

## NZWIG announces plans to mid-2008

Increased research on benchmarking and pruning are among the highlights for the New Zealand Walnut Industry Group's programme for the next eight months.

NZWIG heard proposals from its committees at its last meeting and the resulting plans will provide a focus at least until the next AGM in June 2008.

The benchmarking project is already underway. The data will help growers compare their progress and allow our research team to compare the huge variations between orchards and determine what management practices are working best.

AgMardt has agreed to fund the benchmarking research with a business innovation grant of \$24,750 over three years. We'll be contributing \$16,500 and the work of our volunteers over the same period.

Growth data showing trunk diameters will be on our website within a few months. Information about the benchmarking project (and how to get involved) is already there: [www.walnuts.org.nz](http://www.walnuts.org.nz).

### PRUNING RESEARCH

Our researchers have completed a project on pruning or training young walnut trees.

They have already begun two smaller experiments: to determine the best heading cut for trees three to five years old and to see how pruning methods affect older trees.



NZWIG plans extended research and more events like this demonstration at Lincoln

The research committee will continue its trials of new cultivars and rootstock, and gather information about the costs and methods of importing cultivars.

If it seems that importing has potential, they will make the information available to the members. NZWIG would want the issue widely discussed.

### MORE INFORMATION

NZWIG also approved plans to upgrade the website over the next year and publish another supplement for the *New Zealand Walnut Growers Manual* to create a third edition.

In the next eight months the writers will be adding the updated results of the research on training young walnut trees, managing blight, benchmarking and the cultivar and rootstock trials.

They'll be responding to requests from members who answered the recent survey by adding information about health and safety in employment and handling and

disposing of chemicals.

More than 200 people have bought the Walnut Growers' Manual since NZWIG published it in 2003.

The recent survey of members showed that members and visitors were making good use of the website, but the Communication, Promotions, Stability Committee plans to make it easier to use, update some of the content and provide a library of useful information.

### MORE EVENTS AND IDEAS

The Education and Events Committee have plans for at least four events.

At the end of February, they'll hold a field day focusing on the orchard floor – including sowing and managing different varieties of grass, and also mowing and mowers.

They've organised a field day on December 2 on laying out a new block and choosing complementary trees. (See article page 2)

They're organising a visit to

Plans to mid-2008 cont...

Lower North Island properties in the week of Waitangi Day (It's a Wednesday in 2008).

Check the website and future editions of this newsletter for more information about events. We intend to provide the dates and details earlier now, so that people travelling have time to make their plans.

## Time to renew

Please renew your membership promptly this year. You'll be helping our research programme and will continue to have access to a supportive community and the latest information.

## Research reveals better blight results

Researchers have shown that Mankocide is far more effective than Kocide or other copper-based sprays in the battle against walnut blight.

They have also tried non-copper sprays and found all of them ineffective.

The NZWIG research team have been working with researchers from Lincoln University, HortResearch and Connect Agriculture over six years. They've also been collaborating with walnut blight researchers in Tasmania.

The research has shown that it is very important that growers apply one to four sprays at weekly to fortnightly intervals after bud burst to reduce the initial population of blight and protect the newly emerging tissue.

Also spray in wet, warm weather when the bacteria are multiplying rapidly. Otherwise hold back and always stop in early January because by that time the shells have hardened enough to protect the kernels.

## Field day coming up December 2



The field day will focus on issues for new growers and show other trees that could complement your walnut crop

The Education and Events Committee has organised a field day on December 2 that will be especially useful for new growers.

It starts at Southern Woods Nursery Main South Road at 10.30am where Murray Mannell will show us amenity trees and the hardiest shelter belt trees.

At noon, we'll visit the property of Laura and Lynsey Officer, 503 Weedons Road (approx 3km off the Main South Road) See their 300 seven year-old walnut trees, a cherry orchard and 250 blubberies. Lunch is BYO.

At 2.30pm, we'll call on Stephanie and Robin Gilks, 992 Newtons Road (between Hoskyns and Sandy Knolls, West Melton. See their mix of Rex, Meyric and NZ Purple, their high capacity sprinkler system and garden Their home-built wind turbine may be up and running.

Walnut blight remains our main disease management challenge. It is less prevalent in climates with low humidity, such as eastern North and South Island, but even there, in wet seasons like the Spring of 2006, it can cost growers a significant proportion of their crop.

Our researchers believe the concerns about the copper building up in the soil are well-founded and they want to find ways of using the minimum amount of copper-based sprays.

In the long-term, it's possible that our research project on natural predators of walnut blight, *bacteriophages*, will provide us with a practical alternative. Bacteriophages are working well in the laboratory, but not yet on

### NZ Pickled walnut competition

To enter, pick your green walnuts, brew your pickle and send a 200ml glass jar sample. There's a \$20 entry fee per sample. For more information and an entry form: [www.walnuts.org.nz](http://www.walnuts.org.nz) or email [nelson@digitalprint.co.nz](mailto:nelson@digitalprint.co.nz)

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### To join NZWIG

[www.walnuts.org.nz](http://www.walnuts.org.nz)