

## Future Orchards 2012 - Western Australia Orchard Walk January 2007

Notes prepared by Alan Hill, Western Australian Fruit Growers' Association

29th January 2007

At the property of Steve and Quentin Dilley Perivale Orchards, Upper Capel Road  
Western Australia

19 persons (including presenters and local press) attended the first Future Orchards 2012 orchard walk in Western Australia.

The orchard visited was 8 year old Royal Gala apples on MM106 rootstocks at 4.5 m x 2.0 m approx. A general introduction was given by Tony Portman DAFWA (assistant facilitator)

Steve Sparke (Agfirst Consultant) made a presentation titled "Marketable Yield and Optimising Quality" focusing on fruit quality, maturity testing and harvest management for Royal Gala apples

Dr Simon Middleton from QPDI made a presentation titled "Farming Light in Apple Orchards" focusing on tree structure and row orientation to enable maximum light interception and maximum light distribution and therefore increase fruit quality.

Both presentations were well accepted as they were practical and applicable to WA growing and production systems

In the Royal Gala plots Steve and Simon discussed tree shape and structure and indicated where improvement could be made. Growers participated fully in these discussions and I am optimistic we will see some behavioral change in the way tree shape and structure is managed in the future in WA.

A BBQ was held and further discussion took place between Steve and Simon on one to one basis with growers.

Steve Sparks also conducted a press interview for the Donnybrook/Balingup Mail at this time.

The Demonstration Block Participants then moved on to discuss have discussion in blocks where Quentin and Steve Dilley had adopted some methods for tying down as demonstrated by Craig Hornblower at the previous training day. Steve Sparks demonstrated a pruning method of ripping off upright growth which had grown after tying the branches down.

Seeing where growers had adopted methods discussed previously generated good and positive discussions and indicates that growers are willing to adopt and trial these methods.

General banter and discussions also covered freedom from apple scab for Western Australia which on the most part was in good humour based on Trans-Tasman diplomatic language. The meeting started at 2.30pm and finished at 8.30 pm which was a long day but growers involved generally found the training to be relevant and practical.

From the evaluation sheets growers would have appreciated a more hands on pruning and tying down and general tree shaping demonstration. Generally the majority of participants felt that it was a valuable experience.