



Hydroponic Farmers Federation Newsletter

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March 2024



Hydroponic Farmers Federation CONFERENCE 2024 23-25 July | Melton Entertainment Park

SAVE THE DATE



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The Secretary



Well the past few weeks have been an interesting ride for yours truly, and have highlighted to me that sometimes you never know what's around

the corner! What actually happened was that I woke up one morning and had a large 'blob' drifting across my left eye. Apparently this is known as a floater, and after a quick consultation with Doctor Google it seemed that this was a temporary thing and it would go away in a couple of days. However, 'Harry' as I named the object (which is technically a floater), seemed set for the long haul. So off to the optometrists for a check up where I was informed that the floater was actually some blood from a tear in my retina! So after I had clutched my heart and changed my undies, the optometrist informed me that she couldn't see any more signs of the tear, but it was off to a specialist for a second opinion. The second 'expert' explained that what had happened was that the fluid in the eye had contracted with 'age' (we don't use the old word)

and as such had tugged at the retina wall causing a minute tear. Still all seemed OK but the drama was that 'Harry' had now become more like a mesh in my vision and this was in turn deflecting light coming into the eye, so effectively I couldn't see anything on a computer screen or on white paper! So was this my retirement starting? Well thankfully no, as I managed to switch the computer to 'dark' mode and magically I could see the screens gain! I'm pleased to report that after several return trips to specialists, I've been given a clean bill of health and the floater has now almost disappeared, with near 20/20 vision being restored, but it was a bit frightening to say the least! I think the hair colour went a further shade of grey but otherwise all good. As John mentions in his report, the AGM is on the horizon and this presents a golden opportunity to add a 'grower' member to the committee. An organisation such as HFF needs new blood, and we would really welcome new members to the committee (after all if 'Harry' makes a return visit I might be permanently out of action!) So please consider joining the committee. It's a rewarding job and you'll have a good time! Regards **Tony**

HFF Executive Details and Contacts

President:

John Elford johnelford@bigpond.com 0417 035 956

Vice President & VFF Representative:

Tony Spurling tspurling63@gmail.com (03) 9739 0568

Secretary & Newsletter:

Tony Bundock tony@genesis-hort.com.au 0409 007 610

Treasurer:

Martin Vadakekuttu prodoz@bigpond.com 0402 648 607

Membership:

Ian Mortlock ian@morthydro.com (03) 5461 1111

Committee Members:

Trade liaison

Michael Tran mtran@eemuir.com.au 0418 899 586

Media Liason

Simon Monk simomonk4242@gmail.com 0414 593 706



The President



Hi everyone, well we thought that Autumn was upon us but at the time of writing it seems that summer is making a last gasp attempt to keep going! We have had some really hot weather in our area and this has been accompanied by some sizeable bushfires as I am sure you have seen. Thankfully I am not aware of any growers that have been directly impacted by the fires, but if you know of anyone, please let us know so that we can see where we might be able to help. This rush of 'bad' weather has come right at our "Growers" peak season with no time for dilly dally, so I hope your season is going well. On the bright side, produce prices seem to be stable for yje moment which is always good news.

The Committee is very busy at the moment planning for the HFF AGM , which we are hoping to hold just after Easter. We will be holding the AGM at Royal Brinkman Australia this year followed by a farm visit. Details are on the attached flyer. Whilst the AGM is something of a formality, it is also a time where some committee members are up for re-election. In addition to that, it's a time where we can elect new members to the committee! You would have seen me making passionate pleas for new members to come on board, and I'm still on that particular track! We really would welcome a new 'grower' member onto the committee, so I'd once again put out the invite for one of you to step up and take the challenge! Please have a serious think about joining the Committee and being part of a very positive group seeking to help growers become better growers.

And of course the conference is approaching very quickly, and we are excited about the venue, the Speaker Program and the potential networking that will take place. I am very proud of the Conference Committee and all the hard work they are putting into this event. So 'thank you' Peter Kalinis,(Perfection), Phil Ritchie (Rik Zwaan), Simon Gomme (Power Plants) for all the work they have put in to develop the Speaker Program. Its a very powerful and attractive list of speakers which we will announce very soon.

The trade area at this Conference Venue is much bigger and has a better layout. To date we have had a huge take up from the Trade with three quarters of the booths already sold, which is fantastic news. And don't forget that the trade attending the conference will have Complimentary Tickets for their customers (Growers) to attend the Conference. So make sure you have a chat with your suppliers to see how you can access one of these tickets, and blank out your calendar to attend the HFF Conference in July 2024!

