

Future Orchards 2012 Orchard Walk, Batlow 2nd June 2008.

The orchard walk was hosted by Greg Mouat.

It started raining on arrival, so discussion notes are limited to key points and recollections later on...

Block 1 – “Buckeye Gala” grafted onto Jonagold/M26 (1998 2m x 4m?) This block was planted over ten years ago when growers were planting at much lower densities than would be now. In this block tree vigour is somewhat limited by a shortage of irrigation water (due to various factors); normally the rainfall plus irrigation is adequate. However, the trees have a balanced canopy and produce good quality fruit. In the 2007-08 season, Greg deliberately kept the crop on the lighter side (15T/ha) to minimise stress to the trees. There were also frosts at bloom.



When I arrived the group were discussing the mulch and planting density.

Greg applied a bark & ground green waste mulch two seasons ago to try and conserve water. The soil is fairly moist considering that there has been so little rain in the last few months

MV- You could interplant to fill up the rows, under 20T/ha is not profitable.

GM- I thought of that, but unless I can get very well feathered trees from the nursery, they will take forever to catch up.

MV- You could always interplant with a more vigorous stock (maybe 106) as the vigour in the existing row is low. Make sure the scion wood is from the same source as the original though.

Another thing you could do is tie a vertical shoot from a horizontal graft up and train it as a “tree” in the gap (such as in the left photo). You could increase the canopy for virtually nil cost.

?- These trees would make a fantastic block if they were at a higher density (*trees are calm and well balanced*).

GM- fruit quality was excellent- 95% pack-out in 2007-08 (but yield was low at 15T/ha).

PW- When would you remove branches? (*Pointing out a thicker, long branch.*)

?- Why would you take it out? Keep it in as long as you can (*to maximise canopy, as it is still bearing well*).

RsW- In a very settled block like this one, often the bud numbers will be too high. You would need to bud thin, rather than prune and reduce the canopy.

MV- Take the “6-o’clock” buds off (*take out those on the underside of the branch*)

RsW- Ideally you want about 100 pieces of fruit per tree for this density and canopy size.

RG- there are about 250 buds there

RsW- assuming no frost, you would only need 150 buds.

MV- I like to use a rule that for every metre of row space per tree, you need 100 pieces of fruit. For this block you would want 200 pieces per tree if the water and vigour was there.

Block 2 “Tank block” Cripps pink

Here the block is planted at 1m x 4m. The top half of the block is on newer ground on M26; the lower half is on M9. Trees are close to 4m tall. Trees are low vigour, but well balanced, and not a lot of pruning is required.



Talking in the M26 rows. The estimated TRV here is about 8000m³.



Trees on M9, lower down the hill have an estimated Tree Row Volume of 5000m³.

Key Pruning Tips:

Ross

- Start at the top of the tree and work your way down
- Singulate the leader
- If there are any thick, upright shoots in the tops remove them
- If bottom limbs are not shading anything below them, they can be longer and thicker than the limbs above
- Get the shortening bug out of your system. Shortening branches causes regrowth and stiffening which stops branches growing down into the pendant, calm position.
- Consider the fruitfulness and spatial position of limbs when deciding which ones to remove.

Marcel

- If you are taking out vigorous shoots, either rip them, or cut them so that the cut does not have sunlight shining on it (by cutting upwards from the underside of the branch). Ripping removes basal buds that cause rebound re-growth, Cuts not exposed to light generally don't grow back as easily.
- When deciding whether to keep a less productive branch. It's either in or out. Under no circumstances shorten it as this will only cause vigorous re-growth.

Both:

- When straight lining branches, take out any shoots longer than your secateurs above "12 o'clock" and below "6 o'clock" on the branch.

The walk concluded at 4:30 as it was getting dark.