

Future Orchard 2012 – South Victoria Orchard Walk November 2006

- VENUE:** David and Sue Finger's Eldorado orchard, in the Yarra Valley.
- FACILITATOR:** Fruit Growers Victoria, represented by Bill Rye , Manager Cropwatch and Angela Hammon, Yarra Valley Cropwatch orchard scout.
- CONSULTANT:** Ag First represented by Craig Hornblow, and Ian Stevens as observer.
- ATENDANCE:** Stuart Gray, Communications Manager APAL, John Wilson – General Manager Fruit Growers Victoria. Members of the financial and orchard supply industry, growers and their employees. A total of 49 attended.
- PUBLICITY:** Weekly Times, local press, state wide and regional grower newsletters, email list.
- MEDIA:** no media was present.

LOCAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION:

Government researchers unable to attend due to prior work commitments or distance. Fruit Growers Victoria field staff, represented by myself Bill Rye and Angela Hammon, and several industry consultants Shane Costa and Richard Hawks from E.E.Muir and sons Silvan branch, were in attendance.

BACKGROUND:

Craig Hornblow and fellow consultant Ian Stevens were picked up and driven to local accommodation the night before so as to save on CBD accommodation costs and peak hour travel the following day. This was appreciated by the consultants and gave us valuable time together for briefing as part of a very tight schedule.

Weather conditions were cold with light rain. Most growers had suffered hail damage the previous day. Morning tea and coffee was supplemented by goodies the Fingers purchased from the local bakery. Much appreciated in the cold.

Notes were provided in a clear plastic folder (because of the weather) with pens. All original folders from the first orchard walk were handed out.

PROCEEDINGS:

The program started at 9.15 with a PowerPoint presentation given by Craig in the Finger's work shop and was well received. It went for just over an hour.

As a grower the importance of having:

- Clear objectives, whether they are high early yields, cost efficiencies, fruit qualities, whatever system it needs to be simple and easily passed on to the largely unskilled transitory labour force we are increasingly required to employ.
- What system you choose to use to obtain them with examples of Tall spindle Italian or French Solaxe.
- Visualise the tree shape in full crop and develop the ways to achieve this.

Pruning delivers shape, crop load and vigour. Severe renewal pruning stiffens up laterals and increases vigour. Aim to take out shaded and shading laterals – this provides even light penetration to all fruit which gives consistent colour. Long pruning will achieve this. Important when in third year to achieve full colour without fruit being over ripe.

Too much vigour reduces amount of nutrient to grow apples.

Flat and loop tying just spread vigour. Tie down hard to stop growth. Should be done 10-15cm from achieving desired length.

Untrained labour can be given a triangle shape to follow when tying down.

With crop load look at the history of block, visualise the crop and calculate.

Effective way is to teach worker how to visualise what they are doing when thinning.

Use TCA to calculate fruit per branch, branches per tree x trees per ha to achieve yield.

Dwarf trees, too heavily cropped when young will slow up and not grow.

Also many growers overcrop small branches under large which reduces consistency of fruit colour and size.

The Orchard walk covered the establishment and management of the 2 Blocks the Fingers have entered in the program, Gala on m26 at 3.5m row and 1m tree spacings planted 2006 and Cripps Pink on m26 at 3.8m row and 1.2m tree spacing's planted 2001.

The Gala block did not have adequate water over a dry Spring and consequently had stopped growing.

Craig pointed out the importance for New blocks to have their growth measured weekly to make sure they don't stop growing.

The nature of dwarfing root stocks means they are often unable to achieve optimum growth in the first few years and the best way to keep them growing is fertigate and fertilise.

New Zealand consultants and growers use Australian state Department of Agriculture publications on viticulture for comprehensive information on fertigation.

Craig pointed out that it is a false economy not to train, fertilise and provide an adequate water supply to a new planting. It only adds 10% to the overall investment but brings forward income by tens of thousands of dollars by year 5.

The Cripps Pink block was over cropped too early and now suffers from bi annual production. This time of year was suggested as a good time to remove shading branches and so thin out some of the excess fruit load. Umbrellaing should normally be dealt with before it becomes a problem.

Rip pruning can slow up excess vigor as can Regalis but with the latter expect to set more fruit.

Where there is excess shading and the crop is too light to have shade limbs removed the use of Extendaid will increase colour of Pink lady fruit.

10% NAA on major cuts will reduce height in Pink Lady.

Proceeding finished at 12.30 and the Monitoring Block proprietors left for their meeting which was held at Sanders's orchard located 20 minutes further up the valley. Lunch was kindly provided by Sanders Orchard so as to keep the group together.

The MB proprietors decided to organize a further information session on fertigation in early December and look to install water meters to all their monitored blocks.