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NSW Flower News

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2009 NSW Wildflower conference boosts industry

The 2009 event was the 11th annual meeting hosted by NSW DPI. Held on February 27 and 28, it was well supported by industry from NSW and interstate, with 69 attending. The conference clearly fulfilled its aims of building industry participation and fostering industry leadership. There was much lively discussion during question times and more informally during breaks. Representatives from Austrade (Sydney and Tokyo offices) and DSRD also attended as this conference provides them with excellent insights into and contacts with the wildflower industry.

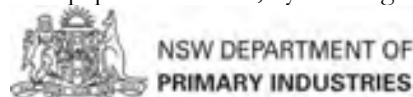
The program included a one-day coach tour with took delegates to the Sydney Flower Market, Flemington. There Rob Giansante, President of the Flower Growers Group of NSW, and Craig Scott, of East Coast Wildflowers, briefed delegates about the



The conference farm tour again very popular

markets and flower trading. The tour also visited the University of Sydney's Plant Breeding Institute at Cobbitty where the finer details of ornamental plant breeding were explained and plants resulting from the grevillea breeding project were viewed. Visits to two farms in the Camden area completed this busy day.

The Saturday conference focussed on key industry issues: marketing and costing product, export market trends and opportunities, improving connections with the floristry industry and specific crop production issues. The opening address came from Dr Roslyn Prinsley from RIRDC who introduced the wildflowers and native plants program and highlighted some exciting current and recently completed projects. Tim Pickles, a very successful garden centre operator, presented the keynote address and shared his energy and clever marketing approaches with the wildflower industry. Tim has some fantastic ways of getting free publicity via local newspapers and radio, by creating 'new



products’, hosting events and ‘pigging backing’ on news stories of the day.

NSW grower-exporter Paul Dalley provided great insights into maintaining your bottom line by knowing your costs and returns. He shared his own ‘rules of thumb’ for deciding whether or not to ship product.

This year the conference hosted a visit by Mr Yuji Yoneda and Ms Naoko Tanaka from Japanese flower importer Cornucopia Co. Ltd, who presented valuable insights into the Japanese market, highlighting recent changes to flower demand and retailing and explaining why the Japanese buy fresh flowers. They stressed the importance of consistent product quality to maintain and build market demand, especially for product destined to be sold prior to auction. Good advance information about products and about the individual grower will build more confidence in Australian grown wildflowers. Issues associated with flower exports were also debated by a panel of speakers, including the Cornucopia representatives, Australian exporter Philippe Lescuyer and exporting grower Steve Wilson.

Floristry also featured strongly in this year’s conference program. Wildflowers Australia (WFA) board member Lana Mitchell profiled initiatives WFA is taking to expand use of wildflowers and improve florists’ knowledge of the products. Lana introduced the annual WFA floristry competition and highlighted a recent project which provided technical inputs into the revised floristry curriculum to ensure wildflowers are well covered (where previously they haven’t been).

Florist and teacher Del Thomas shared her passion for wildflowers in floristry and highlighted ways of improving the profile of wildflowers among florists and their customers. She also noted some problem areas faced by florists like herself, such as the difficulty in getting a regular supply of *really* fresh flowers of an acceptable standard. A floristry demonstration during the conference dinner showed delegates how innovative florists use their product. Del Thomas was joined by Maria Pagnan and together they created a number of arrangements, incorporating a range of

wildflowers and adding traditional flower highlights. Naoko Tanaka from Cornucopia, herself a trained florist, prepared several arrangements to show how a Japanese florist would use the products available.



Florists Maria and Del at work during the dinner demonstration.



One of Naoko’s arrangements

Dr Brian Freeman, representing Chrysal International, explained to delegates how to maintain quality and maximise vase life through the right postharvest solutions and technology. Bettina Gollnow updated the conference on the wildflower quality specifications project, using photos of good and poor quality wildflowers sourced from the markets to illustrate why the specifications are needed.

On farm production issues were also covered by the conference program. Peter Abell challenged growers to ‘think beyond the square’ and try new ways of increasing productivity, for example by adapting the stem bending techniques now used successfully by rose growers. NSW DPI researcher Dr Ross Worrall summarised the

key issues and latest knowledge about growing Christmas Bush. Dr Audrey Gerber, floricultural consultant and current president of WFA gave a useful overview of crop nutrition before introducing the new farm productivity enhancement project being supported by WFA, RIRDC and participating growers.

