

Promising season for Matua

This season's harvest at Matua Valley Wines is one of generally high quality, says national viticulture manager Simon Spence.

Echoing comments from New Zealand Winegrowers CEO Philip Gregan that, nationwide, growers and wineries are universally enthusiastic about the harvest quality, Simon says Matua's fruit volume was inline with expectations and the quality, overall, is very pleasing.

"We had a pretty good season in Auckland with great quality fruit. Gisborne was excellent all round; probably the best quality fruit since 1998. There is consistent quality with Hawke's Bay Chardonnay and the red are excellent. Marlborough's fruit is excellent in terms of quality and quantity, and Central Otago's quality is fantastic."

Drawing on grapes grown in all of New Zealand's major wine regions, the export-focused Matua team is now hard at work in the winery with winemaker Sarah Heyward tackling the complex task of keeping the developing wine in separate parcels and grower blocks until blending.

Simon comments that a key part of Matua's quality improvement process involves ensuring contract growers and vineyard managers can taste all varieties from their blocks, which are ideally managed on an individual basis. "We do a lot of trials with crop loads, pruning, etc. and then classify wines from individual blocks through blind tastings."

Sarah tracks a lot of vineyard data to ensure the finished wines meet export requirements. "As winemakers, we can offer important feedback to Simon and the viticultural team through the tasting processes. We must be able to trace every input, so it's also important that our suppliers, like Fruitfed Supplies, can meet our traceability standards for every chemical used in the winemaking process."

Jason Sail, Fruitfed Supplies' Kumeu branch manager, has been working closely with Sarah to ensure that bulk products used in the winemaking process such as cream of tartar can be supplied at short notice with details like batch numbers and production dates recorded in Fruitfed's system.

"The big thing for us, given the volume of wine we produce a year," adds Sarah, "is the ability of our suppliers to deliver on the promised service levels at the agreed price."

Part of the Foster's Group, Matua has long adhered to sustainable wine growing practices says Simon, who implements an internal programme called Foster's footprint. "Our future lies with ever-more sustainable growing methods and, both as a wider company and within Matua, we are proactively looking to be as sustainable as possible." ⇄



Above: Jason Sail, Fruitfed Supplies' Kumeu branch manager, amongst Matua's Waimauku vines with winemaker Sarah Heyward and national viticulture manager Simon Spence

Top: Simon and Sarah show Jason through Matua's Auckland barrel storeroom



In this issue we look at:

- ✓ Specialised nutrition from JH Biotech
- ✓ Driftstop for use with HiCane
- ✓ PGG Wrightson Aon offer KiwiSaver option

Biotechnology offers specialised nutrition

Products designed to help growers fine tune the nutritional status of a wide range of crops are now available through a new alliance between Fruitfed Supplies and Roots Shoots & Fruits Ltd (RSF)

New Zealand-owned RSF is the local distributor of internationally-patented agricultural and horticultural products from JH Biotech Inc, which are now available from Fruitfed Supplies.

Founded in 1987, JH Biotech focuses on biotechnology and nutrition for safer agriculture, aiming to expand grower profitability at the same time as being conscious and proactive toward environmental and health issues.

JH Biotech products available through Fruitfed Supplies now include:

- **Biomin**

Fully-chelated plant nutrients totally assimilated through all plant parts, including waxy fruit and leaf, within hours of application. These cost-effective nutrients use glycine and amino acids as chelate agents, are available for all market sectors and are the only true amino acid chelate in the marketplace to date. Range includes calcium, magnesium, iron, manganese, zinc, copper, boron, molybdenum, and special combinations ZIM (Zn/Fe/Mn) and Booster V (Mg, Zn, Fe, Mn, Cu, B, Mo, N)

- **Biological inoculants**

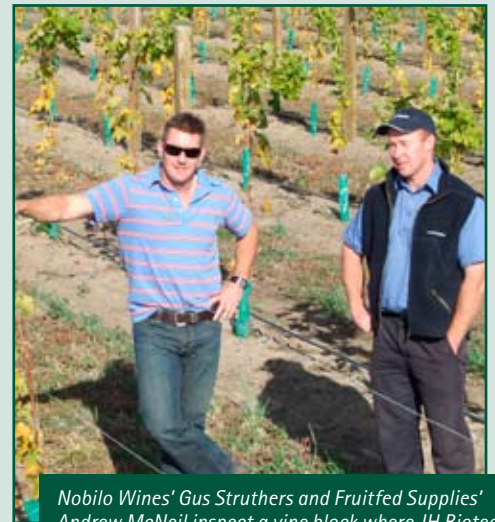
Biotechnology is revolutionising all aspects of cropping worldwide. Used where root competence and disease may be an issue, as well as for foliar inoculants prior to high risk fungal or bacterial infection periods. Products include:

