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## Committee Updates

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### Information Pack

The NZWIG Information Pack has been written, reviewed by industry experts, and is currently being sent out to members. It covers the basics of walnut growing, and is designed to help potential growers decide whether walnut growing is for them. It is not intended as a "How To" manual (this is provided in the NZWIG Walnut Growers' Manual, currently in preparation).

A copy of the Information Pack will be sent to all members as they join, and it will be provided in response to requests for information from members of the public.

*Heather North*

### Newsletter

Heather North has stepped down as newsletter editor, and Graeme Nicholas has taken over this role. The committee thanks Graeme for being willing to take on the newsletter and appreciates the considerable skills he brings to this task.

*Heather North*

### Grower Manual

We're producing a valuable resource for walnut growers.

It's a manual for both new and established growers and will represent the collective insights, experience and knowledge of leading growers, researchers and technical experts in related fields.

The WIG committee chose a folder format to make it easy to update the contents as the research and experience develops. To keep up to date all you will have to do is add or replace pages. We want it to be a living document and the equivalent of having the industry's most knowledgeable people on call to advise you.

The first edition focuses on getting started, how to set up your walnut orchard, how to manage an established orchard in the first few years including irrigation, training young walnut trees, weed control and problems such as disease and animals.

The growers' manual will be launched at the WIG conference in Christchurch in June.

*Ralph Brown*

### Research

#### Walnut blight control project

The walnut blight control project consists of three objectives, (1) determining the most effective timing for copper sprays, (2) trialing alternative spray types, and (3) progressing the fundamental science underlying biological control of walnut blight using naturally-occurring bacteriophages. Last season we showed that the first, critical, copper spray in spring should be put on when the bracts on buds are beginning to pull back. Any earlier, and the buds are too tightly closed for penetration of the spray. However, late spring and early summer were too dry for blight development, so it was difficult to be conclusive about the effects of the alternative sprays.

This season we hoped for better blight weather! – warm and humid – but late spring and early summer were at times cold and at other times dry, so there was again little blight development. Blight began to show up in December, January and February, however, and we have collected data from this period. In objective 1, we have been trialing schedules of fortnightly copper sprays, monthly copper sprays and spraying after each 10mm rainfall event, as well as three alternative "first-spray" dates. In objective 2 we have been trialing several copper-based sprays (including a low-dose one), an antibiotic (streptomycin), and two host-response activators (which do not act directly on the blight bacteria, but just stimulate the tree's own defences).

Walnut orchardists in the trials have been spraying their trees and collecting bud samples according to the experimental plan, and sending them in to Lincoln University for analysis. They have been collecting leaf samples so that we can determine how long the copper is remaining on the leaves after each spray. We have also been carrying out visual assessments of nuts for blight through the season. The second season's experimental work is almost complete now, and we are beginning to start data analysis. We will aim to get results out to you as soon as possible!

### Other research progress

We would like to investigate the use of Paradox rootstock (*Juglans hindsii* pollinated by *Juglans regia*) which is likely to be more vigorous – this may be valuable for earlier canopy development (and thus earlier production) on poorer soils. Ross Jamieson at Quality Tree Company has several rows of black walnut-English walnut crosses in second leaf and we are currently working on identifying the crosses. We may need to bring in further nuts to grow.

We have chosen a set of about 8 walnut trees that are worth trialing in the search for new cultivars. Some of these have been identified by Jenny Lawrence as high quality nuts, and some had a high score in the original walnut search but for various reasons didn't make it into the trial. The plan is to cut these back this coming winter to promote shoot development for scion wood, so they could be grafted in winter 2004.

*Clive Marsh*

### Membership

Membership figures as of 03 April, 103 members at 71 properties.

*Murray Dill*

### Grower Questionnaire

We had 38 responses; 32 from Canterbury, 2 from Otago, 1 from Nelson and 1 from Wairarapa. Over 70% of respondents have been growing walnuts for 6 years or less. Longest time growing was 13 years. Just over a fifth of the respondents said they had been growing for less than a year.

Most are growing for nuts, though 5 growers said they were growing for timber and nuts.

