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NSW Flower News

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Welcome to the 6th issue of Flower News – updates on research and advisory activities from the NSW Department of Primary Industries. 2006 is going to be a big year for conferences and seminars – see page 2 and mark the dates in your diary now.

Research news

Brisbane port assessment of export flowers

Researcher Dr Jenny Ekman and Bettina Gollnow spent two busy days ‘chilling out’ for a good cause. They were assessing a trial shipment of Australian and South African flowers and foliage destined to travel to Japan by sea. In order to avoid compromising product quality, all work was carried out in the cool room of a Brisbane freight forwarder. This real shipment complements a research project funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation titled “Improving Market Access for Australian wildflowers”. Based at our Gosford Horticultural Institute, this is a collaborative project between the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Centre for Native Floriculture in Queensland, and a number of growers in New South Wales and Queensland.



Repacking Christmas bush using moisture control technology liner

The trial shipment was made possible by the assistance of Maersk Sealand, who supplied a 20 foot refrigerated container and shipped it to Yokohama free of charge.

All cut flowers from the Australian east coast are currently exported by air, which represents over 20% of total costs. As air freight charges are based on volume as well as weight, bulky species are particularly expensive. Shipping flowers in refrigerated containers should also overcome the fluctuating temperatures to which air freighted flowers are often exposed, which can lead to significant reduction in product quality and vase life.

The trial shipment included a wide range of flowers and foliages to test how well they tolerate this new method of transport and most importantly to assess their quality on arrival in Japan. They were processed and offered for sale at auction by a Japanese



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flower importer. This 'real life' test has already highlighted several important issues the industry needs to address and will allow 'real time' comparisons between air and sea freight looking at total costs and product quality. Jenny will be giving a full analysis of the shipment at the 2006 NSW wildflower conference.



Samples of all products were photographed and assessed for quality before shipment



The partly loaded container

Dates for your diary –

February 24 - 26, 2006

2006 NSW Wildflower Conference, Port Macquarie.

February 28 **Chrysal post harvest seminar**, Sydney Markets. Details and bookings: Hortraco 02 9899 3232

March 16 & 17, 2006

Waxflower Conference 2006, Western Australia. Call 08 9892 8415 or email npoulish@agric.wa.gov.au

March 30 – April 4, 2006

12th International Protea Conference and 7th International Protea Working Group Symposium. San Diego, California, USA. See www.IPA2006conference.org

June 1 **Business seminar with John Stanley**. Port Macquarie. This seminar, being planned for the nursery industry, may interest flower growers in the region. Details: Greig Ireland, 02 6650 3111, 0412 426 872

July 29

What's New for flower growers. Dural Country Club. Details: Alan Merriman 0408 267 728 or Bettina Gollnow 02 4640 6437

August 29-31 **Flowers 2006**, Gold Coast

Upcoming events

International speakers to join local experts at 2006 NSW Wildflower Conference

Commercial wildflower growers are reminded to register now for the 2006 NSW wildflower conference. It will be held in Port Macquarie over the weekend of February 25 and 26, 2006. This popular event includes a one day conference, a dinner and a farm tour. An optional grower workshop on the topic 'How profitable is your flower farm?' will be held on Friday February 24.

Three international cut flower experts will join local speakers at the 2006 conference. Mr. Nobuya Kaishita of Toa Trading in Japan will share his insights into the Japanese market, telling growers how best to promote Australian native flowers in that key and very fastidious market. Mr Tjerk Van Der Schaaf, from Pokon & Chrysal, in the Netherlands will provide an update on new developments in postharvest solutions.

Ms Kazuko Nishikawa, business development manager with Austrade in Tokyo will speak at the conference dinner about 'Japan – lifestyle and flowers' and introduce Austrade's activities in Japan. The evening will also include a floristry demonstration by Ms Delwyn Thomas using local products.