- TRI-D25: *Trichoderma koningii* and *Trichoderma harzianum* to sharply increase beneficial microbial populations
- Superzyme: beneficial bacterial and fungal micro-organisms – *Trichoderma Spp*, *Bacillus Subtillus* and *Pseudomonas Putida* – plus enzyme complexes promote plant growth
- Mycormax: *Mycorrhizal fungi* ('myco' meaning fungus and 'rhiza' meaning roots) enhance beneficial symbiotic relationships between roots and soil to aid plant growth and vitality

- **Humax 80% and Mobilizer**

Humic and fulvic acids, extracted from leonardite. Increases nutrient availability, promotes nutrient uptake and stimulates growth. Humic acids increase the soil's cation exchange capacity (CEC) ensuring fertiliser application is more efficient, increasing fruit size and quality. Important for low organic matter soil and also utilised as foliar application.

Talk with your Fruitfed Supplies representative about the unique, technically-advanced JH Biotech range now. ➡



Nobilo Wines' Gus Struthers and Fruitfed Supplies' Andrew McNeil inspect a vine block where JH Biotech products, including Biomin elements, Phoscare & Mobilizer, have been in use since 2001



After a positive trial in 2004 using Mobilizer on sweetcorn, Hawke's Bay-based JM Bostock Limited is now using a number of JH Biotech products on crops such as organic apples, tomatoes and onions. JM Bostock's Fulton Gillies and Fruitfed Supplies' Vic Barlow are pictured on one of the company's orchards, which was the first commercial organic apple orchard in New Zealand

Two BASF fungicides gain organic certification

Last month both Kumulus DF and Blue Shield gained organic certification from BioGro New Zealand.

Kumulus DF is a well-established and trusted sulphur fungicide, used extensively for powdery mildew control in apples, grapes, tamarillos and various vegetable crops. It also controls rust in peaches, plums and nectarines.

Blue Shield is a proven protectant copper fungicide and bactericide. It controls a broad spectrum of diseases, including exceptional control of anthracnose.

For more information on Kumulus DF and Blue Shield and their use in the spray programme, talk to your local Fruitfed Supplies representative. ➡



FLINT PROVES EFFECTIVE IN CITRUS SCAB TRIAL

Work by NZCGI has shown FLINT to be very effective in controlling citrus scab as can be seen in the results from a trial in six-year-old Meyer lemons (Pyle 2003). Fungicides were applied twice - at petal fall and again 24 days later. In the folpet/mancozeb programme, folpet was applied at petal fall and mancozeb 24 days later. Cupric hydroxide was applied to the FLINT and folpet/Captan blocks, 6 weeks before petal fall and 6 weeks after last application.

CITRUS SCAB SEVERITY CLASS

(0: clean fruit, 1: mild infection, 2: moderate infection, 3: severe infection)

Fungicide Programme	Class 0	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Untreated Control	12%	10%	20%	58%
FLINT	92%	5%	1%	2%
Folpet/mancozeb	65%	14%	8%	13%

Lemons infected with citrus scab (Image courtesy Bayer informs)



Ridging on tangelo fruit caused by botrytis (Image courtesy of K Pyle)

PRODUCT UPDATES

New fungicides target citrus diseases

Citrus growers throughout New Zealand have two new weapons in their battle against diseases with the granting of new label claims for two well-known Bayer CropScience products.

Teldor®, which is mainly used for the control of botrytis in grapes, has been granted a new label claim for controlling the disease in lemons and mandarins, while another Bayer fungicide, FLINT®, used to control disease in grapes, kiwifruit and apples, can now be used to control citrus scab, also known as verrucosis.

Bayer CropScience marketing manager Peter Fisher says botrytis is difficult to control in most crops, but especially so in citrus because of the long blossom period.

"Until Teldor was granted this label claim, there was no fungicide available at all for the control of botrytis in citrus, so this is great news for growers.