So that's all from me, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM! **John Elford**

Membership

G'day all. It's renewal time for members and it's been pleasing to see the majority of members paying their subscription and renewing their HFF Membership. However, we still have some members who need to renew, so if you are in that category, can I urge you to deal with that particular transaction as a matter of urgency! With the Conference on the horizon we do traditionally see an increase in member numbers, so we are hoping to capitalise in that area once again. As I am sure you will have realised by now (if you've read John and Tony's reports!) the AGM is our next event and details are in the attached flyer. The AGM will also be in conjunction with a visit to a grower, so please try and attend if possible. I look forward to catching up with you all at the AGM. Thanks **Ian**



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Optimal Hygiene:- Virus and disease are constant threats that can emerge to infiltrate your entire operation. Implementing hygiene protocols with safe hygiene practices is extremely important in safeguarding your operation and protecting you against the risk of spread - Maximise your crop yields by maintaining optimum operational hygiene.

Protect your operation:- Hygiene, protecting your overall operation is a major focus of growers all around the world, the threat of virus/disease outbreak has the potential to wipe out your entire crop - this can be avoided by proper planning and preparation - disinfecting and thorough cleaning of your operation and implementing hygiene protocols for your staff/equipment are important measure taken to combat such threats.

Clean First / Disinfect immediately after:- Cleaning and disinfection are of significant importance to hygiene cultivation. It's the only way to prevent disease, bacteria and pests infecting your production.

Cleaning? Cleaning = the removal of plant material, plant juices, dust, dirt or grease. For this you use a cleaning agent. Cleaning does not kill microorganisms.

Disinfection? Disinfection = controlling, inactivating or removing pathogenic organisms, such as bacteria and virus. By combating the microorganisms they cannot spread further. Disinfection should be done immediately after surface cleaning.

Personal Hygiene Practices:- Disease and virus can easily spread transmitted through contact via the hands and cause extensive damage to your entire crop, To prevent this, it is important good company hygiene is maintained. An important aspect of hygiene is hand disinfection.

Safeguard Entry/Exit points of your working environment:- Prevent virus and disease from spreading into your crop. Protect your operation - Install Hygiene station (hands and footwear disinfection) or Flexxomat's (footwear/machinery disinfection)

Fernland



Contact Zak Iqbal on **0455 415 504**
or zak.i@fernland.com.au

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- ▶ Shadecloth
- ▶ Bird Netting
- ▶ Hold Down Pins
- ▶ Fixing Channel
- ▶ Wiggle Wire
- ▶ Plastics



Versys Permit Extension

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has recently extended Permit ID PER90178 Version 2, allowing the use of Versys Insecticide on raspberries and blackberries (cane berries) for the control of aphids and greenhouse whitefly. This extension, issued on April 20, 2021, grants authorization for the application of the specified insecticide until February 28, 2027. The permit holder for this authorization is Hort Innovation Australia. The latest version of the permit, Version 2, includes several updates and amendments. Notably, the permit now incorporates an additional critical use comment and includes an s161 statement. Additionally, the expiry date of the permit has been extended to February 28, 2027. These changes aim to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the permit for users and stakeholders. The APVMA encourages individuals to report any non-performance or adverse experiences associated with the use of agricultural chemical products under this permit. This includes unintended or unexpected effects on plants, plant products, animals, humans, or the environment. Reports can be submitted online through the AERP AgVet Online Report System, which is available on the APVMA website. While the use of Versys Insecticide is permitted under the APVMA minor use permit, users are reminded of potential regulatory considerations regarding maximum residue limits (MRLs) and the food standards code. It is crucial to note that there may be a delay between the approval of MRLs by the APVMA and their adoption in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Until MRLs are officially recognized and gazetted, there may be a zero-tolerance policy for residues of the pesticide in food products. This could result in the suspension of produce in the marketplace. Users are advised to consult the FSANZ website or the Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation website to confirm the establishment of MRLs by the food standards code. The extension of Permit ID PER90178 Version 2 provides continued authorization for the use of Versys Insecticide on raspberries and blackberries for the management of aphids and greenhouse whitefly. Stakeholders are encouraged to adhere to the permit conditions and report any adverse experiences to the APVMA. Additionally, users should remain vigilant regarding regulatory requirements concerning maximum residue limits to ensure compliance with food safety standards. Source: berries.net.au






Hydroponic Farmers Federation

CONFERENCE 2024

23-25 July | Melton Entertainment Park



Sustainable Growing



Centuria



Rainbow
Bee Eater

The HFF 2024 Conference Update

The HFF Conference is being held at Melton Entertainment Park, Melton from July the 23rd to the 25th, and we are delighted to announce that the number of sponsors and exhibitors coming on board is increasing. The trade exhibition floor plan displayed to the right, highlights where booths have been allocated and where there are free exhibition areas. So if you are looking to secure an exhibition booth there are now limited options available - so don't delay in booking a stand.