For full details and a registration form, please contact Bettina Gollnow, NSW DPI, PMB 8, Camden NSW 2570, phone

02 4640 6437, email:
bettina.gollnow@dpi.nsw.gov.au or see our
website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au under 'f'
for flowers.

Sydney Chrysal post harvest seminar

Don't miss this rare opportunity to get the latest information on post harvest flower care.

Guest speaker Mr Tjerk Van Der Schaaf, from Pokon & Chrysal in the Netherlands, will be in Sydney in late February 2006. He will provide an extensive update on new developments in post harvest solutions.

Mr Van Der Schaaf's visit to Australia is being sponsored by Sydney company Hortraco Trading Pty Ltd and is supported in NSW by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Seminar details:

Tuesday February 28, 2006
Venue: Conference Centre, Sydney Markets Ltd, Flemington
Time: 10 am – 12 noon

To book your place, please call Hortraco, Sydney on 02 9899 3232

Waxflower Conference 2006.

16th & 17th March 2006
Don't forget that early bird registration rates close on 24th February 2006.

The conference is the perfect opportunity to meet with other Waxflower growers and industry members from WA and the eastern states, and to hear the latest research and information to ensure you can be "Delivering Quality, Profitable Waxflower to the Customer".

It will be held at Technology Park in Bentley, Perth, Western Australia. Highlights include presentation of the Waxflower Industry Innovation Award and the Waxflower Variety of the Year Award.

For further information contact Nikki Poulsh by email npoulsh@agric.wa.gov.au or telephone on 0417 921 184.



Flower Growers from around Australia and the world will be flocking to the Gold Coast in August 2006 for the 'Flowers 2006 – The Australian Flower Conference'. The conference theme is 'Profit through Innovation'.

The Conference is being held at the Holiday Inn Surfers Paradise, from 29 August to 31 August 2006.

The conference aims to increase the profitability, profile, growth and technological advancement of the flower industry. It will provide participants with ideas and information that have immediate and practical applications in their business.

The organising committee, which comprises growers, wholesalers and industry development officers from Queensland and New South Wales, is hard at work developing an innovative conference program. The conference's international and national high profile speakers will provide information on total crop management, breeding & new varieties, marketing & promotion, water and issues confronting the industry's future.

Days one and two are filled with seminars, workshops, floristry demonstrations and competitions, a trade fair and the highlight of the event, the Conference Gala Dinner. Day three is an optional field/farm tour visiting some of Brisbane's largest flower growing enterprises as well as a flower research facility.

If you are thinking of attending, presenting or becoming a conference sponsor please register your interest by contacting Denyse Corner from the Flower Association of Queensland Inc. on 07 3824 9516 or email denyse.corner@dpi.qld.gov.au.

For regular updates on the conference program and activities, please visit the conference website www.flowersaustralia.asn.au



Industry happenings Wildflower industry meets the researchers



Researcher Jonathan Lidbetter explained his grafting field trial

The annual Sydney region grower meeting and farm walk last November gave growers the chance to see current research at the Somersby Research Station and hold one on one discussions with DPI researchers. Growers were briefed on current projects assessing grafted wildflowers (Jonathan Lidbetter) and potting media (Ross Worrall). They were able to inspect the grafted plant trial area where they gained first hand insights into the benefits of using dataloggers and Full stops[®] to monitor their production areas. Each year the meeting also gives a research student the opportunity of interacting with the flower industry. This time University of Sydney PhD student Paul Wynn spoke about his assessments of water use efficiency of urban ornamental plants.

'Go wild in Wauchope' floral extravaganza

Richard Go, international botanic architect and floral designer, delighted and entertained industry and general public alike last November with his unique floral arrangements which featured locally grown flowers and foliage.

The aim of the event was to expose local florists and consumers to the dazzling array of Australian native and South African flower and foliage products grown on the mid north coast. Many growers, who in the past focussed exclusively on the export market, need to expand domestic markets to remain profitable and this event was an important 'pilot' promotion for the industry.