The trade show held in conjunction with the conference featured displays by the following organisations: Ace Ohlsson Pty Ltd, the Australian Flower Export Council, the Native Flower Growers Association (Mid North Coast) and Golden Gecko, NSW DPI, Organic Crop Protectants, Scotts Australia, the Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation, T & G Flower Growers, and WildFlowers Australia.

The WildFlowers Australia Board, the Blandfordia Research & Extension Group and the Waratah Industry Network steering committee all took the opportunity to hold their own meetings in association with the conference.



Australian Hydroponic & Greenhouse Association Conference, Sydney

Are you unsure about the future? Should you modernise? Should you expand? Would you like to know more? With the theme of 'modernising Australian farming', the 10th Australian Hydroponic & Greenhouse Association (AHGA) National Conference and Trade Exhibition is sure to help you answer these questions. Sydney is looking forward to hosting this event, being held from July 19 to 22 at the Sydney Showgrounds, Homebush, close to Sydney Markets. This conference is not often held in Sydney (the last one in NSW was held on the NSW Central Coast eight years ago) and the 2009 event will showcase Sydney's extensive greenhouse and hydroponics industry.

This biennial event is expected to bring together growers and industry experts from

all sectors of the industry – vegetables, flowers, salad greens and herbs – under one roof. The conference expects to attract several hundred commercial growers and allied industry delegates from around Australia, New Zealand, throughout Asia and elsewhere in the world.

The conference theme highlights the focus of this important national conference. Rising costs for fertilisers, energy consumption, labour and transport means growers are pressed more and more to economise without sacrificing productivity. The conference and trade exhibition is a timely opportunity for growers to network with other commodity growers and industry experts, face to face, to improve and modernise their business operation.

Why should you attend?

- Hear from expert speakers about the latest trends both in Australia and overseas during the stimulating 2 day Conference Program. Many of the presentations will be given on both Monday and Tuesday of the conference, making it easier for you to attend the sessions of particular interest to you.
- Participate in the workshops designed to update you on topics that you can apply to your business. Workshop topics are pesticide residues and food safety; business planning; and getting the best out of your technology. There will be a specific workshop for flower growers - 'Flowers - what's new'.
- View the largest trade expo of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region. There is free public entry to this expo on the afternoon of Sunday July 19.
- Network and enjoy the friendly company of other growers and allied industry representatives during the conference as well as the social events - the welcome reception and the banquet dinner.
- Immerse yourself in the hustle and bustle of Sydney markets and enjoy a tasty breakfast
- Applaud your industry colleagues at the awards ceremony
- Join the post conference tour to visit several greenhouse operations in the Sydney region.

The conference organisers have also secured funding in order to offer a number of travel subsidies and leadership grants. These will assist industry members to attend the conference, and may be of interest to flower growers. Travel subsidies are typically worth \$300 per person, rising to \$400 for growers from WA. To apply for a grant, please use the application forms on the conference website.

For further information and registration contact:
Conference Design Pty Ltd, 228 Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000
Ph: (03) 6231 2999 Fax: (03) 6231 1522
Email: info@cdesign.com.au
Website: www.cdesign.com.au or the AHGA website www.ahga.org.au
Registration forms can be downloaded from this site.



Conference workshop:

Flowers - What's new?

This will feature two technical speakers followed by a question and answer session. One of the speakers will be Dr Brian Freeman who will discuss how the growth in cut flower sales in Europe is largely driven by vase life guarantees. These guarantees rely on post harvest protocols throughout the distribution chain. Maintenance of these standards uses tracer technology to enable timely and cost effective auditing of post harvest applications. Dr Freeman is Regional Manager - Asia Pacific for Chrysal International, a Dutch company that is the world's leader in flower food technology. He has a plant physiology background and over 20 years commercial experience in the cut flower industry. He manages Chrysal's commercial interests in the Asia Pacific region including most countries from Australia northwards to South Korea.

Industry news

Bad press?

