



# **Gift of the Unicorn: The Story of Lue Gim Gong, Florida's Citrus Wizard (Pineapple Press Biography)**

*Virginia Aronson*

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Here is the story of Florida's citrus wizard, an immigrant boy from China who became a brilliant man who blessed the world with his horticultural gift. In China, the expression "*Gift of the Unicorn*" means a blessing from the gods to the most fortunate of parents: an exceptionally bright son. In 1860, a simple farming family was so blessed. The Lues named their baby boy with the sparkling black eyes Gim Gong, which means "double brilliance." When he was only twelve years old, Lue Gim Gong left China to seek his fortune in America. The adventurous boy sailed across the Pacific to work in a shoe factory. The life of a Chinese immigrant was difficult, but the magical unicorn would soon bless the boy again. The factory workers all received tutoring in English, and one teacher recognized Lue's unusual brilliance. Appointing herself the young boy's benefactor, Miss Fanny Burlingame took Lue under her sheltering wing. Lue eventually lived with the wealthy Burlingame family, tending their gardens in Massachusetts and their citrus groves in Florida. In the rural central Florida town of Deland, Lue revealed his extraordinary genius with plants. With the support of "Mother Fanny," Lue developed world-famous species of citrus, including a super-hardy sweet orange and a perfumed grapefruit the size of a soccer ball. He faced illness, lost love, business failure, and heart-breaking prejudice, but Lue's genius continued to flower and bloom.

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