

Low Chill Australia Inc.



LOW CHILL

STONEFRUIT GROWER

No 2/06 – April 2006

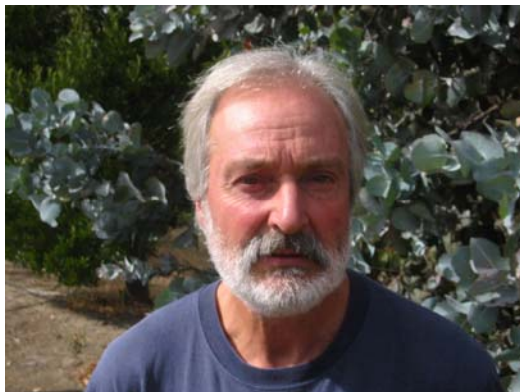
The official newsletter of Low Chill Australia Inc, an industry body representing the interests of low chill stone fruit growers



Register now for the Netpro Update 2006 National Low Chill Stonefruit Industry Conference & Trade Expo, to be held at Summerland House With No Steps, 253 Wardell Rd, Alstonville, Northern Rivers, NSW from **Tuesday 16th to Thursday 18th May 2006.**

Full conference program, registration and accommodation details are posted at:
www.lowchillaustralia.com.au

***Low Chill Australia Inc welcomes
Dr Wayne Boucher, Summerfruit IDM***



Dr Wayne Boucher, the new Summerfruit IDM

Low Chill Australia Inc warmly welcomes Dr Wayne Boucher, and is looking forward to working closely with him in his new role of Summerfruit IDM. Wayne has a thirty year history with the Summerfruit industry, ranging from various appointments on the previous Australian Fresh Stonefruit Growers Association (AFSFGA) R & D Committee, and more recently on the Summerfruit Australia Ltd (SAL) IAC Committee. Wayne has also been growing his own stone fruit in Southern Tasmania, and working in the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment as a horticulturalist (specialising in stone fruit) and most recently as Manager, Horticulture Branch. Wayne started his professional career in agriculture as a research plant pathologist, specialising in tree fruit virology and also has six years experience in amenity horticulture as Teacher-in-Charge of horticulture at Hobart TAFE College.

Wayne sees economic sustainability as the major issue facing summerfruit growers. The two key issues affecting grower profitability are grower costs and market returns. Labour costs are by far the greatest annual cost for growers. The only room to move here is increasing labour use efficiency. Increasing markets, both domestic and export, will have the biggest impact on increasing grower returns. Wayne also sees finding ways to address specific issues at a regional level as important.

Nationally, Wayne sees improving communications between growers and the national body as one of the most important issues to address. A key role for the IDM will be improving communications between SAL and growers. Communications is a two way street. SAL needs to know what the current issues are affecting growers and growers need to be kept informed of the initiatives that SAL undertakes on behalf of its members. To be effective in this role the IDM needs to spend time in regions, talking with growers and grower groups. Only then can the industry move forward in addressing issues such as increasing domestic consumption of summerfruit, satisfying consumer expectations, maintaining and expanding export markets, meeting market requirements, maintaining retail sector relationships and labour availability.

Contact: Dr Wayne Boucher, Mobile: 0427 666 257 E-mail: idm@summerfruit.com.au

Low Chill Australia Inc.



The Taste of Spring



From the LCA President – Bill Hatton

Update 2006 - have you registered yet?

It is now three years since the last Update conference, so we have lots to present and discuss. I would strongly urge all low chill growers and our service and supply partners to attend this important industry event.

The Taste of Springt

Low Chill Australia Inc has a colourful new corporate image to complement the recent launch of its website:



www.lowchillaustralia.com.au

The latest Update 2006 Conference program details are now posted on the website. We also welcome your constructive feedback and suggestions to enable us to improve the site, and to meet your needs.

New Members

A very warm welcome to our new members:

Producer members:

- Bowes River Orchard (WA)
- Kalemur Orchard (WA)
- Springdel Orchard (QLD)
- Tomarata Orchard (Pomona) QLD

Corporate members:

- Golden Grove QLD Pty Ltd
- Brisbane Produce Markets (QLD)
- Dalwood Wholesale Nursery (NSW)
- Flemings Nurseries (VIC)
- North State Finance Ltd (NSW)
- Wesfarmers Federation Insurance Ltd (NSW)

Handy Guide for Low Chill Stonefruit Season Poster 2006

The poster will be launched at Update 2006, a Low Chill Stonefruit Season Poster, prepared by R.J. Nissen, A. P. George Qld DPI&F & P. Wilk, S. Hetherington NSW DPI.