Valentine's Day 2009 prompted several media reports in *The Land* and industry media (*Australian Flower Industry*) about the long standing industry dilemmas regarding rose imports (and flower imports generally). The main points highlighted in the media stories were difficulties faced by local growers in competing against the (usually cheaper) imports, differences in product vase life, the allegations that imported flowers are grown and processed using exploited female and child labourers, and carry a high level of pesticide residues, potential biosecurity risks and the efficacy or otherwise of devitalisation treatments. Many local growers and wholesalers have strong views on these issues and the subject of flower imports has been a highly contentious issue for many years.

What is clear is that the media extracts on the website *Farmline.com.au* gave consumers and members of the general public the opportunity to comment on what they had read – and these views represented very bad 'PR' for the flower industry. For example (quoted exactly as posted):

'Unbelievable story - I can't imagine anyone buying flowers that had been dipped in roundup (ie imports) if they knew. I think we all like to minimise chemical use and exposure to chemicals when possible (though it seems chemicals are everywhere and to stop breathing is self defeating). Nice Valentine's Day gift - a bunch of roses with a hint of carcinogen. Maybe the flower growers could introduce labelling - Australian Grown or similar. Most of us would not think that flowers are imported. (I would suggest that imported flowers should be labelled as such but I'm sure that would be less likely to happen.)'

Posted by **AW** on 18/02/2009 9:40:22 AM

'I'm all for buying local product but when you have to pay over \$15.00 for one rose (as was the price in my town), it does make you think twice. I really find it hard to believe that the cost of production for roses is that high. Maybe if the price for roses was more reasonable, especially around Valentines Day, we all might buy a dozen or two and keep everyone happy.'

Posted by **G** on 18/02/2009 1:40:11 PM

'I'm sure our country can grow enough cut flowers to satisfy our own needs. There is enough competition amongst our own producers to stop price gouging. Economic rationalism like communism is proven to be a flawed ideal, we need to use some logic and common sense. We are not lifting the third world out of the gutter by importing things that we already produce, nor are we making marked improvement on our lives by purchasing one off gifts for a few cents less'.

Posted by **rod** on 18/02/2009 2:15:19 PM

'Local roses are too expensive and it appears they up their prices for valentines day. Well fellows, if that's the case it backfired on you this year'.

Posted by **richo** on 18/02/2009 7:17:01 PM

'The price of RED roses for VALENTINES Day: As a rose producer of old I might have to explain how we get to produce so many RED roses in one go: no grower can have enough RED rose bushes to supply the quantities needed for Valentines day, 6 weeks before the day every single red bush is de-budded i.e. every single flower open or not, every single bud is removed that stimulates the plant to produce new buds just in time (2-3 days before hand) for Valentines day, so the rose grower cannot supply red roses for a month and a half! Obviously we all keep some plants on a standard pattern just so we have a little supply of reds. When you have to harvest and employ extra pickers, at 17-18 dollars an hour, you can see where the price is. Roses do not hold on the plant only once they are cut and in the cold room they stop progressing. Our operation was not huge; we used to get by with a couple of casuals during normal times, but come Valentine day and Mothers day, our workforce was supplemented by another 4 to 5 people. Now you know why the price jumps so much! Our roses used to hold in a vase for a couple of weeks (Dear); imported ones 2-3 days (Cheap). Do the maths and you will see that the imported, treated and old rose is actually dearer than your locally grown variety!! A little knowledge is dangerous!'

Posted by **Peter** on 22/02/2009 7:

'Well, I got caught didn't I? Paid 80 bucks for the most magnificent large bud, long-stem red roses in a beautiful red window box with a big red ribbon from Brisbane flower markets (thought they would be reputable). Thought I had saved about 60 bucks. But they were drooping in two days even though they were in air con all the while, and now all dead. They all got a big brown spot on them very early on and karked it. No more flowers for me, next time I will take the wife to dinner instead.'

Posted by **dudroses**

Workshops fine tune specifications



Participants at the Campbelltown workshop trialled draft specifications on real product samples.