To date we are delighted to announce that the following companies will be participating:

Naming Right Sponsors

Katunga Fresh Booth 23 & 24
 Perfection Fresh Australia

Centuria

Rainbow Bee Eater

Platinum Sponsor

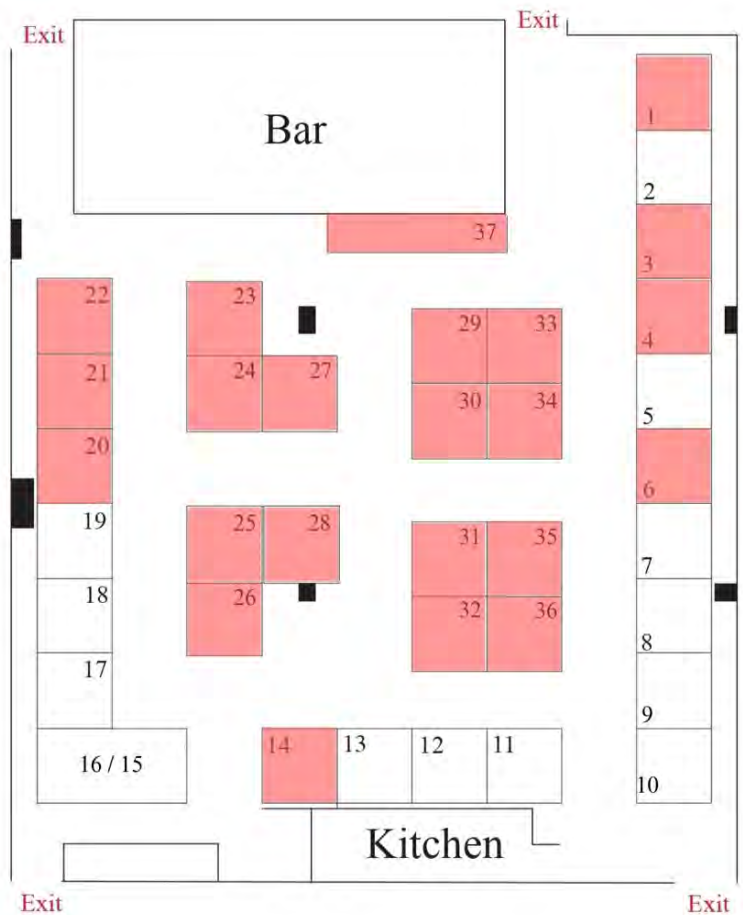
Rijk Zwaan Booth 34

Dinner Sponsor

A & D Australasia Booth 37

Exhibitors

- Ecomix Booth 1
- Ferland Booth 3
- Protected Cropping Australia Booth 4
- Garden City Plastics Booth 6
- A1 Growsystems Booth 20
- Elite Tunnels Booth 21
- Redpath Ideal GH Booth 22
- Greenlife Gro Booth 25
- Biological Services Booth 26
- Royal Brinkman Booth 27
- AIS Greenworks Booth 28
- E.E. Muir & Sons Booth 29 & 33
- Roam Technology Booth 30
- Powerplants Booth 31
- Transplant Systems Booth 32
- Australian Growing Solutions Booth 35
- Apex Greenhouses Booth 36



Storm cause widespread damage

On Tuesday the 13th of February, the state of Victoria was hit with some wild extremes of weather. Initially the west of the state experienced some of the hottest weather we had seen for the year, which assisted in triggering some widespread bushfire activity. However, what followed was something of a contrast as wild winds and storms lashed the state, bringing down trees, and more importantly, critical infrastructure in electricity power lines. This ultimately saw both domestic and commercial properties left with no power for a considerable time.



For those who remained off power as at 12.01am Tuesday 20 February (for at least 7 days), a Prolonged Power Outage Payment is now available.

A payment of \$1,920 per week – for up to 3 weeks – will be available to all eligible households (residential customers), while for eligible small businesses (those with a Victorian payroll of less than \$10 million a year), payments of \$2,927 per week – for up to 3 weeks - will be made.

Getting recovery support

After an emergency, it can be difficult to know what to do next.

Depending on what you need, the Victorian recovery support group can help you to:

- find services to support your recovery
- apply for payments
- progress an insurance claim
- get legal support
- get support for your business.

Find out more at vic.gov.au/recovery-support, or call [1800 560 760](tel:1800560760).

Major event day payment

If your power was disrupted for more than 12 hours during the February 2024 storm event, you are entitled to compensation.

Under the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice, a distributor must make a payment to a customer of \$90 if the customer experiences an unplanned sustained interruption of more than 12 hours on a major event day, such as extreme weather or a storm.