This quality full colour A1 size poster clearly sets out the annual cycle of low chill tree growth and fruit development, orchard cultural practices and pest and disease management.

The poster will be issued free to LCA members at Update 2006 Conference, (\$10 for a second copy, or \$20 for non members).

The poster is a comprehensive monthly guide for low-chill stone fruit growers. It features a central calendar grid with color-coded boxes for various tasks and events. Key sections include:

- Seasonal Calendar:** A grid from June to May, color-coded by season (Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn).
- Crop Cycle:** A diagram showing the progression from leaf growth to fruiting and harvest.
- Planting & Establishment:** Guidelines for planting times and site preparation.
- Pruning & Training:** Instructions on when and how to prune trees.
- Fertilisation & Irrigation:** Recommendations for nutrient management and water use.
- Pest & Disease Management:** Detailed information on common pests like Fruit Spitting Bug, Green Tortoise Beetle, and White Peach Scale, along with their life cycles and control methods.
- Harvest & Marketing:** Information on ripening indicators and market requirements.

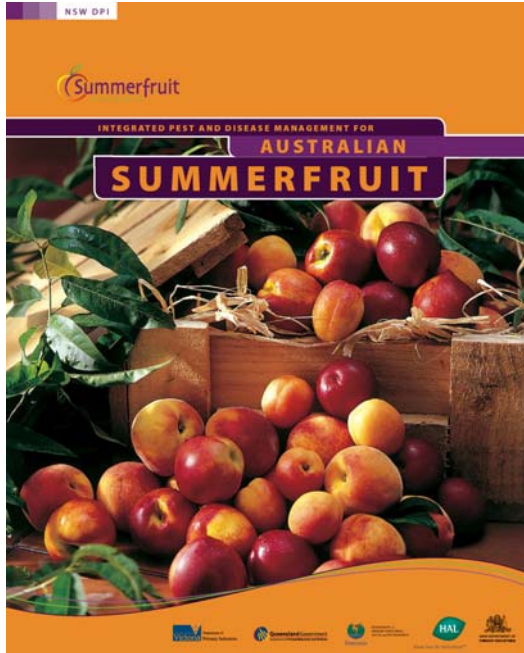
The poster is proudly sponsored by:



Contact Ross Barker:
 ph: 03 9396 1777, mbl: 0418 867 860,
 e-mail: barkers@barkersmelbourne.com.au

Stonefruit IPDM Manual

LCA members can expect to receive a copy of 'Integrated Pest and Disease Management for Australian Summerfruit' published by NSW DPI. Additional free copies of this publication will be available to Update 2006 delegates.



Update 2006 - Post-conference program: Orchard Walks

On **Thursday 18th May** following the Update 2006 Conference session, there will be a free program of **Orchard Walks**, hosted by Phillip Wilk – NSW DPI, and followed by a BBQ lunch:

- 8.30 for a 9.00 am start at Phil & Patti Stacey's orchard – 145 Victoria Park Rd, Alstonville, NSW
- 11.00 am Ray Hick's Heavenly Valley Farm - Bangalow, NSW, followed by:
- 12.30 BBQ lunch & refreshments at Heavenly Valley Farm, sponsored by gold sponsor BGA AgriServices:



Researcher Network Forum

Also scheduled on **Thursday 18th May**, is a Researcher Network Forum, commencing at 1.30 pm, at the Bangalow Bowling & Sports Club – Byron St. Bangalow NSW. Hosted by NSW DPI the forum is an opportunity for researchers involved in the low chill industry to consider Update 2006 Conference outcomes, and plan future collaborative research.



Congratulations to Ross Barker!



Australian Chamber President Bill Chalk presents Ross Barker with the 2006 Meritorious Service Award

At the recent Australian Chamber of Fruit & Vegetable Industries Conference held in Perth, Ross Barker was presented with the Chamber's 2006 Meritorious Service Award.

Ross Barker, of Barkers Melbourne, commenced work in the markets as part of the family business. Right from the start he became heavily involved in industry affairs.

He was soon appointed President of the Victorian Potato Merchants Association and Vice Chairman of the Australian Wholesale Potato Merchants Association. These two roles were his first appointments as an Industry Representative.