Participating TAFE floristry students were major beneficiaries of the event. They used

wildflower products for the first time to create two works for their final assessment. Their chance to work one on one with an expert like Richard Go was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The floral demonstrations program was made possible through the partnership of the NSW Department of Primary Industries with two other state government agencies - NSW Department of State and Regional Development and TAFE NSW-North Coast Institute (through its Wauchope Campus). The support of regional flower growers and Temples Floristry Supplies was coordinated by NSW DPI through Bettina Gollnow.



Richard Go at work

The program comprised an invitation only demonstration for florists, students and growers, and an industry networking event and dinner attended by 60 people. On day two a public display of around 40 floral arrangements at Wauchope RSL attracted over 300 people.



wildflowers/nsw

Wildflowers NSW

Industry representatives passed two important resolutions at the August meeting of the state wildflower peak body, Wildflowers NSW. These are:
Resolution 1: Wildflowers NSW will support growers and promoters of both Australian native and South African native crops, together or separately as the occasion may warrant. There will be honest fulfilment of customer requirements – so that Australian natives are provided when asked for and proteas, leucospermum, leucadendron and related species are supplied when South African are natives

ordered. There will be ongoing effort to promote the education of growers and customers in this regard.

Resolution 2. Wildflowers NSW recognises the uniqueness and importance of Australian native flowers to the flower industry and the importance of protecting our national floral heritage and germplasm.

With the industry still going through tough times, the meeting discussed ways of building strength back into the industry and associations. A 'per member' contribution of \$22 was approved to raise funds for Wildflowers NSW. This will allow it to tackle more issues on behalf of the industry.

A R&D plan for the wildflower industry was released and is summarised below:

These topics have been identified by member groups of Wildflowers NSW as high priority issues requiring a research and development effort to assist the commercial industry. Those in italics are already receiving attention from NSW DPI working closely with growers; the others are available for study by researchers or research students if the required funding becomes available. Another way for the industry to solve production problems is by growers working together in a systematic manner.

- *Grow through in Christmas bush – this is the top priority issue, affecting the greatest number of growers*
- *Development of intensive cultivation systems for selected Australian native crops – including disease and nutrition management and growing media design*
- *Grafted wildflowers for commercial cut flower production*
- *Chemical registration – access to products via APVMA minor use permits*
- *Collection of reliable industry statistics*
- *Waratah bud borer and leaf miner – effective management including chemicals*
- *Effective management of Christmas bush psyllids*
- *Development of new east coast flora crops*
- *Improving market access for Australian wildflowers through sea freight*
- Irrigation requirements and timing for key native flower crops

- A benchmarking study – costs of growing. Especially for some key crops – NSW Christmas bush, flannel flowers, kangaroo paws and waratahs
- Waratah variety assessment
- What triggers flowering in waratahs? – can that trigger be used to manipulate flowering time?
- Banksias suitable for NSW conditions - development of east coast Banksias with terminal flowers, e.g. *B. plagiocarpa*, and breeding and selection of *B. ericifolia* for terminal flowering forms.
- Propagation of *Persoonia pinifolia* as a cut foliage
- A comparative analysis of cultivation vs wild harvest of Byfield fern with an emphasis on economic analysis and cultural impediments

The next meeting of Wildflowers NSW is scheduled for late February.

Pest & disease management

Insect Sampling Kit

The Insect Sampling Kit is a tool developed by NSW Department of Primary Industries to aid growers in the identification and control of insect pests that can be devastating to yields and a costly nuisance to your business.

Plant Health Diagnostic Staff are on hand to provide expert identification of pest insects and recommend methods of control that can minimise damage caused by agricultural pests. The Insect Sampling Kit is a simple solution to problem pests.

Using the Insect Specimen Kit is easy. Simply call the 1800 number below and arrange to have a kit sent to you. Then submit a specimen by following the instructions printed on the side of each Kit, complete the enclosed Request Form and pop it in the post. It's that easy. Postage is free and identification is quality assured.