This payment will appear as a credit on your power bill from your electricity retailer within two billing cycles of the day your power was out.

Emergency Relief Payment

Emergency relief payments are available for eligible community members whose homes have been damaged by the storms in Victoria.

An emergency relief payment can help you to pay for things you need most, including:

- Food
- Clothing
- Medication
- Accommodation.

Payments are \$640 per adult and \$320 per child, up to a maximum of \$2,240 per eligible family. You are eligible for a relief payment if your principal place of residence is an evacuation warning area, or the storm have damaged your home, and you have met immediate relief needs.

If you think you may be eligible for a relief payment, find out more by calling the Emergency Recovery Hotline [1800 560 760](tel:1800560760).

Storms cause widespread damage

Emergency Recovery Victoria's Recovery Support Program is available for people affected by the February 2024 Western Victorian bushfires.

The program can help with tailored support, including access to mental health and wellbeing services, legal support, business advice and other services to support your recovery.

You can access the program by visiting [recovery support](#) and filling out the online form.



Financial counselling

Recovering from a natural disaster will take time, and there are a lot of financial decisions to think about straight away, and over the months ahead.

Financial counselling is free, independent and confidential. A financial counsellor can help you make a plan to manage your money and prioritise your bills and other payments. In addition a financial counsellor can also talk to creditors on your behalf and negotiate affordable payment plans. If you get help early, you will have many more options. These include:-

National Debt Helpline on [1800 007 007](tel:1800007007) to speak to a financial advisor.

Small Business Debt Helpline - [1800 413 828](tel:1800413828)

Rural Financial Counselling Service for primary producers & small, related rural businesses – [1300 771 741](tel:1300771741)

The program can help with tailored support, including access to mental health and wellbeing services, legal support, business advice and other services to support your recovery.

The Secretary On The Run.....again!

Once again our Secretary and his fire brigade colleagues rolled up their sleeves to run in the Royal Children's Hospital - Run For The Kids event on Sunday the 17th of March. The team were repeating their previous performances from last two years of completing the course in their 'Running Fire Engine'. The fire engine itself does have a vague horticultural connection - it is built out of plastic irrigation pipe - and covered in printed shade cloth, but still has an overall weight of around 30kg - so not exactly a feather! "Doing the run in the fire engine certainly takes the notion of a team event to another level!" said Tony. Whilst the fire engine itself doesn't have a great deal of water holding capacity (that was mostly consumed by the team during the run!) It does have flashing red and blue lights and horns to alert unsuspecting runners on the course! The fire engine has also been fitted with a ladder, so that the team can potentially rescue cats out of trees if they see one on the course! This year's team was made up of Tony Bundock, Karen Bundock (long suffering wife of TB!), Anthony Jones, Tim Obourne, Corey Green and Peter Green. All six are volunteer firefighters with Country Fire Authority at the Narre Warren Station. If you saw the six o'clock news on Channel Seven you would have seen their smiley faces!. If you want to help them with their \$2000 fund raising target please feel free to go to:-



<https://runforthekids.gofundraise.com.au/page/NARREWARRENFIREBRIGADER58656994>

Business for sale

Bellarine Hydroponics is a pioneering business producing horticultural crops on the Bellarine Peninsula. We have been successfully running commercial greenhouse operations for the past twenty years. Our fruits and vegetables are known for their high quality and flavour and we have been ongoing suppliers to reputed retailers and restaurants located on the Bellarine and Melbourne CBD. We have two sites, one located in Portarlington and the other in Swan Bay. As we look to scale back our business we are planning to sell our business operations at the Swan Bay site. This business is on a leased site in Swan Bay and we are looking to sell the following:



1. Tomato / Vegetable Greenhouse:

Currently producing 250 tonnes of high-quality tomatoes

There are two sheds covering an area of about 3,500 sq m with climate control and raised gutters for growing hydroponic crops. We have been successfully growing all varieties of tomatoes including Truss, Cherry Truss, Heirloom, Black Russian, Roma & Colour cherry. The other vegetables that we have grown include cucumbers, baby cucumbers, capsicums, baby capsicums and eggplants.

2. Lettuce / Herb Greenhouse:

With the capacity of over 5000 plants

The facility is currently successfully growing many varieties of lettuce including baby cos, butter, green oak, red oak, coral. It also grows highly fragrant herbs including basil and coriander.