In more recent times Ross has been particularly active in the fruit industries, including stone fruit. He was member of the Australian Stone fruit Growers Association marketing forums from 1997 to 2003, and representing the Wholesale sector from 2003 to 2005 on the Summerfruit Industry Advisory Committee.

Ross was also one of the key drivers and convenors of the Melbourne Summerfruit 2004 Conference.

Ross was very active in the formation of, and was a board member of the Australian Mango Industry Association. He also represented the Melbourne Markets wholesalers in the original consultations on the Mango Code of Conduct. He has remained active on code issues from 2003 to this date.

Ross has lobbied Ministers, addressed grower meetings, and worked tirelessly to ensure that the proposed mandatory code applies to whole of industry, not just some sectors.

He is a current director of the Victorian Chamber of Fresh Produce Wholesalers and remains a dedicated supporter of the Australian Fruit and Vegetable Industry, working on a variety of promotions committees.

Australian Chamber President Bill Chalk described Ross as a very worthy recipient of the Australian Chambers Meritorious Service Award.



Low Chill Australia Inc warmly welcomes Western Australian members *Noel & Lynda Harding*, who will be making a presentation to Update 2006 on their low chill enterprise – **Harding Horticulture**.



Noel & Lynda Harding - Gingin WA

Set on the limestone coast of Western Australia approximately 1 hour north of Perth in Neergabby (West Gingin), Harding Horticulture's low-chill peach and nectarine orchard occupies approximately 5 acres within a 40 acre property. Backing to the south onto the Gingin Brook, the property is slightly undulating and is bounded on the east by a cattle hobby farm, on the north by a citrus orchard and by a turf farm on the west.

As new entrants to the low chill stonefruit growing scene, we found one of the most challenging aspects was obtaining contemporary and relevant information on growing low chill stonefruit. Taking over the property as an existing business just prior to harvest in 2003, the learning curve was steep. Stonefruit is grown, picked, graded & packed on the property and since the 2004 harvest, we also transport the fruit to market.

Since the first harvest, we have brought the orchard into 21st century by improving infrastructure and introducing equipment, implementing nutrient management and harvest procedures, tracking yields and obtaining food safety accreditation. Business planning is also playing a major role in looking to the future. The business plan incorporates the adoption of more cost effective growing methodologies, planting of different varieties of nectarines to capture the early market and expansion into the apricot market which will eventually fill most of the available land in the property.

Noel is also a 1st Class Machinist & Fitter with hands-on experience and superintendent & supervisory roles with fixed plant maintenance in the mining industry, predominantly working overseas including Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and Tajikistan. Noel has also developed and implemented maintenance management systems.

Lynda is a Social Scientist who worked in the fields of community consultation and environmental management within the government and private sectors. During the harvest Lynda organises the grading and packing of the fruit, ready for market.

Low Chill Australia Inc.



The Taste of Spring

LCA Special Membership Offer

Take out a new membership subscription and receive membership benefits to June 2007 – 15 months!

Annual membership of *Low Chill Australia* is \$110 for growers and researchers, which comprising \$50 membership fee, \$50 devoted to research and development, plus \$10 GST. The Corporate membership rate is \$275 comprising \$50 membership fee, \$100 devoted to research and development, \$100 advertising fee for the *Low Chill Stone Fruit Grower*, plus \$25 GST.

Your subscription assists in funding important research projects including the low chill varietal breeding and evaluation programs, which are critical to the future success of our industry.

Membership of *Low Chill Australia* is an investment in the future for you and your family.

Your Industry Needs Your Support

Corporate Member Profile



Norco Rural Stores is a major rural merchandise retailer having over twenty-two stores located from the Hunter Valley along the coast to Murgon (200km north-west of Brisbane) and inland to the New England Tablelands of NSW. The Group is locally owned by farmers, with outlets being an integral part of many small rural communities.

Stores carry a vast array of produce, seeds, fertilizers, agricultural and veterinary chemicals, fencing, irrigation supplies, hardware and garden requisites which are sourced directly from manufacturer suppliers. Where possible Australian owned and based manufacturers are supported whereby product quality and performance can be assured. In all, the product range encompasses some 24,000 lines across the Group.

A dedicated carton business located at Woolgoolga provides machine-erected fruit boxes and trays to the store network for retail sale to fruit and produce growers.

In store and on farm, Agronomic and Horticultural advice are strong aspects of the service provided, which extends to soil and leaf analysis as well as a specific crop monitoring service called *Cropwatch*. Integrated Pest Management principles are applied through the service and qualified horticulturists are employed to ensure high quality results.