If you would like more information on the insect Sampling Kit, or would like to know more about the Plant Health Diagnostic Service why not visit the Departments website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au and follow

the links to Diagnostic Services – plant pests and diseases. Contact:
Merydyn Davison -Enquiries Officer
Plant Health Diagnostic Services
Free Call: 1800 675 821
Fax: (02) 6391 3920
merydyn.davison@dpi.nsw.gov.au

The Plant Health Diagnostic Service is NATA accredited and our team of specialist plant pathologists and entomologists have the backing of the Agricultural Scientific Collections Unit - Australia's largest collection of agriculturally significant insects, fungi, and plant bacteria

Western flower thrips

An updated insecticide management plan for western flower thrips on ornamental crops can be found on our website – search for 'western flower thrips' to find it quickly. The plan gives details of 5 recently issued permits.

Disease alert!

A disease in lupins caused by the exotic fungal pathogen *Phoma schneiderae* has been detected on a broad leaf (field crop) variety of lupin at a property in western Victoria. It is unclear whether or not this disease could infect ornamental lupins, so this information is included to help you look out for any odd symptoms. The symptoms of this exotic disease include:

- * Retardation of plant growth with mild chlorosis (where the stems and leaves turn pale green or yellow)
- * Elongated black lesions that often completely girdled and sometimes severed the taproot
- * Small (3-5mm wide), circular shaped light-brown leaf lesions
- * Where the disease was severe, the leaf tips and edges turned completely yellow, and the affected leaflets withered and died before falling to the ground.

If you spot anything unusual on your crop you should check it out - call the exotic plant pest hotline on 1800 084 881.

Bird control

See www.naturebase.net and search for 'orchards'. The information on bird control in orchards in WA may be useful to you.

New Primefact: Management of psyllids in NSW Christmas bush plantations



-First edition Released: December 2005
Primefact No. 17

Psyllids are a serious insect pest affecting NSW Christmas bush. The pest causes damage to the new growth by rolling the leaves, thus causing the cut stems of Christmas bush 'flowers' to be considerably less marketable. The damage can also stunt growth and decrease production. The authors are Ross Worrall, Bettina Gollnow and Gary Taylor.

The contents of this illustrated Primefact include the following information:

Key facts; the problem; the host; what are psyllids?; the Christmas bush psyllid; the psyllid lifecycle; factors favouring psyllids; managing psyllids; recommendations for further research; chemicals for possible control of psyllid.

Go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au and search under 'i' for 'insect pests' to find the Primefact.

APVMA Community Consultative Committee

The APVMA is seeking nominations from individuals or organisations that have a keen interest in the regulation of pesticides and veterinary medicines and strong community networks to be considered for appointment to the APVMA Community Consultative Committee. See the APVMA website for more details – www.apvma.gov.au

Information on the web Centre for Native Floriculture, Queensland

See www.aghort.uq.edu.au/cnf/index-cnf.html

Booklets available on this website include:

'Market research for new floricultural products'
'Building a marketing strategy'
'A practical guide to value chain management in floriculture'.
There is a lot of other useful information on this site, including details of short courses on offer this year.

Soil biology basics leaflets

NSW DPI's leaflet series on soil biology is now available on the DPI website at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/factsheets/soil-biology-basics>

New legislation you need to know about

New explosives laws

From September 1 2005, new laws were introduced to ensure the safe handling and storage of dangerous goods and to strengthen security controls for explosives and concentrated ammonium nitrate. Growers who use fertilisers which contain ammonium nitrate may be affected by these changes. These changes, which have just come into effect under the *Explosives Regulation 2005*, reflect a tightening of Australia's security.

Here's what you need to know:
Under the new regulations, any fertilisers containing more than 45% ammonium nitrate are designated Security Sensitive Ammonium Nitrate (SSAN), with access and use restricted.

