

## October Plant Highlights: Cooking

\*\*Please note: due to the ever-changing and growing nature of the Conservatory, plants may move locations and flowers and fruit may not always be visible.

### Breadfruit



#### **Where do we find it in the Conservatory and why do we find it here?**

Our breadfruit tree grows right in the middle of Sugar from the Sun. It grows fruit (a theme of what we grow in Sugar from the Sun) and, being from Southeast Asia, it enjoys the warm tropical conditions of Sugar from the Sun.

#### **How does it grow or reproduce and what is special about it?**

The breadfruit tree grows and reproduces like an ordinary tree. It flowers and fruits; new breadfruit trees grow from the seeds of the fruit. Breadfruit trees can grow up to 85 feet tall and each tree can produce more than 200 grapefruit-sized fruits per season!

#### **How do humans use it or interact with it?**

While breadfruit is primarily used in cooking, all parts of the breadfruit tree produce latex, which is used to seal ships and boats to prevent leaks. Pacific Islanders also use the wood of the breadfruit tree for timber and building canoes. Breadfruit trees play a role in culture, too, serving as the star of mythical tales.

#### **How is it used in cooking?**

How do you think the breadfruit got its name? As you probably guessed, the fruit tastes like freshly baked bread! Some say that it also can taste like a potato. The breadfruit is cooked and prepared in a variety of ways: roasted, baked, fried, or boiled. It is a staple food in many tropical regions and is often cooked with coconut milk to make mashes and curries. It can be hollowed out and stuffed with meats, fruit, or sugar and butter!

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### Miraculous Berry



#### **Where do we find it in the Conservatory and why do we find it here?**

The miraculous berry plant grows in Sugar from the Sun along with all of our other tropical treats! This plant is also native to West Africa, so it enjoys the warm, sunny climate of Sugar from the Sun.

#### **How does it grow or reproduce and what is special about it?**

The miraculous berry plant reproduces with seeds. After three or four years, the plant will begin to produce fruit (red berries, each containing one seed). Its flowers are small and white and bloom throughout the year. The coolest thing about the miraculous berry plant is the berry. When you eat a berry and then eat something sour, like a lemon, that sour thing tastes sweet! This is because the berry contains *miraculin*, a compound that binds to the sour taste receptors on the tongue. When miraculin binds to the sour taste receptors, those receptors cannot bind to anything else; so, if you eat a lemon after eating the miraculous berry, the lemon molecules cannot bind to the sour taste receptors, so you do not perceive the taste of the lemon as sour! It's pretty...well...miraculous!

#### **How is it used in cooking?**

Historically, the miraculous berry has been used in West Africa to flavor cornbread and sweeten wine. All over the world, the berry is popular for patients with diabetes and dieters, since the berry gives people a way to experience "sweetness" without eating a lot of sugar!

\*\*DO NOT pick the berries. We want all of our visitors to be able to see and enjoy this amazing plant. The berries are also sprayed with pesticides, which will make you sick if you eat them. You can purchase miracle berries on amazon.com. Thank you for your consideration of our collection!

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### Purple tomatillo



#### **Where do we find it in the Conservatory and why do we find it here?**

Head outside to our Urban Demonstration Garden while the weather is still nice so you can get a good look at our purple tomatillos! Tomatillos are easy to grow outside, even in an urban environment, which is why we wanted to showcase them in our Demo Garden...they are also delicious!

#### **How does it grow or reproduce and what is special about it?**

Tomatillo plants reproduce with seeds. They grow flowers that can be white, purple, yellow, or light green. When a tomatillo fruit grows, it is surrounded by a husk that splits as the tomatillo ripens. The purple tomatillo plant produces tomatillos that are mostly purple, though some can contain a lot of green, too.

#### **How is it used in cooking?**

Tomatillo plants are native to Central America and the southwestern United States and are thus staples of Central American and Mexican cuisine. They are most often used to make a variety of green sauces, as well as salsa verde!

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### Grapefruit tree



#### **Where do we find it in the Conservatory and why do we find it here?**

In Sugar from the Sun, you will find our grapefruit tree—you can't miss it! It is very tall and there are many grapefruits growing on it!

#### **How does it grow or reproduce and what is special about it?**

New grapefruit trees grow from seeds. When the little white flowers of a grapefruit tree are pollinated, grapefruits can grow. The seeds inside the grapefruits can be used to grow grapefruit trees. Grapefruits often grow in clusters on the tree, like grapes, which is why we call the fruit "grapefruit"! The leaves of the grapefruit tree are also interesting—the leaves produce oils that smell like fruit loops!

#### **How is it used in cooking?**

While we often just eat grapefruit raw, it can also be cooked! For example, we use grapefruit as flavoring for candies and throat lozenges. Grapefruit can also be a flavor of jam or jelly. Additionally, in Costa Rica, people often cook grapefruit down to make them sweet. Sometimes, the cooked grapefruits are stuffed with *dulce de leche*, a caramel-like treat!