Total number of hectares planted by all respondents is about 100; although total area planned to be planted is almost 240 hectares. The average planned planting is 6.25 hectares, with growers ranging from 1 to 44 hectares.

On the question of organic growing, only one grower is currently organic, 29% are planning to go organic in the future, and 22% don't know.

The total walnut yield reported was 4057 kg; average yield for trees over ten years old is 3.09 kg. Average yield per hectare for trees over ten years is 233.8 kg (although these figures are based on an educated guess as

to the exact number of trees and hectares planted for more than ten years).

Of the eleven respondents who are currently marketing, all but one are or intend to sell to a processor, the other markets to a shop.

There were 11284 trees represented by the returns, with an average per grower of 297. Over 50% of these are under 3 years old. 55% are Rex (152), 34% Meyric (1199/4).

Issues identified for growers included selection and care of shelter, irrigation design and installation, marketing and processing, blight control, availability of grafted cultivars, long lead-time to full production (need to maintain enthusiasm and generate income), harvesting practice, and orchard management.

Support sought by growers focussed on collecting and disseminating local best practice information on everything from site selection and design to orchard and harvest management. Other requests were for sharing of knowledge through informal discussion groups, field days etc., blight research, benchmarking best practice, and provision of a directory of growers, propagators, consultants and contractors.

Issues for propagators included access to healthy scion wood, lack of definitive information on best rootstocks, the skills and time required for grafting, and keeping disease out of seedlings.

Propagators seek updates on future demand for type and number of trees.

Issues for processors were achieving a sufficient supply of nuts, and quality control from orchard floor to processor to consumer.

*Murray Dill, Graeme Nicholas*

## Visit to Central Otago

Waitangi weekend and what a fantastic hot Central Otago weekend it was.

Close to twenty Cantabrians along with two Nelsonians made the trip south, where we were treated to some true southern hospitality. Not only was it a great opportunity to meet growers from Central, and to gather under the oldest – 138 years – walnut tree in the Southern Hemisphere, but it was an opportunity to get to know each other and to compare knowledge, experience and understanding.

As we all know, the recent growth of the Walnut Industry in Canterbury has been centred to a large extent upon the "great walnut hunt" in the mid 1980s and subsequent Lincoln trials. In contrast, the Central development has been lead by the work of Otto and Valda Muller in finding the best nut trees and Marg Matheson's work with walnut timber production.

These are quite different initiatives when compared with the Canterbury developments, where the main objective has been to find the best nuts for processing. Not surprisingly, the preferred varieties are different. Hardly a Rex or Meyrick to be seen at Otto and Valda's place, in

their place Franquette and Vina, along with other varieties familiar to the European markets which Otto and Valda have targeted. Rob and Kate Wardle's property and the varieties being grown there were more reminiscent of Canterbury.

Another marked difference was the reduced emphasis on shelter, although there was some recognition that if this were given more attention the results may be even better. However, whilst wind might not be such an issue, frost certainly is. Getting trees up and established is paramount to the Central growers. Otto grows on his grafted trees in a greenhouse, where they put on very strong growth in their first year. Then it's winter planting of trees with central leaders pruned back to about 1.2 metres height.

Pickled Walnuts at the Stone House, not to mention other delicacies such as Cherry and Apricot Kirsch! made an interesting visit. The processing theme was continued with a presentation by Jenny Lawrence. It is fascinating to see the growth in the product range from *A Cracker of a Nut*.

The visit to Otago Polytechnic's Cromwell Crop Centre was an interesting follow-on to Canterbury Branch's field day on complementary cropping in the developing orchard. A lot of investigative work into potential new crops suitable to Central Otago is being done, from herbs and flowers, through to Olives, Walnuts and Pistachios.

The meal at Carrick Bend Winery was fabulous, it was a pity that numbers were such that a second dinner party had to be arranged. We missed you Valda!!

All in all a very interesting and successful weekend, enjoyed by all and a "must be repeated" concept; maybe in Nelson and Marlborough next year?!!

*John Mathews*

## Coming Up

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### Walnut Conference 2003

Friday 20th – Sunday 22nd June 2003

Canterbury Horticultural Centre, Hagley Park (off Riccarton Avenue), Christchurch.

