

## Farewell Ross

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Members of NZWIG will still be shocked at the news of Ross Jamieson's death early at the beginning of August. Ross has been a source of knowledge, encouragement and energy in the industry for many years.

On Monday 8th August approximately 300 people gathered to farewell Ross at his funeral in Christchurch. The tree cropping community was strongly represented, along with people from farm forestry and from the old Forest Service.

The service was, at times, a quite lively and informal occasion. Throughout there was a blend of thanksgiving for Ross's life, dismay and unresolved feelings that he had chosen to end his own life and recognition that we would miss both his friendly presence and his encyclopaedic knowledge on trees.



We heard fond memories of Ross as father, brother, partner, colleague and friend. His knowledge and his generosity were celebrated. One speaker referred to him as the "man that had the library in his head."

Ross had his childhood in Christchurch. He entered the Forest Service as a young man. After working in the North Island, Ross returned to Christchurch and was employed at the Ministry of Forestry

Office in the city. He quickly became active in the Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Tree Crops Association and the Mid Canterbury division of the Farm Forestry Association.

Ross shared his knowledge freely and was a willing and enthusiastic committee member on the local branch of NZTCA, periodically taking on the roles of chairman, treasurer and secretary during the 15 years he was involved.

Ross excelled at speaking to groups during field days - he was spontaneous, knowledgeable and often humorous without offending hosts or participants who may have had trees lacking a maintenance programme! He always put his name forward for the big occasions such as seminars or conferences, whether at committee level or on home ground as a venue host during field visits.

When the NZ Walnut Industry Group was formed Ross was a founding member, coming directly from the South Island NZTCA Walnut Action Group [research] from which NZWIG evolved. At his death he held the position of secretary on the NZWIG committee and was an active member of the research committee.

Ross was co-founder of the Quality Tree Company along with Linda Gardner. It became one of the key businesses supporting the developing tree crop industries in New Zealand and was recently bought out by Linda.

Ross's expert advice and sense of humour will be sorely missed.

*Jenny Lawrence and Graeme Nicholas*

## How's Your Taste?

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The NZWIG Standards Committee has put forward a proposal to establish conditions for a walnut oil competition. The idea is promote the quality and variety of walnut oils available commercially in New Zealand. In the first instance it is envisaged that the competition would be run by NZWIG. Four classes are suggested:

Class 1 – cold pressed – single cultivar

Class 2 – cold pressed – blend

Class 3 – lightly roasted – single cultivar

Class 4 – lightly roasted – blend

It is likely that the A&P Show will want to have another competition for oils this year and it will be good to be able to present our details for them to use as a basis for their competition - just like the olive people did last year.

So the call has gone out for those interested in being judges. If you are interested in this, contact Jenny Lawrence from the Standards Committee.

## Walnuts Promote Kakapo Breeding

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Jenny and Malcolm Lawrence have come to the rescue of the Department of

Conservation National Kakapo Team. Apparently Kakapo like walnuts and they may help the Kakapo breed successfully. The following is an extract from the *Kakapo Update* (March 2005), published by the Team.

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For many years the kakapo team has been trying to establish exactly what initiates breeding in certain years, and a great deal of research time and effort has been devoted to this elusive goal. If we could identify the trigger we might be able to simulate it – and so induce breeding at more frequent intervals: This could speed the rate of recovery dramatically! On Whenua Hou, kakapo feed on the green, developing rimu fruit, and breed in synchrony with the ripening of heavy (“mast”) crops that occur every 3–5 years. Clearly, the birds are able to anticipate these mast crops many months before they happen, and we suspect that hormones contained within the green developing fruit may be the key.

Rimu fruit developing on Whenua Hou, Te Kakahu and Anchor Islands was sampled in March 2004, and that on Whenua Hou was assessed again in October 2004 and February 2005. Individual rimu trees were found to have a reasonable amount of fruit, but overall the crop was below the lowest level that is known to have triggered breeding on Whenua Hou in the past. Thus, it seemed unlikely that breeding would occur in early 2005 unless it could be triggered artificially – through supplementary feeding perhaps.

It is not practical to pick tiny green rimu fruit in sufficient quantity for storage and subsequent supplementary feeding since the fruit is produced high in the forest canopy and each weighs ~150th of a gram! We assume that plant hormones present in green rimu fruit, are also present in some other developing fruits, & it seems likely that exotic pines may serve a similar role

in this regard as native conifers. For example, *Pinus radiata* foliage, stems, pollen cones & small green cones are readily eaten by some kakapo, & in 1998 "Flossie" & "Richard Henry" kakapo bred successfully on Maud Island on this unlikely diet! Walnuts are another favourite food of kakapo, and one of the few that might be fed as a supplement while fresh & in a partially developed green state during the weeks leading up to a potential breeding season.

Having exhausted other options in previous years (eg pulse feeding, ad lib feeding, manipulation of nutrient levels, feeding freeze-dried & frozen ripe podocarp fruit), we opted this season to feed them small green walnuts & pine conelets. Screening green podocarp fruit for unspecified hormones would be expensive since it is likely a large number of hormones is present - and once identified, we'd then need to trial each at the appropriate season on the few kakapo – and that could take years! Feeding green pine conelets to one group of birds and green walnuts to another just might short-cut all of this!

We therefore ad lib fed green walnuts to half of the adult females and some genetically under-represented males, and green pine conelets to the remaining females and other males on Whenua Hou from early November 2004 to mid February 2005 in an attempt to stimulate breeding. We are, as yet, uncertain what sparked breeding this year, but if in fact it was the green supplementary foods, then this will represent an important breakthrough!

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## NZWIG Committee

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Research; Clive Marsh

Standards; Russell Hurst

Events; Frank Brenmuhl

Manual & Information; Ralph Brown

## Research Update

### **Blight**

Last year was a high blight year. Results from our experiments have been reported in the latest issue of *Health in a Shell*. We encourage all growers to study this report. A more detailed report is available on the website.

HortResearch making good progress with phage work.

## Benchmarking

With a bit of encouragement we have got a number of orchards now registered in the Benchmarking project and the winter trunk diameter measurements have been flowing in. If any growers have taken measurements but not sent them in yet, please contact Graeme Nicholas at 027 208 7314.

## Pruning/training

Data was collected at end of first year and treatments applied for second year.

## Cultivar trial.

Several orchards have now planted specially grafted trees to test potential new cultivars. The progress of these trees will be monitored carefully over the years. Each tree is coded so that the grower is not aware of what the parentage is of any trial trees.

## Rootstock trial work

We are also planting as trial trees Rex on Paradox with Rex on Surr for comparison..

## Lincoln University Orchard

The research committee has negotiated an updated memorandum with Lincoln University covering access, inputs and research use of the walnut research orchard at Lincoln.

The events committee has organized a working bee to do further pruning in the block.

## Events

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You are invited!!

Come and join us pruning up the trees in the Lincoln University walnut research blocks.

Sunday 21 August

10 am till 3.30pm (come for as long as you can).

Bring equipment for pruning: secateurs, loppers, pruning hooks, pruning saws, chain saws.

Clive Marsh will guide us as to which trees we are to work on and what is expected.

Bring some lunch. We will have hot water. We will also have good size BBQ if you would like to cook on it.

During lunch we will be taking time to thank Jenny Lawrence for her role in the establishment and on-going life of NZWIG. Jenny has decided to step down from the research committee to which she has contributed a lot, so we would like to take that opportunity to acknowledge her.

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