The stores are supported by a strong supply network of preferred suppliers including Incitec Pivot Limited fertilisers, Nufarm Ltd (quality Australian agricultural chemicals), Ryset Pruning equipment and tools (including the Electrocoupe electric pruners), and Agrichem (liquid nutrition products).

Our Lismore based stockfeed plant manufactures a range of bulk and bagged feeds in pellet and mash form for the dairy, pig, beef, poultry and horse industries as well as domestic pets, for distribution throughout our retail network. Norco has also purchased Goldmix Stockfeeds in Murgon in south east Queensland.

The group offers wholesaling facilities to smaller independent produce and farm supply retailers from the Coopers Plains Wholesale branch as well as our retail outlets.

Norco Rural Stores suppliers include *Ryan Bros. trading as Ryset Tools*, an Australian owned family company with over 70 years of manufacturing experience, and one of the largest wholesalers of professional horticultural and viticultural pruning and harvesting equipment. Boasting names such as Electrocoupe (French Electronic Pruner), German Lowe Pruners, Italian Lisam Pneumatic Shears and many other specialised horticultural equipment. The company aim is to provide professionals with products which are tailored to their needs and to provide excellent after sales service.

When seeking quality products, friendly service and professional advice, we invite you to visit your local Norco Rural Store, proud sponsors of the Update 2006 Conference.

Low Chill Australia Inc.



The Taste of Spring

LCA Newsletter Publication Timetable

The scheduled Newsletter publication timetable for the remainder of 2006 is the second week of the following months:

- June 2006 – Update 2006 Proceedings Edition
- August 2006 – Pre-season Edition
- October 2006 - AGM Edition

Contributions including Corporate Member announcements / profiles should be received no later than the end of the month prior to publication.

LCA Newsletter - June Edition

Contributions are now invited for the June 2006 Edition of the LCA Newsletter.

Please forward copy / photo's / advertising to the editor by May 31st 2006.

Advertising rates in this newsletter are very reasonable and provide a cost effective way of informing members about your products and services.

Please note that LCA Corporate Members & Update 2006 Sponsors and Partners receive complimentary advertising (conditions apply).

Please contact LCA Communications Manager Peter McFarlane on:

Phone: 08 8376 2161

Phone / Fax 08 8376 7048

Mobile: 0418 839 836

Email: peter@mc.com.au, or

cm@lowchillaustralia.com.au

AUF - FRESH PRODUCE WATCH



Fresh Produce Watch (FPW) was established in 1991 as a project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Ltd (AUF) to promote the clean and healthy image of fresh fruit and vegetables with regard to pesticide residues, as well as taking an active stance to defuse or reduce the negative effects of adverse media reports.

Fresh Produce Watch recently issued the following response to a report published by *Australian Consumers Association*, in *Choice* magazine, titled ***Pesticides in fruit and veg: Are they harmless - or is the truth that we really don't know?***

Dear Sir,

I welcome this opportunity to provide further feedback to *Choice* on the current story on pesticides in fruit and vegetables (April 2006 issue of *Choice*), which appears to be a push for organic produce.

There are several important issues that I would like to raise and to encourage *Choice* (and the Australian Consumers Association) to provide their readers with better researched and balanced articles on food safety and health - in a concerted effort to inform the Australian public, rather than create unwarranted anxiety. This is especially important at a time when national public health nutrition policy and action are directed at encouraging Australians to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables for good health.

There are two serious omissions from this story, which unfortunately fails to disclose the writer's name and technical qualifications.

1. Not acknowledging the significant role of the federal government agency, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA www.apvma.gov.au) in registration of all agricultural and veterinary medicines in Australia and their intensely thorough approach to establishment of maximum residue limits (MRLs) for all pesticides. The agency also actively seeks consumer input into any deliberations through the Community Consultative Committee (CCC).

2. The extensive horticulture industry testing program for fresh fruit and vegetables - national *FreshTest* program - that monitors pesticide residues and other contaminants in fresh produce throughout Australia, including imported produce.

The program currently has some 20,000 results in its database and provides valuable feedback to growers on production practices.