3. Farmgate Shop:

A direct onsite outlet for the fresh farm produce

The farm-gate shop has been in operation since 2003 and is a Bellarine tourist attraction with a very loyal following among the locals. Nestled in a native vegetation area, with a charming rustic décor the shop offers a unique, pleasurable experience for shoppers, who absolutely love the fresh, 'handpicked today' produce money can buy! All the produce grown in the hydroponic farm including tomatoes, vegetables, lettuce, herbs etc. is made available and sold at the Farmgate Shop. The shop also sells sauces and relishes made from our tomatoes also with other vegetables procured from wholesale market and locally sourced products like honey, cheese, smallgoods and crackers.

For further details on this exciting opportunity, please feel free to contact Alok Kumar on mobile 0418 322 070 or via email at aok_teo@yahoo.com



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Transplant Systems is your one-stop-shop of horticulture automation solutions, with a comprehensive range of hydroponic equipment including Benching, Vertical Grow Racks, Grow Lights, Climate Control and many more Hydroponic solutions, all sourced exclusively from the finest European suppliers. We are actively involved in hydroponic projects across Australia, installing state-of-the-art technology to cultivate plants without soil, offering efficient water usage. We have solutions for utilising space with vertical grow racks or enhancing crop quality through climate control, providing flexibility and reliability necessary for success in modern horticulture.

Our services extend beyond the supply of cutting-edge equipment and seamless installations. We understand that your success is an ongoing journey and we are dedicated to being your reliable partner every step of the way. We take pride in our responsive and experienced national service team, ready to address any challenges or provide you with spare parts. Our commitment to your success doesn't end with the installation; it's an ongoing collaboration aimed at maximising the return on your investment.

Whether you're embarking on a new project, managing an existing one, or venturing into automation for the first time, Transplant Systems provides expert advice, cutting-edge equipment and ongoing support to expedite your progress and maximise the return on your investment.

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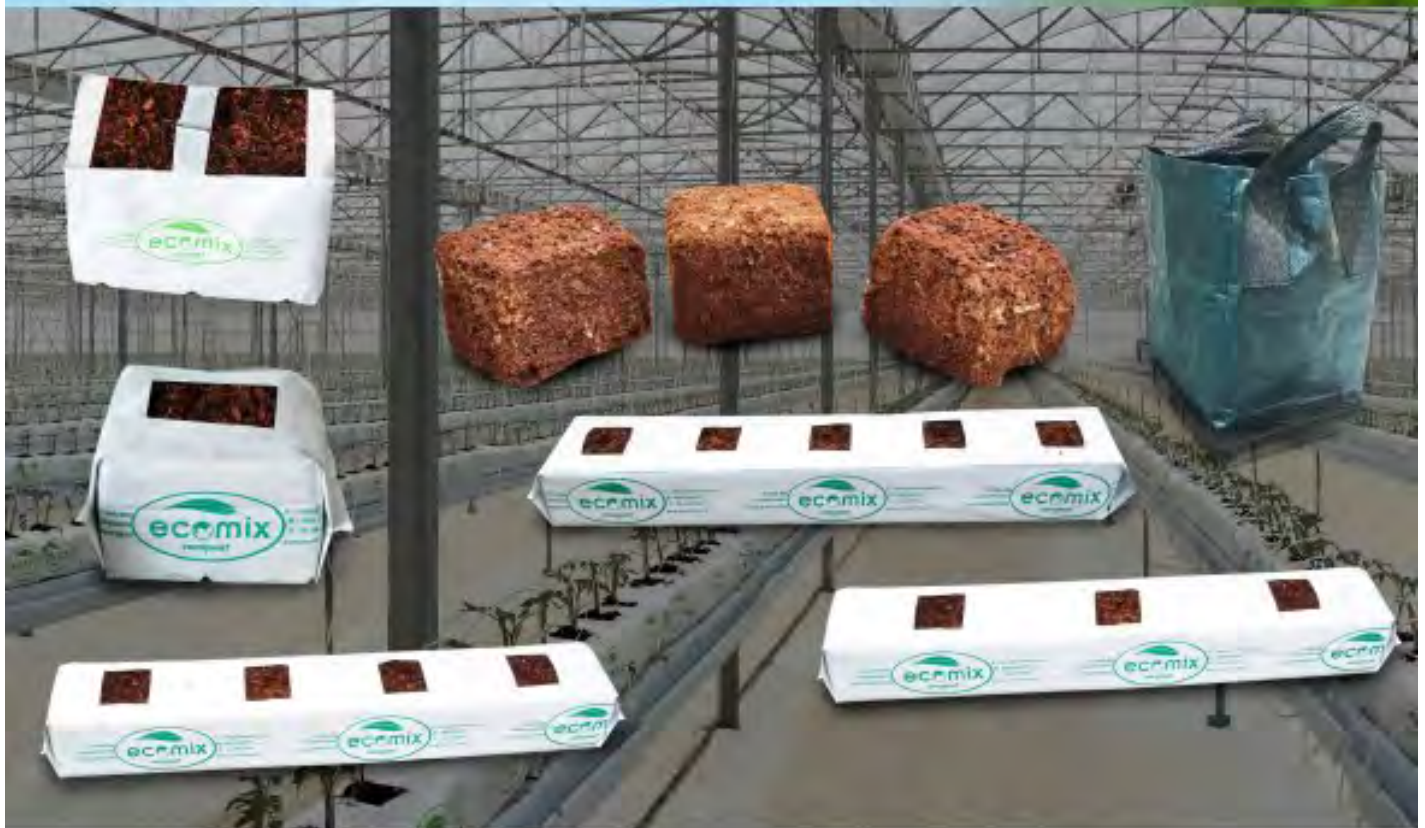
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pricing and your
nearest distributor.



