

## Focus Orchard Trial: Can growth of Gala on M26 be kick-started?

**Orchard:** Favaro Orchards

**Orchardist:** Simon Favaro

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### Trial details

Variety: Royal Gala apples on M26 rootstock

Trees spacing: 3.6 X 1.0 m = 2,778/ha

Tree height: 2.4 m

Replant situation, but good soil preparation done

4-wire trellis installed in year 2

2008-09 Trees planted

2010-11 Not cropped as frosted

2011-12 Medium crop

2012-13 Full crop of 38 t/ha

Trees have not grown as well as expected and have yet to fully fill their canopy. Very little new growth in 2011-12 season.

Ideally would want another 0.5- 0.7 m on top of the trees and more lateral branch development in the top half of the tree.

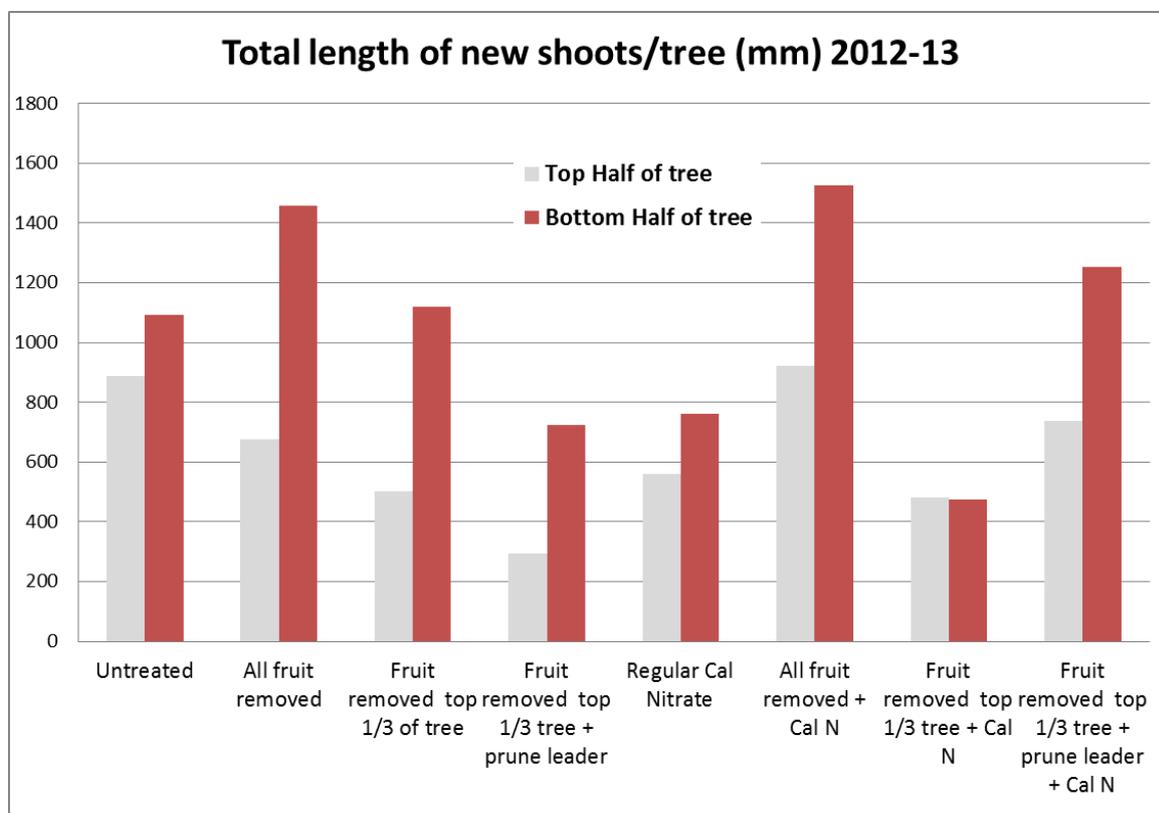
Aim of trial was to see if growth could be kick-started to enlarge the canopy and cropping potential.

All trees received the usual fertiliser program but some received an extra 250 kg/ha calcium nitrate split into seven ground applications.

Fruit was removed from in late October by hand.

Season was wetter than usual and considered good for tree growth.

Treatment	Treatment	Treatment
1	Untreated	
2	Fruit removed from entire tree	
3	Fruit removed from top 1/3 of tree	
4	Fruit removed from top 1/3 of tree	prune leader
5		regular Cal Nitrate
6	Fruit removed from entire tree	regular Cal Nitrate
7	Fruit removed from top 1/3 of tree	regular Cal Nitrate
8	Fruit removed from top 1/3 of tree	prune leader regular Cal Nitrate



## Observations

- Fruit removal and extra fertiliser had a greater impact on increasing the amount of new annual growth. Pruning the leader not very effective.
- Overall level of growth was low and no treatments had the result of kick-starting the trees.
- More new growth occurred in the bottom half of the trees than the top, even when fruit was just removed from the tops of trees.
- Conclusion is that once M26 switches from a vegetative to a cropping stage, it is hard to kick start growth again. May have been better to delay cropping another year and fill the canopy.



Trees in winter – very little pruning to do



Trees with crop removed – new growth visible