"In the case of citrus scab, growers have traditionally relied on old protectant fungicides such as mancozeb and folpet. With the label claim granted to FLINT, citrus growers now have access to a modern and highly effective fungicide for controlling citrus scab."

Fisher says another benefit is that both Teldor and FLINT are not harmful to bees and other beneficial species, and have a good fit with integrated pest management programmes.

The active ingredient of Teldor, fenhexamid, belongs to the recently-discovered chemical group known as hydroxylanilides and FLINT is a protectant, strobilurin fungicide based on the active ingredient trifloxystrobin. ➡

FRUITFED SUPPLIES JULY/AUGUST GYPSUM WINTER PROMOTION

APPLY GYPSUM NOW

to improve your soil structure and drainage during the winter months

Gypsum (Calcium Sulphate) applications are a well known and effective way of improving soil structure to facilitate early root development, water infiltration and retention, and is a source of readily available calcium.

- Gypsum improves soil structure aeration and drainage. Reduces compaction
- Gypsum is a pH neutral source of readily available calcium and sulphur
- Calcium enhances soil biology leading to increased microbial activity and nutrient mineralization
- Gypsum applications will suppress the incidence of *Phytophthora*, *Clubroot* and *Bitter Pit* and other forms of soil borne diseases present in anaerobic conditions
- Calcium is an important element required to maintain fruit quality during transport to market and storage



For further information & promotional details contact your local Fruitfed Supplies branch representative or see instore

Visit our website at www.gypsum.co.nz

gypsum



Driftstop aids accurate Hi-Cane application

Specifically developed for use with kiwifruit bud-break enhancer Hi-Cane being applied via air inclusion nozzles, a new adjuvant called Driftstop is now available to help minimise off-target spraying.

Industry-funded trials over the past two seasons show that Hi-Cane® applied to Hayward kiwifruit with a new adjuvant, Driftstop™ through air inclusion (AI) spray nozzles and relatively low sprayer air output is much less likely to drift off-target than standard applications.

In fact, the Hi-Cane/Driftstop/AI nozzle combination can reduce off-target drift by as much as five times, with hydrogen cyanamide efficacy at least equal to industry standards. In other words, it seems that changing the way in which Hi-Cane is applied can minimise the potential off-target impact of spray applications without unduly compromising bud-breaking performance.

The Driftstop adjuvant being used in the project is a new product from Nufarm, available in one-litre and five-litre. Driftstop has been

specifically developed for use with Hi-Cane on kiwifruit when Hi-Cane is being applied via sprayers fitted with air inclusion nozzles. At a rate of 50ml/100l of spray mix this equates to 300ml Driftstop/ha for the standard 600l/ha water rate used to apply Hi-Cane.

Evaluation of this new technology and process will continue in 2007, as part of a three-year MAF Sustainable Farming Fund project being carried out in the Bay of Plenty. Zespri and Kiwifruit Growers Inc are co-funding the research, which is also supported by Nufarm, Environment Bay of Plenty and spraying contractors. ♦♦

™ Driftstop is a trademark of Nufarm Ltd.

© Hi-Cane is a registered trademark of AlzChem Trostberg GmbH. Registered pursuant to the ACVM Act, 1997 No. P3566.

Strong support with Kiwi-lok



With over twenty years' reliable use in New Zealand conditions, the Kiwi-lok® fastener remains the market leader.

Manufactured in New Zealand, the Kiwi-lok is made of quality UV resistant engineering-grade nylon to withstand often harsh conditions experienced in local kiwifruit orchards. Local support and reliability of supply are also important factors to take into account during the peak of the pruning season says Cameron Gilliland, sales and marketing manager for the manufacturer, ITW Fastex New Zealand.

Cameron says: "Look for the Kiwi-lok branded product and enter our 2007 promotion running this season."

With a reputation for performance, Kiwi-lok is available in 60mm and 90mm lengths from Fruitfed Supplies. ♦♦



The return of Dacthal herbicide

Popular herbicide Dacthal is now back on the market and distributors, Elliott Technologies Ltd, have reduced the price.

Dacthal, based on chlorthal dimethyl, is an effective pre-emergent weed killer. With registrations for onions, forestry nurseries and a wide range of ornamental crops, Dacthal kills a wide spectrum of weeds.