Some further points that I would like to raise with *Choice* about this story:

- Most people with a basic education know that "*the dose* (of any chemical substance) makes the poison".
- It's silly to talk about creating bias by selectively quoting scientific studies to support a particular viewpoint and then go on to selectively quote the personal opinions/views of one overseas professor at Cornell University. What is the source/ reference for the statement that "*pesticide use probably saves only around 10% of the world food supply*"?
- Introducing the complex concept of *risk perception* in this generalised piece is likely to confuse the reader more than to inform them.
- Excessive use of emotive language for example, "chemical warfare" and "cocktail effect", and the unsubstantiated link between pesticides and cancer.

Fresh Produce Watch is well positioned to assist the media and journalists with researching stories on food safety and environmental issues and to review articles prior to publication. Our aim is to ensure the facts on fresh produce (quality and safety) are communicated to the public.

I strongly encourage *Choice* to prepare a feature article on *Integrated Pest Management*, new softer chemistry pesticides and other new technologies that have changed the face of Australian horticultural production. The result is cleaner, safer fresh produce for consumers and better protection of the environment.

In closing, I would like to put on record that Australian consumers can feel confident in fresh produce as safe and wholesome! The industry strives for continual improvements in good agricultural practice (GAP)/ adoption of best management practices and quality assurance programs. Today this country can boast having one of the cleanest and safest supplies of fresh fruit and vegetables in the world.

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact me.

Ms Frances Warnock
Project Manager, *Fresh Produce Watch*
BSc(Hons) in Food Technology, DipNutr&Diet,
GradDipFurther Ed.

Address: PO Box 1006, Sydney NSW 2001,
E-mail: frances@freshproducewatch.com.au
Web Page: <http://www.freshproducewatch.com.au>

*A project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit
and Vegetable Association Ltd*



NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Stone fruit Soil Nutrition workshop

*By Phillip Wilk, District Horticulturalist, NSW DPI,
Alstonville, phone: (02) 6626 2450*

A stone fruit soil nutrition workshop was held at the Centre for Tropical Horticulture on 7th March for interested growers and industry representatives. The workshop was sponsored by Agrobest and supported by NSW DPI and Low Chill Australia Inc.

Stone fruit growers from QLD and Northern NSW were asked to submit soil and leaf samples after harvest in November 2005 from two peach and nectarine varieties. These samples were tested as a single batch by one soil laboratory.

The soil and leaf analyses were checked and the data was entered on a series of graphs to compare both the nutrient levels and their similarity with other samples from growers in the same region.

Dr David Huett, Senior Research Scientist and Phillip Wilk, District Horticulturalist from NSW Department of Primary Industries were the main speakers on the day.



Dr David Huett

Dr Huett has over 30 years experience in his field and has been involved with a large number of horticultural industries on the North coast over these years. The industries with which he has had involvement include Nursery, Vegetable, Hydroponic, Citrus, Stone fruit and most recently Macadamia. Fertiliser recommendations now being used by north coast horticultural industries are based on a crop nutrient replacement strategy developed by Dr Huett in the mid 1990's.

The morning session was an interactive discussion which involved comparing grower results of soil and leaf nutrient levels and explaining just how these nutrients effect plant growth.

The take home messages

Dr Huett's take home messages for growers on the day were simple,

"The soil for trees is like the petrol tank of a car", what a grower removes during the season as fruit, prunings etc must be topped up at the end of the season with fertiliser. It may be in the form of animal manures or straight chemical fertilisers. Allow an additional small amount of loss due to soil leaching, fixation and loss due to volatilisation into the atmosphere. This total nutrient loss from fruit removal prunings etc needs to be replaced each season to keep trees healthy and continually producing.

The second message was not a new one but one that needs to be constantly reinforced. Over fertilising is not only harmful to the environment from nutrient runoff polluting our waterways but it also imposes unnecessary extra costs on growers for fertilisers. More importantly it increases production costs for pruning and thinning by producing very vigorous regrowth and in the end may result in poorer fruit quality.

Annual soil and leaf tests are essential tools for all horticultural producers. They are however not the only tools that growers can use but they do provide a snapshot view of the nutrient levels in the tree and the reserves of nutrients in the soil. It is also important to know the crop production or the crop load from the previous season. The other factors that are equally important to know are the seasonal weather conditions, the soil type and the tree's demands. Where and when to apply fertilisers to maximise soil infiltration and then availability and uptake by the tree.

Free software

Mr Wilk ran the afternoon session which revolved around a nutrient replacement software package developed by NSW DPI staff John Dirou and John Slack. The software is free to commercial growers and allows them to enter their own crop production statistics which then calculates the amount of fertiliser that needs to be reapplied for the following season. Growers who are using this software or matching crop nutrient removal and replacement for next season are not only maximising their returns but also practising responsible environmental management.