Growers who use SSAN as a fertiliser must get a 'licence to use Security Sensitive Dangerous Substances' by 1 January 2006. From this date it is illegal to be in possession of SSAN without a licence; nor will it be possible to purchase SSAN without a licence. There are costs associated with the licence.

All applicants for the 'Licence to use Security Sensitive Dangerous Substances' are required to undergo a security clearance check through the NSW and Commonwealth police and security agencies.

If you use SSAN you have a responsibility to limit unauthorised access to this fertiliser.

You are required to develop a Site Security Plan which describes how you control access, use and transport of the SSAN you purchase. More detailed information and suggested templates for the site security plan can be found on the WorkCover website (www.workcover.nsw.gov.au) or at WorkCover offices.

An indicative list of market name fertilisers containing ammonium nitrate, along with the percentage of ammonium nitrate they contain, is available on the WorkCover website (and translations of the list, in 10 languages, are also available).

Alternative products to fertilisers containing SSAN are being developed. These fertilisers will not require a licence. Ask your fertiliser supplier for details.

NSW Water Management Amendment Bill 2005

The *NSW Water Management Amendment Bill 2005* passed in State Parliament in December redefines environmental water and extinguishes a number of court challenges to water sharing plans. The amendments mean that water entitlements cannot be reduced at the end of the ten year plan period without compensation being provided when the changes are due to a variation in Government policy. The changes will also:

- purchase and protect supplementary water to meet critical environment needs, such as the Macquarie Marshes
- allow licences for adaptive environmental water that can be temporarily traded when not needed for the environment
- allow irrigators belonging to the five irrigation corporations to both sell and buy water, while allowing the corporations to charge 'exit fees' to avoid stranded assets
- include floodplain harvesting in water sharing plans, as large amounts of water can be captured in floodplains, particularly in the in-land catchments. See: http://www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au/mediarelnr/md20051202_3253.html

Environment news

Methyl bromide phase out

DPI Victoria's methyl bromide (MB) phase out website has recently been updated – go to

www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming/horticulture/mb. Information includes:

Background information about MB phase out and Australia's response, a guide to soil disinfection strategies in the absence of MB, summaries of research, MB update newsletters, national contacts and MB phase out links.

Methyl bromide review of registrations

Last September, the APVMA initiated its reconsideration of the registration of products containing methyl bromide and the approvals of associated labels. This is because in the post phase out period from 1 January 2005, only two broad types of use for agricultural chemical products containing MB are allowed. These are quarantine and pre shipment (QPS) and critical agricultural uses for which a specific critical use exemption (CUE) has been granted. The APVMA review aims to ensure that MB product labels only allow QPS and CUE uses.

Legislation to ensure that methyl bromide imported into Australia is only used for CUEs and QPS purposes is now in place and administered by the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH). This enables DEH to track methyl bromide imported into Australia to ensure that none is diverted into other uses.

ChemClear® Helping to Clean up NSW

A partnership has formed between ChemClear® and the NSW State Government to support the clean up of unwanted chemicals from NSW farms. ChemClear® is a national program collecting registered obsolete rural chemicals manufactured by Avcare (the National Association for Crop Production and Animal Health), the Veterinary Manufacturers and Distributors Association (VMDA) member companies and participating non members.

These chemicals (classed as Group 1) are free for disposal under the ChemClear® program. Group 2 chemicals include those

from non-participating companies, de-registered products, scheduled chemicals, mixed or unknown ag and vet chemicals. A cost for disposal is placed on these chemicals.

ChemClear® encourages any holder of unwanted rural chemical to register their unwanted products on their booking line. You may visit the booking site link on their website www.chemclear.com.au or call **1800 008 182** from any region of Australia. Please ensure that you have a completed inventory of your unwanted products prior to contacting the booking line. Include all identifying features of the chemical for disposal such as manufacturer name, product name, size of container and quantity remaining in container.