Dacthal is extremely crop safe and can be applied pre- and post-emergence greatly assisting establishment of these crops which generally compete poorly with weeds says Elliott's northern region manager, Damian Elliott. "Dacthal can be applied to herbicide-sensitive red onion varieties, leeks and even quick turnaround crops like spring onions. With particular strengths against grasses and many hard-to-kill broadleaf weeds, Dacthal provides excellent forward protection without posing any residue issues for subsequent crops, as can occur with some herbicides such as pendimethalin."

Talk with your Fruitfed Supplies representative for details on rates and application timing. ♦♦



ASPARAGUS



Reminders for July:

- ✓ Mulch and bury dead ferns to ensure good rotting of crop debris. This will reduce the amount of **stemphyllium inoculum** surviving into next season.
- ✓ Take a **soil test** to determine fertiliser requirements for the coming season.

AVOCADOS



Reminders for July:

- ✓ **Greenhouse thrips** populations are again being detected on some orchards by Fruitfed Supplies' Crop Monitoring Service. If not controlled, these populations can over-winter causing fruit damage leading up to harvest. Calypso is now registered for greenhouse thrips control in avocados.
 - ✓ Keep an eye out also for over-wintering **six spotted mite** populations. For control options at this time of year, please contact your local Fruitfed Supplies branch or field representative.
-
- Adult six spotted mite and eggs on avocado leaf
- ✓ Approaching harvest, be aware of **withholding periods** (pre-harvest intervals) when spraying, especially for fruit destined for the USA, Asian or European markets.
 - ✓ Remember to maintain a **fungicide cover** with Kocide 2000LF. Industry best practice recommends eight (8) fungicide applications per year and with a large crop on trees throughout the country this season, optimum fruit quality will be an important consideration in markets next spring. Research by Kerry Everett, HortResearch, clearly shows some avocado fruit rot pathogens may infect under cold conditions during winter.
 - ✓ **Foliar nitrogen**, e.g. Yara Safe-N or low-biuret (max 0.4% biuret content), may need to be applied to remedy nitrogen deficiencies that often show as yellowing foliage through winter. Magnesium sulphate may be added to assist also.
 - ✓ Avocados are susceptible to frost. Ensure adequate frost protection is in place, particularly on young trees and/or higher altitude or colder areas. For details on the best **frost** protection system to suit your situation, please contact your local Fruitfed Supplies branch or field representative.
 - ✓ If **soil tests** have not yet been taken, it is not too late. The information gained from these is extremely useful for designing the coming season's fertiliser programme.

BRASSICAS



Maintain good protective fungicide cover for **ringspot** and use strategic applications of systemic fungicides in periods of favourable weather. Once seedling brassicas have established, apply a single spray of Ridomil Gold MZ for control of **downy mildew**. This systemic fungicide will give some protection to new foliage. Subsequent to this, and for other established crops, only protectant fungicides are available for downy mildew control. Monitor grey cabbage aphid and green peach **aphid infestations** and act early to avoid product downgrade at harvest.

CARROTS



Soil test fields, then apply and incorporate required fertilisers before planting.

If **root knot nematode** is an issue, a soil test can be conducted to determine presence and concentration of cysts in the soil. It takes a month to get results, so plan ahead to allow plenty of time before planting.

Likewise **seed dressings** should be planned ahead of time.

If **weevils, wireworms or other beetles** are considered to be a potential problem, sample the field and, if necessary, apply an appropriate insecticide around planting.

Apply **pre-emergence herbicides**, such as Stomp® Xtra, after planting but before the crop has emerged.

CITRUS



Keep an eye out for **greenhouse thrips**, as these pests will still be evident throughout autumn and early winter, especially in the warmer northern regions. Please contact your Fruitfed Supplies representative for control options if these pests are present.

If fruit have not yet been harvested, remember to keep up a fungicide cover to protect against **brown rot**.

Consider application of **Perk Supa** in autumn to strengthen the plant and improve disease resistance.

June and July are also the optimum time to take **soil tests**, to determine fertiliser programmes for the coming season. Your Fruitfed Supplies representative receives ongoing training in making fertiliser recommendations so please contact them for assistance.