V-46 - Pepper crop

V-46 -Tomato crop

V-46 - Cucumber crop



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PHOTOGRAPH

Western Sydney University

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**“From this course
I gained a deep
understanding
of how crops are
produced in controlled
environments which I
now apply in my job.”**

Mamta Khadka
Assistant Grower
Green Camel

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AgNova

Protected Cropping

Wuxal Calcium Xtra Uptake can be applied in protected cropping situations at the following rates:



CROP	RATE PER 100 L	NUMBER AND TIMING OF APPLICATION
Cucumbers	300-500 mL	Repeated applications at 7-10 day intervals starting about 10 days after fruit set to 2 weeks prior to harvest
Brussels Sprouts Cauliflower Celery Chicory Chinese Cabbage Endive Head Lettuce	300-500 mL	Weekly applications Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage & Head lettuce: Start before head formation Celery: Start about 5-7 weeks before harvest, properly wetting the heart of the plant Endive: Start about 10-14 days after planting
Tomatoes / Peppers	100-400 mL	Repeated applications at 7-10 day intervals starting about 10 days after fruit set

Nutrient	Total Product Basis (% w/v)	Nutrient	Total Product Basis (% w/v)
Nitrogen (N)	16	Copper (Cu)	0.064
Calcium (Ca)	17.2	Iron (Fe)	0.08
Magnesium (Mg)	1.8	Manganese (Mn)	0.16
Boron (B)	0.08	Molybdenum (Mo)	0.0016
		Zinc (Zn)	0.032



Brad Johnson

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HFF Conference Registrations Open!

HFF Member		
	Earlybird	Regular
Full Conference Registration	\$455	\$530
Day Registration	\$255	\$320
Invited Grower Registration	\$50	N/A

The above rates are only open to members at the Hydroponic Farmers Federation (HFF).

PCA Member		
	Earlybird	Regular
Full Conference Registration	\$525	\$670
Day Registration	\$255	\$320
Invited Grower Registration	\$100	N/A

The above rates are only open to members of Protected Cropping Australia (PCA).

Non-Member		
	Earlybird	Regular
Full Conference Registration	\$620	\$765
Day Registration	\$360	\$425
Invited Grower Registration	\$100	N/A

Registrations are now open for our conference with the Early Bird deadline being the 24th May 2024.

FULL REGISTRATIONS INCLUDE:

- Access to all sessions
- A ticket to the Welcome Cocktail Event (RSVP is required for catering purposes and can be provided during the registration process)
- Conference Program and Conference app
- All morning and afternoon teas and lunches during the program
- Free WiFi access throughout the conference venue
- Certificate of attendance post conference

SINGLE DAY REGISTRATIONS INCLUDE:

- Access to all sessions on your nominated day of attendance
- Conference Program and Conference app
- Catering during the breaks on your nominated day of attendance
- Free WiFi access throughout the conference venue
- Certificate of attendance post conference

Registration fees cover and includes all Australian Government taxes

Hort Connections comes to Melbourne

Growers and members of the horticulture industry can register now and save with early bird rates for Hort Connections 2024. Attracting upward of 3,500 delegates as Australia and New Zealand's largest horticulture event, Hort Connections 2024, will be held from 3-5 June 2024 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, examining the theme of Grow. Connect. Thrive.



Hort Connections is a joint initiative between AUSVEG and the International Fresh Produce Association Australia New Zealand (IFPA-ANZ) and has cemented a reputation as the must-attend fixture on the Australasian and international horticulture calendar.

With an action-packed program, unparalleled networking opportunities, and the largest exhibition in the event's history all on the agenda, delegates have until 29 March to make the most of early bird registration.

"Following the success of last year's Hort Connections in Adelaide, we are excited and proud to be gearing up for another massive event," said AUSVEG National Manager – Events and Partnerships Nathan McIntyre.