Several industry workshops have been held as part of the NSW DPI, RIRDC and

wildflower industry project, Quality specifications for Australian wildflowers. These were held at Port Macquarie, Toowoomba, Mt Tomah and Campbelltown and have involved over 80 growers, marketers and researchers. Three of the workshops fine tuned the information for specific products, and incorporated industry know how about picking and handling the flowers. The Campbelltown workshop, which was held in conjunction with the 2009 NSW Wildflower Conference, was used to test several draft specifications. Participants were given flower samples to assess according to the specifications and their keen eyes found a wide range of defects ranging from by pass shoots, to excessive foliage retained on stems, to overmature flowers.

Feedback from the workshops has been very positive, with most participants noting that as a result they have gained a better understanding of the specifications and how to use them. The workshops have captured information from well experienced and relatively new members of the wildflower industry. The Campbelltown workshop also collected information on postharvest disinfection methods used by different growers, what people put into their postharvest solutions and how they pack and label their boxes. This valuable information is being incorporated into the revised edition of the postharvest manual which is being revised as part of the project.

Chrysal expert visits Australia

Mr Tjerk van der Schaaf, Senior Technical Consultant for Chrysal International, Holland visited Sydney in December. He presented a half day workshop updating the audience on new developments in postharvest technology. It was a pity that very few growers attended. Applying the correct postharvest treatments is critical to ensure that flowers reach the end customer in optimal condition and that this customer will enjoy them for a reasonable time. At the very least, the treatments aim to optimise water uptake by the stems, adjust the pH of the water and inhibit microbial growth.

Some flowers exhibit very specific postharvest problems, which can be overcome with specific treatments. For instance liliiums develop leaf yellowing which can be remedied by using a post harvest treatment containing gibberellins, a type of plant growth regulator. For ethylene sensitive flowers like carnations, it is critical that growers apply the correct treatment – anti-ethylene treatments achieve the best results when used on farm, and can more than double the vase life, compared to untreated flowers. Basic attention to things like clean buckets can add several days' vase life to many flowers.

Tjerk also shared interesting information about the flower industry overseas. For example the large UK supermarket chain Tesco has a strong focus on flower quality and postharvest care. It gives customers a vase life guarantee, so if a postharvest

treatment gives an extra day or two of vase life, that's important. Tesco trains its staff in how to maintain fresh flowers and plants in store and insists that suppliers use the appropriate Chrysal treatments. Tesco sells 80 million bouquets annually, and gets few complaints about the flowers. Increasingly, bouquet makers are testing flowers from growers under standard test room conditions to make sure the flowers supplied meet specifications. Tjerk also outlined tests used overseas to check postharvest solutions are as they should be, for example to ensure that STS is present (if the flowers require this) or to check levels of microbial contamination.



Part of the display at the Sydney workshop where different postharvest treatments were compared.

AQIS to increase export fees and charges

For the past 8 years, Australian exporters have been paying 60% of the cost of export certification services provided by AQIS, with the federal government contributing the remaining 40%. This 40% Government assistance will be allowed to lapse on the 30 June 2009. AQIS has to implement this decision and return all AQIS exports programs to full cost recovery on July 1, 2009, so this issue will in all likelihood affect you financially if you export flowers.

AQIS is reviewing their fee structure and has proposed several models of cost recovery. AQIS undertook a period of consultation with all their clients and the wider industry during March and April. WildFlowers Australia joined other individuals and industry associations representing horticultural exporters and sent

in a submission opposing the changes. Keep up to date with developments through your exporter, Wildflowers Australia or your local AQIS office.

Waratah Industry Network news

The Waratah Industry Network held its annual farm walk and meeting on November 15. The first part of the meeting was hosted by Mt Tomah Botanic Garden.

NSW DPI's Dr Victor Rajakulendran gave a well received talk on scale insects and growers reviewed the draft quality specification for waratah.

Attendees also took the opportunity for a brief tour of the Proteaceae gardens at Mt Tomah before travelling on for a farm visit hosted by Frank and Ros Allatt.



Frank Allatt discussed pruning during the farm walk



The photo shows white palm scale on the bracts and leaves of a waratah. Another indicator for the presence of scales is ants on the bush, particularly when the flowers are infested. The ants feed on the honey dew secreted by the scales as excreta, and they tend to congregate around the scales. Sometimes they even try to protect the scales from enemies such as predators and parasites.