GRAPES



Reminders for July:

- ✓ If possible, **avoid pruning** vines during rain or when rainfall is imminent. Apply a suitable wound dressing after vines have been pruned and burn prunings as they may later become a source of inoculum for diseases like *Eutypa* in your vineyard.
- ✓ Endeavour to prune blocks that exhibit **symptoms of wood-invading disease** first, as spore production is lower in early winter.
- ✓ Fruitfed Supplies representatives continue taking **soil tests** during the month of July. These tests are an important step to ensure vines achieve optimal nutrient status. Be mindful of excessive nitrogen readings as this can lead to an increase in the susceptibility of leaves to powdery mildew infections.

Black dead arm and **dying arm disease** of grape vines is caused by spores of wood-infecting fungi such as *Botryosphaeria stevensii* and *Eutypa lata* invading fresh pruning wounds of mature wood. Rainfall releases spores, which are carried by wind and washed onto pruning cuts. The spores germinate and grow into the healthy wood. The most obvious symptoms are noted in the early spring. Leaves are yellow, small cupped, often tattered with scorched margins followed by progressive cane dieback and canopy decline. Significant losses in production yields can occur when vines are affected with *Eutypa* die-back. Your local Fruitfed Supplies representative is available to discuss all aspects of the management of wood invading diseases during pruning.

KIWIFRUIT



Reminders for July:

- ✓ **Hi-Cane** applications should be made on Hort 16A later this month. Please read the label carefully and take note of all relevant safety precautions. Growers can also calibrate sprayers this season using air-inclusion (AI) nozzles and apply Hi-Cane with **DriftStop**, a proprietary surfactant. Recent detailed research by Zespri has shown this combination to greatly reduce spray drift during application, without compromising efficacy. Please note that this work has not been carried out with alternative hydrogen cyanamide formulations or other surfactants. Your Fruitfed Supplies representative has experience and several resources to assist with correct Hi-Cane application rates, use of DriftStop, application method and timing. Please contact them for assistance.
- ✓ June and July are also the optimum time to take **soil tests** to determine fertiliser programmes for the coming season. Your Fruitfed Supplies representative receives ongoing training in making fertiliser recommendations so please contact them for assistance.
- ✓ Several winter jobs should also be underway, such as servicing/replacing **pruning gear** ready for the pruning season, checking **kiwifruit structures** and carrying out repairs, and preparing for any block conversions/new plantings.



LETTUCE



Strategic applications of Mesuro!® or Larbait™ slug baits will limit **slug and snail infestations** as they move in from crop margins.

Maintain a protective fungicide cover for **downy mildew**. Monitor crops for downy mildew and sclerotinia after spells of cool moist weather.



ONIONS



Reminders for July:

- ✓ **Soil test fields** prior to planting onion crops. Apply and incorporate required fertilisers before planting.
- ✓ Have onion **seed pelleted** with fertilisers and/or fungicides to maximise seed germination and crop establishment.
- ✓ Apply Stomp® Xtra within 3-4 days of the seeds being planted for **residual weed control**.
- ✓ Apply Roundup® Renew Xtra or Preeglo® to **burn off weed seedlings** before the onions emerge.
- ✓ Monitor seedlings for **onion fly** about the loop/flag stage.



Onion fly adult

PIPFRUIT



Reminders for July:

- ✓ With **silver leaf**, the first steps are (1) to aim at pruning on fine days when no rain has fallen for 24 hours, and (2) apply a wound protectant dressing on the same day as wounds are made. Do not leave wounds uncovered overnight.
- ✓ The removal of over-wintering **European canker** and **fire blight** cankers during the dormant pruning operations is the most important cultural practice. Remember cankers become active in the spring as temperatures warm and buds begin to develop.
- ✓ Winter pruning provides the opportunity for an effective management programme to control **powdery mildew**. Selective pruning of the infected terminal shoots will assist to reduce the level of primary inoculum.
- ✓ June and July are also the optimum times to take **soil tests** to determine fertiliser programmes for the coming season. Correct soil pH is vital in apple production; if your pH is low, apply lime now. Your Fruitfed Supplies representative receives ongoing training in making fertiliser recommendations, so please contact them for assistance.