An exciting and informative programme will include a wide range of topics related to successful walnut ventures, interesting and knowledgeable speakers, site visits, static displays, machinery demonstrations, nutritional information and recipes for using walnut products, and the launch of the New Zealand Walnut Growers' Manual.

#### **BE SURE TO MARK THIS EVENT ON YOUR CALENDAR**

Details and registration forms to come out in future issues of the WIG newsletter.

Conference organising committee:

Jenny Lawrence, John Mathews, Ngaire Sigmund, Paul Visser, Craig Oliver, Diane Leighton, Liz Ellis.

## The Walnut Industry Group wishes to thank the following sponsors for their support for Walnut Conference 2003

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River Terrace Nurseries  
Southern Nut Growers Association  
Southern Woods Tree Nursery  
Water Dynamics Ltd



### Southern Nut Growers Association AGM

Tuesday 29 July @ 7.30pm  
P.C. Browne Room – Canterbury Horticultural Centre  
Riccarton Avenue, Christchurch

8.15pm Guest Speaker  
Brent Rawstron of Rossendale Farms  
Former winner of the 'Rabobank Lincoln University  
Farmer of the Year' award for excellence in innovation.  
**Topic: 'The needs and desires of the market place'**

# Feature

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## Walnut Propagators' Label Scheme

(Factual information supplied by Vernon Harrison WAG [NI] )

The scheme was initiated in 1985 by the original Walnut Action Group of NZTCA. The scheme serves three purposes:

1. To certify the most promising cultivars and, by this, to give some guidance to the public of the best varieties to purchase.
2. To provide funds for [a] the support of ongoing trials comparing cultivars and providing more accurate observations of each, and [b] the search for new cultivars and their inclusion in the trial areas.
3. To pay royalties to [a] the owners of the original certified tree of New Zealand origin covered by a Propagation Agreement and [b] the owners of patented cultivars either overseas or in New Zealand.

Nurseries propagating and selling the certified cultivars apply for approval to be included in the scheme and are then able to purchase sufficient certified labels to cover their sales. A cost is put on the labels with 30% being passed on to the owner of the original tree and the rest being retained by WAG for funding ongoing research.

Intending walnut growers are encouraged to support the participating nurseries in this scheme as:

a) You are safeguarding yourself by only purchasing walnuts that have been recommended and certified through the scheme.

b) You will reward the originator of the cultivar and support ongoing research.

Only commercial walnut cultivars are recommended and certified, as the main purpose is to encourage the

establishment of a viable industry based on selected New Zealand gourmet walnuts.

Current participating nurseries in the scheme and the year in which they joined are:

1986 Harrisons' Trees	Palmerston North
1987 Peninsula Tree Nursery	Canterbury
1993 Quality Tree Company	Canterbury
1997 River Terrace Nurseries	Nelson
2002 Ford's Nurseries	Oamaru
2003 Waimea Nurseries	Nelson

Since 1985 Vernon Harrison has been the convenor of the propagators' scheme. A meeting was held in Canterbury recently, to which all of the propagators were invited. Vernon indicated that with the establishment of the NZ Walnut Industry Group as the peak industry body, it would be timely to shift the administration of the propagators' scheme to NZWIG and that he would be pleased to assist someone else into the role of convenor. He was pleased to see the development of the walnut industry over the years. Messages of thanks to Vernon, and his wife Erica, who has assisted with all of the statistics gathering and secretarial work, were passed on at the meeting.

Donna Hiser, of Nelson, has since offered to take on the role of convenor and will be liaising with Vernon over the next few weeks to set the revised scheme in place for the 2003 propagating season. One major change in the scheme will see the issuing of certificates to propagators rather than bundles of labels. This will mean that purchasers of trees will in future receive a certificate verifying the number and names of cultivars purchased from a participating nursery in a given season.

NZWIG wishes to thank the propagators' participating in the scheme and will actively promote all nurseries willing to join. Growers providing sine wood to propagators are encouraged to support the nurseries on the list and maintain the integrity of the scheme for the benefit of all walnut industry participants.

*Jenny Lawrence*