

Future Orchards 2012

June 2008

North Victoria

9am Monitoring Block meeting, 2nd June 2008. Mooroopna Cricket Pavilion.

Began meeting with Ross Wilson, Marcel Veens, Michael Crisera, Ian Bolitho, Jason Shields, Matthew Lenne and John Wilson. Mathew Lenne joined later.

Ross Wilson outlined the morning meeting and what outcomes had been achieved during the project and for the Monitoring Block proprietors. Not many growers in the Goulburn Valley have taken on the high-density plantings of apples and there does not seem to be as much emphasis on Pears. Growers would like more information that is applicable for the Goulburn Valley climate and soil types and more for Pear Growers as a high percentage of Orchards are Pears.

Climate modification is a huge issue for the Valley. Needs include access to water, netting for heat, sunburn protection, and frost protection.

Discussion on Scion and Rootstock combinations that would work here as a high density planting situation for apples and for Pears??

Some of the variety options included:

Sweetie Gala, Rosy Glow, Ruby Pink, Brookfield Gala, Granny Smith and Pears.

Varieties need to be high colour strains or varieties where colour is not an issue to be successful in the Goulburn Valley.

Rootstocks options include M9, M26 and the quince Series of Pear rootstocks.

Significant change in tree pruning techniques have resulted from the project. "DOWN NOT UP" was the catch cry.

After discussing these combinations the group headed to Maurice Silversteins Orchard in Shepparton East to observe the high density plantings that are 1 year old. Glenco Gala on M26 rootstocks planted 3.5m x 1m and then followed by Ruby Pink on M26 3.5m x 1m. Consultants and growers were impressed by the results achieved so far. Fertigation through drip irrigation was a success, frequent use of Urea and Calcium Nitrate

Much discussion on the previous and upcoming tree limb management from both Marcel Veens, and Ross Wilson. The use of rubber bands to train limbs down was discussed re being more cost effective and better for orchard hygiene (ie string). Training wires also used which also looks to have worked well.



1pm Orchard walk presentations.

Marcel Veens had a talk on orchard planning and systems looking forward to the year 2012. Apple rootstocks suited are Virus free M9 3.25m X 1 m (3000 trees per hectare) or M26 3.5m X 1 m (2500 trees per hectare). Australian varieties of apples Pink Lady, Granny Smith and Sundowner.

Pear rootstocks preferred are Quince 4m x 1.2m, BP1 5m x 1.5m(Tatura Trellis), BP 2000 5m x 1.5m (Tatura Trellis). New varieties of Pears from Europe include Concorde, Sweet Sensation.

Marcel also stressed the importance of increasing organic matter in the soil to help with cation exchange which helps nutrients become available for roots in the soil. Soils low in organic matter have poor cation exchange.

Ross Wilson then presented a key point road map of the past 2 years of the project. Variance of weather conditions throughout Australia is a huge challenge and needs to be considered when choosing orchard systems that will work best for the local climate.

Refer to handout notes for details of the presentations.

The group then drove out to Chatswood orchard and looked at the trellis Pink Lady blocks of VC17 (block 15) Pink Lady on MM106 rootstock, 4.75m x 1 m. Shane Hall spoke on the challenges of containing vigour and increased shading now that the age of the trees had reached 6 to 7 years. Ross and Marcel demonstrated the pruning techniques that would be required. Gradual heavier thinning cuts required without increasing vigour. Crops averaging the 40 tonne per hectare with some colour issues. A good returning block even if vigour has been excessive but challenging years ahead.



Then the group moved on to VC15 (block 13) Pink Lady on M26 rootstock where a distinct difference in vigour(less) is noted and less pruning required as a lot more balanced fruiting wood and shoot growth.

Shane Hall commented how much easier this patch is to manage. Not sure if this patch has performed as well with cropload returns as the MM106 rootstock Pinks. A lot less discussion on how this should be pruned as less cuts needed.

We then looked at a Corella pear block that was nicely settled and in great cropping/vigour balance.