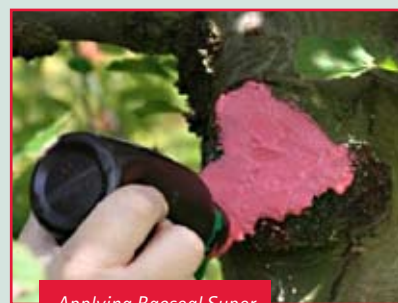


Powdery mildew on terminal shoots

Pruning should be carried out with good equipment, which results in a clean cut and that, does not result in pressure splitting, which leaves deep entry points. Pruning cuts should be made at the correct angle leaving sufficient tissue to aid effective callus formation.

Infection of trunk wounds often leads to silvering of the entire tree. Ensure pruning cuts are made at the correct angle and covered immediately with a wound sealant.

The wood is most susceptible during the first week after wounding but infection may occur up to a month later. It is important to apply a wound protectant, e.g. Baceal Super dressing, on the same day as wounds are made. Do not leave wounds uncovered overnight.



Applying Baceal Super

POTATOES



Reminders for July:

- ✓ **Soil test fields** prior to planting early crop potatoes. Apply and incorporate required fertilisers before planting.
- ✓ **Seed dressing fungicides**, such as Monceren®, should be used. Choice of product is partly determined by the disease spectrum present in the field.
- ✓ Monitor early crops for **late blight**. This pathogen can be active at a wide range of temperatures and may appear in crops during periods of favourable conditions.

STONEFRUIT



Reminders for July:

- ✓ With **silver leaf**, the first steps are (1) to aim at pruning on fine days when no rain has fallen for 24 hours, and (2) apply a wound protectant dressing on the same day as wounds are made. Do not leave wounds uncovered overnight.
- ✓ June and July are the optimum times to take **soil tests** to determine fertiliser programmes for the coming season. Correct soil pH is vital in apple production; if your pH is low, apply lime now. Your Fruitfed Supplies representative receives ongoing training in making fertiliser recommendations, so please contact them for assistance.

The **silver leaf** disease pathogen, *Chondrostereum purpureum*, continues

to cause significant tree losses in stonefruit production every year. We are not alone in this; US researchers claim 10% of trees are infected each year in severely-affected areas.

Silver leaf is spread by air-borne basidiospores which are released from the fruiting bodies often noticed on infected host trees. Rainfall and relative humidity are the key factors governing spore release. Rainfall is essential, as spore release commences six hours following rain and continues as long as the fruiting bodies remain hydrated. Therefore the initial management step is to prune on fine days when no rain has fallen for 24 hours.

Basidiospores are minute and, when deposited on an unprotected pruning wound during moist weather, may germinate in place or are drawn up into xylem vessels. It is vital to apply a suitable wound dressing, e.g. Bacseal Super, as soon as possible, at least on the same day. It is important to note that spore-trapping studies have detected low spore numbers even during dry periods with the release being liberated from fruit bodies in damp shady locations. So cover that wound.



Ken Jeffery – contributes for pipfruit and summerfruit.



Tim Herman – contributes for brassicas, onions, potatoes, squash and tomatoes.



Richard Bawden – contributes for avocados, citrus and kiwifruit.



Paul Hassan – contributes for grapes.

KiwiSaver is here

From 1 July 2007, KiwiSaver comes into effect for all new staff and many existing employees may also wish to 'opt in' and open a KiwiSaver account.

Sean Lysaght, insurance manager for PGG Wrightson, says that, in association with Aon, the company has created a KiwiSaver scheme particularly designed to:

- Help employers meet their KiwiSaver obligations with free and accurate advice
- Provide a single point of reference to both employers and employees.
- Provide a wide choice of investment funds from leading fund managers

Sean says: "Employers play an important role in KiwiSaver, being responsible for enrolling new employees, distributing KiwiSaver information packs, processing 'opt in', 'opt out' and contributions holiday requests, keeping accurate records and forwarding contributions deducted from wages with monthly Inland Revenue PAYE returns."

AonSaver is a registered KiwiSaver scheme which will help employers and employees meet their KiwiSaver obligations with free advice and simple-to-use forms and provide a single point of reference for any queries and problems. For more information, telephone 0800 363363 or visit www.pggwrightsonaon.co.nz. ➔

KiwiSaver
Poua he Oranga

AON\$AVER
YOUR PREFERRED KIWISAVER FUND



Orchids in full bloom; new bromeliad already promising

*Nancy and Dave Beck
amongst the Cymbidium
orchids they export to the US*



Taupaki-based West Coast Orchids is heading into the busiest time of the year as their Cymbidium orchids reach full bloom, but it's their home-bred bromeliad that's really catching people's attention.