"After a challenging year in the horticulture sector, Hort Connections 2024 will be an important opportunity for growers and the broader industry to come together to share knowledge, hear from world-class speakers, network, and acknowledge the achievements that make horticulture great."

A key highlight of Hort Connections 2024 will once again be the Horticulture Awards for Excellence, which acknowledge key contributions and innovation among leading growers and industry members. Nominations for all award categories opened on the 14th February.

"There is no shortage of passion, innovation, and achievement in horticulture, and I encourage everybody involved in the sector to consider nominating an inspiring individual or business across the whole range of award categories," said Mr McIntyre.

"For anybody in need of inspiration, there is no shortage of that in the previous winners, who you can learn about on the Hort Connections website."

Hort Connections 2024 is supported by Hort Innovation – Principal Convention Partner – as well as the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Agriculture Victoria, E.E. Muir & Sons, Coles, Syngenta, Nutrien Ag Solutions and the Melbourne Convention Bureau, as major event partners.

For more information:

Andrew MacDonald

AUSVEG

Tel.: +64 03 9882 0227

Mob.: +64 0406 836 330

Email: andrew.macdonald@ausveg.com.au

hortconnections.com.au

HORT CONNECTIONS
3-5 June 2024
Melbourne Convention Centre

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Young Plant Options For Growers

Optimum healing for grafted plants - that's what Jack Mooney had in mind when he designed his propagation facility. With four state of the art climate chambers integrated within it, Provenance Propagation, is now in it's ninth month of operation, providing high-quality plant propagation services to Australian growers. The process of keeping grafted seedlings healthy has been Jack Mooney's passion: ever since starting his bachelor's education when he researched factors that influence the successful healing of grafted tomato seedlings. His career path after graduation includes Australian greenhouse company Costa Group, where he helped improve the grafting activities, a visit to multiple horticultural propagators all over the world, a job with Canadian propagator Roelands Farm, and the completion of a PhD in horticulture focusing on - you might have guessed - the healing of grafted vegetable seedlings. Based on all knowledge and experience gained, and answering the growing demand for high-quality seedlings in Australia, Provenance Propagation was designed. From this 5700m² facility in NSW mid-north coast, the company has started to supply



commercial vegetable growers and research institutions in the domestic market with cucumber, tomato, eggplant, capsicum and grafted watermelon plants. The glasshouse is the largest independent vegetable propagation glasshouse in NSW and the Eastern States of Australia. "The opening of Provenance Propagation has been a game-changer for the horticulture industry in Australia and for job seekers across the region", Jack shared proudly, revealing the biggest challenge in setting up the facility has not been anything technical - but has been the personal sacrifices. "The long working hours, financial pressure, uncertainty, work-life balance, and raising a young family", said Jack. However - he is assured Provenance Propagation is poised to revolutionize the horticulture industry with its advanced facility. Having said that, it hasn't all been a preverbal bed of roses! After six months things didn't go quite right at first, admitted Jack. "Hygiene is a crucial part of our business, in retrospect our hygiene protocols were not in order at the start." we have since taken the first steps towards improvement. Anyone wanting to enter the greenhouse

at Wells Crossing now has to pass through a recently installed hygiene lock first. "All visitors and staff must pass through the lock when entering the facility - no exceptions." said Jack. "In the lock, hands are disinfected and footwear soles are cleaned . Upon completing this process the turnstile is unlocked and guests/staff can enter the cultivation areas. However guests are also fitted with disposable suits and hair nets," Jack stressed. "Only then are they allowed to walk through." Additional supplementary measures have also been taken within the cultivation area. Transport equipment such as pallet trucks and trolleys travel over disinfection mats which ensures wheels are properly disinfected and thus prevent viruses from spreading. Office staff also enter the office via a disinfection mat to disinfect their footwear as well. "If the office staff need to visit the greenhouse nursery growing area then they also have to go through the hygiene lock." said Jack. To keep disease pressure down at the facility, water used in the growing process is also disinfected with a UV-C disinfector. he says. For further details on the availability of seedlings, please feel free to contact Jack via:-



Email: admin@provenancecorp.com or through the website <https://provenancecorp.com/>

Food Safety for Victorian Horticulture producers

On 12 August 2022, three new national horticulture primary production and processing standards were introduced into the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code: Standards 4.2.7, 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 – Primary Production and Processing Standards for berries, leafy vegetables, and melons.

Standards were developed through [Proposal P1052](#), led by Food Standards Australia New Zealand and aim to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness. The transition period to implement standards ends on the 12th February 2025.



How will the new standards be regulated in Victoria?

Under the Food Act 1984, all producers (of all commodities) have an obligation to ensure that food for sale is safe and suitable for human consumption and to comply with the [Food Standards Code](#), where applicable. The three new standards introduce further specific requirements and will be regulated by Agriculture Victoria, who are also determining how standards will be implemented and enforced in Victoria. Interim information can be found on [the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Website](#).