For more information, please contact Lisa Nixon, Project Officer, ChemClear® - phone: (02) 6230 4799 or 0417 295 457 - Email:chemclear@agsafe.com.au



Interesting facts & figures

Lily intoxication in cats

As flower growers, you may be interested to know about this problem. Many people, even veterinarians, are unaware of lily intoxication as a potential cause of kidney failure in cats. Indoor cats and especially kittens, may be drawn to floral arrangements in the home and may sometimes chew parts of the plant material they contain. If these plants are lilies, the result may be deadly as all parts of the lily – flowers, stamens, stems, leaves and roots – are poisonous to cats. Cats seem unique amongst domestic pets in their susceptibility to this intoxication, possibly due to differences in their metabolism.

Because the key to successful treatment of affected cats is early recognition of possible ingestion on lilies, the Faculty of Veterinary Science and the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney have prepared a flyer on lily intoxication in cats. Signs of toxicity can appear within 2 hours. If untreated, cats die in 3-7 days. The Cat Protection Society is developing a laminated poster that they plan

to distribute to Sydney florists, warning of this problem.

2005 was Australia's hottest year on record

Australia's annual mean temperature for 2005 was 1.09°C above the standard 1961-90 average, making it the warmest year since reliable, widespread temperature observations became available in 1910. A 1°C increase in mean temperatures is equivalent to many southern Australian towns shifting northward by about 100km. Read more at

http://www.bom.gov.au/announcements/media_releases/climate/change/20060104.shtml.

New report on Australian farmers markets

RIRDC has published a new report into Australian farmers' markets. It found the markets are complementary to existing businesses, showcase local food and educate consumers about local food systems, and provide a range of opportunities for growers. Download the report

<http://www.rirc.gov.au/reports/HCC/05-109.pdf>.

Water use on Australian farms 2003-04

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has published figures on agricultural water use, sources of irrigation water, irrigation methods, and water traded in Australia in 2003-04. In that period 40,400 (31%) Australian agricultural establishments irrigated, a slight decrease from 43,774 establishments in 2002-03. The total area irrigated increased by 1% to 2,402,000 hectares, and the total volume of water applied increased slightly to 10,442 gigalitres. During this same period, the total area of agricultural land in Australia increased by 579,000 hectares. More details at

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/0EB7A4518A98F092CA256FD4007809A6?Open>.

NSW flower grower associations and networks:

Australian Native Flower Growers & Promoters

PO Box 4327
East Gosford NSW 2250

www.anfgpa.com

Blandfordia Research & Extension Group

Contact: Greig Ireland
NSW Department of Primary Industries
PO Box 530

Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

Phone: (02) 6650 3111

Fax: (02) 6651 2780

Central West Flower Industry Association

Contact: Neil Jones

Phone: 0419 224 461

Coffs Harbour Flower Exporters

Contact: Jeff Eggins

PO Box 22

Corindi Beach NSW 2456

Phone: (02) 6649 2698 (ah)

Flower Growers Group of NSW (Inc.)

Contact: Nicole Bouery

c/- 1322-1340 Camden Valley Way

Leppington NSW 2179

Phone: (02) 9606 6222

Fax: (02) 9606 6841

Native Flower Grower's Association Inc. (Mid North Coast)

Contact: Harry Kibbler

Address: 23 Plover Lane

Kempse NSW 2440

Phone/fax: (02) 6567 4266

www.australiannativeflowers.com.au

NSW Farmers Association

Level 10, 255 Elizabeth St

Sydney 2000

Phone: (02) 8251 1700

Fax: (02) 8251 1750

www.nswfarmers.org.au

Waratah Industry Network

Contact via Australian Native Flower

Growers and Promoters

Wildflowers Australia – NSW Branch

(previously the Australian Flora and Protea

Growers Association – NSW Branch)

Contact: Tim Bailey

Phone: (02) 4447 8016

www.wildflowersaust.net

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Distribution:

Flower news is published on our website and sent to each industry association in NSW to be forwarded to members via the next mail out