Arriving in New Zealand from the United States in 1988, PhD graduates Dave and Nancy Beck put their professional scientific expertise to good use in their commercial cut flower operation.

"With our business partners we bred a new type of Pitcarnia bromeliad we named Red Dragon and, as it flowers during the summer and the orchids from April to October, they compliment each other in terms of cashflow and retaining valued staff full-time," says Nancy.

The Beck's breeding programme transformed the original bromeliad into a unique red long-stemmed prolifically flowering variety.

Tasks like writing research and marketing funding applications didn't present any problems to the highly-skilled couple. "We were keen to seek all possible assistance with our new export business, and sought and received grants from NZ Trade & Enterprise and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. Our skill in this area has also allowed us to help a number of horticultural colleagues with similar applications."

With 6,000m² of greenhouse currently in production and another 2,000m² being developed this coming season, the Becks are focussed on building their sustainable year-round operation, improving Red Dragon's resistance to pests and breeding new colours of the bromeliad.

Dave says: "We don't want to spray at all and if we can develop a flower that is pest free and requires no, or minimal, pesticide applications, our market access will be assured. New colours like orange, yellow and purple spikes would complement Red Dragon."

Dave estimates that the additional shades will expand exports to around a million stems in five years. Their obvious knowledge of the US market sees them export around 100,000 stems of Red Dragon and thousands of boxes of orchids largely to the US via one exporter.

"The US likes the single cultivar (or colour) orchid boxes, compared to Japan which prefers four cultivars in one box," explains Nancy who moves through the shadehouse manually adjusting developing orchid flower buds to align them to one side of the stem. "They're easier to sleeve with a definite 'back' to the stem and the yoyos (now available from Fruitfed Supplies) pull the stem straight, all of which help get premium prices."

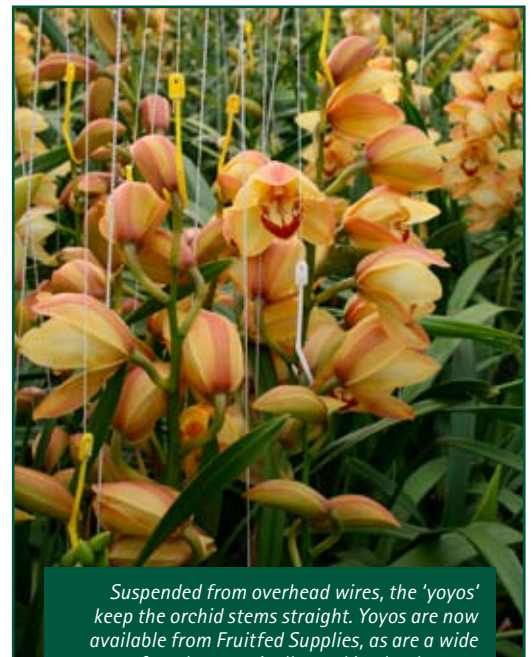
Some technical assistance from Fruitfed Supplies' fertigation specialist, Jean Corona, by way of fine-tuning the fertigation regimes, has played a part in the quality of orchids being picked this season.

"Jean has helped us to fine-tune our orchid fertigation to maximise their colour. And, with so much still unknown about growing the Red Dragon bromeliad, we've been trialling new ways of planting these with weed mat, irrigation dripper insertion points and feeding regimes."

With 32 orchid cultivars in production, the Becks are always looking for fresh material. "There are well-established favourites but you also need to continue looking for new colours and forms which we source from local breeders but also from overseas." ➔



*The Becks bred this unique bromeliad
specifically as a cut flower, registering the
name Red Dragon as their own trademark*



*Suspended from overhead wires, the 'yoyos'
keep the orchid stems straight. Yoyos are now
available from Fruitfed Supplies, as are a wide
range of products typically used in glasshouses.*

Fruitfed Supplies

Facts is a monthly publication of Fruitfed Supplies. Feedback to the editor is welcome. Please contact Kate Gordon, Relish Communications, c/o PO Box 2116, Auckland, email: kate@relishcomm.co.nz or mobile 021 587 227. Subscription details and address updates, please phone Fruitfed Supplies national office on 09 448 0510.

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