What do impacted businesses need to do?

Until February 2025, there are no new requirements for businesses. All producers continue to have the general obligation to ensure that food for sale is safe and suitable for human consumption.

While still under development, after February 2025 Agriculture Victoria intends to require impacted businesses to:

- Register with Agriculture Victoria

- Demonstrate they are compliant with the new standards

Agriculture Victoria will have powers to verify / audit compliance, take enforcement action if not compliant, and charge fees associated with these activities, commensurate with the size or throughput of the business.

Agriculture Victoria is working with industry representative bodies to design an efficient approach to these requirements, including developing regulations that are proportionate to risk.

How will existing food safety schemes and audits be recognised?

To be compliant with the Food Standards Code, Agriculture Victoria will need to be satisfied that leafy vegetable and melon businesses have a current, compliant food safety management statement (a requirement under the new standards) and are operating according to this statement. Berry producers will only need to notify Agriculture Victoria as to how they are addressing the standard.

Business participation in a Global Food Safety Initiative scheme (i.e. Freshcare) could be recognised by Agriculture Victoria as already meeting these requirements, and work is underway to facilitate this approach. Recognition will aim to reduce regulatory burden for businesses.

If a business is not certified under a recognised Global Food Safety Initiative scheme, Agriculture Victoria will be required to verify directly with that business its compliance with the Food Standards Code, likely via an audit.

What consultation will occur?

Initial consultation has begun with peak industry bodies to assist in regulatory design.

Agriculture Victoria will engage with growers, including to discuss onboarding processes, from mid-2024. This engagement will continue after the February 2025 implementation date. AV's regulatory aim is to take a proportionate and reasonable approach to these new requirements.

Certificate in Protected Horticulture

For some time now, individuals looking to get into the Protected Cropping Industry have had a dilemma in terms what qualification is best suited to the industry. A Certificate III is seen as the trade qualification standard, but the issue has been in what stream do potential students enrol in - there are Certificate three courses in generic Horticulture, Nursery and Production Horticulture, none of which are specifically aimed at the protected cropping industry. However, a qualification now exists which is known as AHC33722 - Certificate III in Protected Horticulture. This course requires students to enrol in a total of 17 units - 6 of which are core units that have to be completed. The core units are:-

<i>AHCBIO303</i>	<i>Apply biosecurity measures</i>
<i>AHCWHS302</i>	<i>Contribute to workplace health and safety processes</i>
<i>AHCWRK320</i>	<i>Apply environmentally sustainable work practices</i>
<i>FBPFSY3003</i>	<i>Monitor the implementation of food safety and quality programs</i>
<i>FBOPR2070</i>	<i>Apply quality systems and procedures</i>
<i>FBOPR2074</i>	<i>Carry out manual handling tasks</i>

The remaining units are split into distinctive 'streams' that reflect a specific aspect of work that is carried out in areas of protected cropping. These streams are defined as:-

Group A - Picking, Group B - Packing, Group C - Crop Work, Group D - Nursery.

A further **Group E** has a range of generic subjects allocated to it.

Where appropriate, electives may be packaged to provide a qualification with a specialisation area as follows:

At least 3 electives must be selected from Group A for the award of the Cert III in Protected Horticulture (Picking)

At least 3 electives must be selected from Group B for the award of the Cert III in Protected Horticulture (Packing)

At least 3 electives must be selected from Group C for the award of the Cert III in Protected Horticulture (Crop Work)

At least 3 electives must be selected from Group D for the award of the Cert III in Protected Horticulture (Nursery)

Whatever stream is chosen, 5 additional units have to be selected from groups A,B,C,D, or E, and then the remaining 3 units can either be from groups A - E or from any currently endorsed training package.

Now if that all sounds somewhat confusing - it is! The full details of all the electives can be found at <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/AHC33722> and bear in mind there are the following number of electives to choose from:-

Group A - 4, Group B - 14, Group C - 12, Group D - 9, Group E - 27

Now the real stumbling block - at this stage we are not aware of any training provider offering the course as the funding associated with it is considerably lower than that of generic Horticultural courses.

At this stage the HFF is working closely with the PCA to look at potential funding sources and delivery modes that will enable the course to get up and running in order to provide our industry with a meaningful and recognized course for individuals. It is vital that we have qualifications that recognize the skills we need in the industry as well as being able to reward new entrants with a qualification that will effectively act as a 'skills passport' for people to move across the industry. New entrants to the industry are the lifeblood of sustaining our enterprises, and the HFF is committed to making access to this qualification a reality for a large number of people.

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