the money to pay for her car payment and could enroll later.

She has been diagnosed with colon cancer. I called Social Security to help her enroll in Part B and was informed that she must wait until January 1 to enroll in Medicare Part B. The Social Security agent said that my mother has missed her "window of opportunity" since she did not enroll when she turned 65 and is going to receive a penalty when she enrolls. Please advise me what I can do to help her? Thanks, Jeanine from El Paso, TX.

Oh My, Jeanine: Your mother has an extremely serious Medicare issue! She will have to enroll during Medicare's General Enrollment

Period (GEP) which is from January 1-March 31 each year for those that never enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B. Your mother will receive the famous "Part B penalty" for the rest of her Medicare life.

Beginning January 1, 2023, Medicare's General Enrollment Period (GEP) January 1-March 31 rules changed that help Americans who had not enrolled in Medicare when turning 65. Now when you enroll in January, February or March, your Medicare Part B will begin the first day of the following month. If you wait past March 31 to enroll, your Medicare enrollment will be delayed until Jan. 1 of the next year, and you'll receive a higher Part B penalty which will go all the way back to the month you turn 65.

Jeanine, when your mother enrolls in Medicare Part B during Medicare's General Enrollment Period (GEP), she will receive the Part B penalty which is a 10 percent penalty for each 12-month period or year that

she failed to enroll. Your mother's penalty will be 20 percent (2 years times 10 percent) for as long as your mother could have had Part B but failed to enroll. The penalty remains in effect for the life of the Medicare beneficiary's Medicare coverage.

For your mother to enroll in a Medicare Part D plan, she must wait until the next Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) which is from October 15-December 7. The Medicare Part D plan will start January 1. The Medicare Part D penalty is 1 percent for each year that you could have enrolled in Part D but failed to enroll in Part D from age 65. This penalty, which is based upon the national Part D average premium, also changes as the national Part D average changes.

Medicare enrollment periods are:

-Medicare Initial Enrollment Period (IEP): 7-month window that begins 3 months before turning 65, the month one turns 65 and 3 months after one turn 65.

-Special Enrollment Period (SEP): The 8-month window of signing up for Part B without receiving a Part B penalty after turning 65. One must be working full-time with company benefits to avoid the Part B penalty.

-General Enrollment Period (GEP): January 1-March 31 for anyone who has not enrolled in Part B and now can enroll in Medicare Part B beginning the next month. You WILL receive a Medicare Part B penalty if you are past your IEP and do not meet the criteria of the SEP.

Currently, there are over 7 million Americans on Medicare receiving a Medicare Part B penalty costing on average \$5,000 in Medicare lifetime penalties because they did not enroll at the right time. Remember, "with Medicare, what you don't know WILL hurt you!"

Call the Toni Says® Medicare office at 832/519-8664 or email [info@tonisays.com](mailto:info@tonisays.com) regarding your Medicare plans and options.