During the farm tour, Peter Abell demonstrated the stem bending technique which he feels has great potential to increase yields of marketable flowers.

Australian flower industry award to Greig Ireland

The recipient of the 2008 cut flower and foliage growers' innovation award is Greig Ireland, recently retired District Horticulturist (Coffs Harbour), for his support of the cut flower and ornamental plant industry. The awards are presented annually by *Australian Flower Industry* magazine.

WFT Spray Strategy Schedule

Sylvia Jelinek & Grant Herron

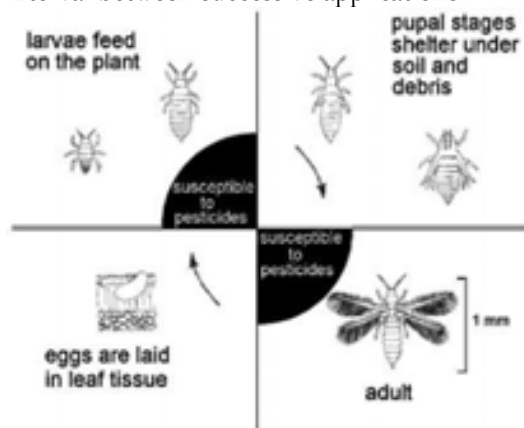
Very little has changed since 2007 in regard to insecticide options available for controlling *western flower thrips* (WFT) outbreaks. Overdependence on spinosad (Success®) can and will lead to WFT resistance and total chemical failure, making this a significant concern for growers. Without spinosad, pesticide options for managing WFT are limited or in the case of some crops, non-existent. Although it would be nice to have a silver bullet solution to the problem and have a suite of chemical options available for the control of WFT in flower and vegetable crops, the research and registration process can seem slow. Several new products are being investigated and it is hoped that there will be a break through in the near future.

□□ Spraying

Adult and larval stages of WFT can be effectively killed by insecticides, but the eggs (laid inside leaf tissue) and pupae (mostly in soil) are protected from sprays (see the diagram of the life cycle of WFT). For this reason three sprays are recommended to

cover the time taken for eggs to hatch into larvae and for pupae to develop into adults.
 A series of three sprays of the same chemical several days apart will be effective for killing the majority of thrips.

The interval between applications varies with temperature. In cooler areas or at cooler times of the year (10°C–20°C) the length of the lifecycle is 25–35 days. At 20°C–30°C the life cycle is 15–25 days. Therefore, the higher the temperature, the shorter the interval between sprays (3-6 day range); however you must follow the product label directions for the minimum interval between successive applications.



An important note on applying consecutive sprays and chemical resistance.

To reduce the chance of WFT becoming resistant, apply three consecutive sprays of the same chemical and then alternate to a different chemical group for the next series of sprays. There must be at least a three week break (<20°C) or a two week break (>20°C) before another series of sprays is applied. If monitoring indicates the need to spray earlier, then you should suspect insecticide resistance, inappropriate spray application or inadequate farm hygiene, and seek expert advice.

You should continue to monitor numbers of WFT so you know when to apply another series of sprays. If WFT are building up on sticky traps, or you see many WFT on your plants, or fresh damage is visible, then consider spraying again.

However, if the same insecticide is always used to control WFT, the thrips will become resistant and the chemical will no longer be effective.

Now is a great time to review your WFT strategy and to modify it if you haven't been following the advice above. Then you will be better equipped to manage this pest during the next growing season.

Reprinted with acknowledgement from NSW Vegetable IPM newsletter # 7 2009.

How well do you know your own farm?

Sylvia Jelinek

So.....How well do you know your own farm?

Do you monitor your crops for pest and diseases?

Do you remove as many broadleaf weeds as possible throughout the growing season?

Do you know what pests, diseases, plant disorders and beneficial insects occur on your crops?

If you answered **NO** to one of these questions, you probably don't know your farm as well as you thought. Everything that is situated on a farm, including the irrigation, soil type, crops, insects and plant pathogens creates the farming environment.

Crop monitoring is essential to help you make the most appropriate decisions in regard to the timing of a spray application for pest and disease control or beneficial insect release for the pest in question.