Nutrition workshop proudly sponsored by:



An Update 2006 Silver Sponsor



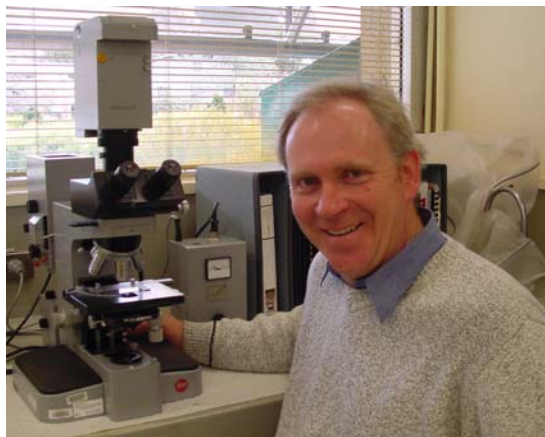
IPDM for low chill stonefruit

Managing pests and diseases is difficult at the best of times, but add the complexity of ICA requirements and pests such as Queensland fruit fly and White Peach scale and the job becomes even more difficult. So where does a 'soft' strategy like Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) fit into the low-chill picture?

We recently asked growers to tell us which pests and diseases were causing them the most worry and how they were dealing with them. Fruit fly tops the list for low-chill orchardists with other problems including thrips, mites, Orange fruit moth and brown rot.

Fruit fly control (including mandatory control under ICA-21) requires frequent applications of Fenthion (Lebaycid). Fenthion is hard on beneficials such as predatory mites like *Phytoseiulus persimilis* which control two-spotted mite outbreaks under IPDM. This means that IPDM in low chill orchards is often a compromise between sound ecological management and what has to be done by law to get fruit to market.

Low chill orchardists have to deal with different pests and management options to their high chill cousins. This paper looks at the benefits and limitations of using IPDM in Australian low-chill production.



Dr Shane Hetherington, NSW DPI, Orange

Contact: Dr Shane Hetherington, Deciduous Fruits Pathologist, NSW DPI, Orange Agricultural Institute, ORANGE NSW 2800, E-mail: shane.hetherington@dpi.nsw.gov.au Web Page: <http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au>

(Shane is the author of 'Integrated Pest and Disease Management for Australian Summerfruit')

Development of new management systems for low chill stonefruit in Australia and Asia

By A.P. George, R.J Nissen and D. Bruun, DPI, Maroochy Research Centre,

New management systems and techniques have been developed for growing low chill stonefruit under sub-tropical environments, including training the latest low-chill varieties onto the open Tatura trellis system planted at densities of about 1 700 trees per hectare. We estimate that yields at full maturity, 3-4 years after planting, to be between 28-35 tonnes per hectare.

Due to the improved ease of management of this system, labour costs associated with pruning, thinning and harvesting have been reduced by at least 30% compared with conventional palmette-trained trees. With our new training system, sub-leaders are espaliered in contrast to the normal oblique training. Both fruiting and non-fruiting laterals are pre-harvest pruned, prior to or during stone-hardening, by shortening laterals by 30-50%.

The severity of this summer pruning is greatly reduced by applying the growth retardant paclobutrazol either as a collar drench, or more preferably, under the irrigation drippers. Paclobutrazol can increase fruit size by up to 30%. Labour costs associated with harvesting can be reduced by concentrating the flowering and fruit maturity period using a sequence of treatments including application of paclobutrazol in summer, autumn defoliation and use of rest-breaking chemicals such as Armobreak.

The ethylene inhibitor ReTain®, was highly effective in increasing fruit firmness and size by about 10-15% but responses were variety dependant and timing of application was critical. This growth regulator may play an important role in 'firming up' very soft varieties such as White Satin nectarine or in extending the cool storage life of varieties suitable for sea-freighting. The combined application of gypsum, humic acid and mulch has also been shown to improve fruit firmness. The correct sequence and combination of all of the management and training techniques described above is needed to gain the greatest improvements in yield and fruit quality.

Contact: Dr Alan George, and Bob Nissen, Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, Maroochy Research Station, PO Box 5083, Sunshine Coast Mail Centre, Nambour QLD 4560 Email: Alan.George@dpi.qld.gov.au Bob.Nissen@dpi.qld.gov.au

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