Monitoring the crop gives you a more accurate picture of what is happening in the cropping environment. This ensures unnecessary spray applications (calendar spraying) do not become a habit. Only spray when it is necessary.

ONLY USE SPINOSAD AFTER REGULAR MONITORING & RECORD TAKING SHOWS YOU REALLY NEED IT !!!

Reducing broadleaf weeds throughout crops, end rows and farm boundaries prior to planting and during the cropping season ensures there is low virus incidence; as most weeds harbour insect pests, including thrips and aphids that transmit diseases. Broadleaf weeds are also known to act as a plant virus reservoir, in which creates a green bridge for pests and diseases to contaminate newly planted crops much faster than on a weed free farm.



Andy Ryland Beneficial Bug Company & Sylvia Jelinek NSW DPI inspecting insects vacuumed from a crop

□□ Your ability to recognise and clearly identify pests, diseases, plant disorders and beneficial insects that occur on your crops is essential in decision making. This is especially critical so you can select the most suitable treatment for the pest or disease in question. In managing problems in your flower crop, there are many factors to consider, including:

1. Ensuring that you select the correct treatment and that you have not misdiagnosed the cause of the problem.
2. Reducing the incidence of pesticide resistance.
3. Making sure that any treatment or spray application to the crop is done at the right time and doesn't disturb beneficial insect activity.
4. Cost. If the incorrect treatment is applied, it has all been for nothing and can be as beneficial as burning money.

Ultimately as the grower, YOU are responsible for final decisions and actions regarding recommendations of pesticide use and their application.

Reprinted with acknowledgement from NSW Vegetable IPM newsletter # 7 2009.



New from RIRDC Fresh look for RIRDC website

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation has supported a Wildflowers and Native Plants Program since 1990. RIRDC have recently changed their website and the links to their publications. Go to www.rirdc.gov.au to learn more about current R&D and access reports of completed projects. A number of

new publications are also available, including:

- Nutrient Management of Waxflower for Quality and Yield Under Adequate Irrigation Levels (08/016 DAW-107A)
- Flowers by Sea - Improving market access for Australian wildflowers (07/181 DAN-235A)
- Grevillea: Breeding and Development of Cut Flowers (07/101 US-105A)

Other new RIRDC publications of potential interest to flower growers include:

- 'Turning a good idea into a profitable venture – a guide to success for new rural industries and enterprises' (published in March 2009). The wildflower industry was included as a case study to show the benefits of improved communication to progress an industry.
- 'Emerging plant and animal industries – their value to Australia' 2nd edition (published 2009). This includes a section on the wildflowers and native plants industry, including some interesting industry statistics.
- 'Farm Trees: Enhancing Biodiversity, Nature Conservation and Pest Control' by GM Gurr, S Gamez-Virues, R Bonifacio, C Kinross and A Raman. Publication no: 09-039.
- 'Trees for Farm Forestry - 22 Promising Species' by Bronwyn Clarke, Ian McLeod, Tim Vercoe. Publication no: 09-015.

Since 1995, the Wildflowers and Native Plants Program has co- invested more than \$15 million to help support development of the Australian wildflower industry. Over the next five years the RIRDC Wildflowers and Native Plants program aims to develop:

- * A profitable industry through more efficient production methods
- * A strong reputation as a supplier of new and improved products
- * Expanded domestic and export market opportunities; and
- * Sustainable use of land and water resources.

Vital flowers!

If you want to know more about the health benefits of flowers (and there are many!), go to

www.aboutflowers.com/health-benefits-a-research.html

You can adapt this information to suit your flower marketing.

New guide will help sell Aussie grown wildflower blooms to the world

A new, updated guide to Australian wildflowers will help sell local blooms to the world. *Flowers from Australia*, an updated guide to Australian native flowers has been produced by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and the Australian Flower Export Council (AFEC). The full-colour guide features beautiful photos of Australian wildflowers and native foliage and provides information on botanical and common names, and seasonal availability. The guide will be used to promote Australian flowers to buyers at home and overseas, where much of Australia's product is sold.

RIRDC's General Manager of New Rural Industries, Dr Roslyn Prinsley, said the guide would help boost a dynamic niche industry. "There are about 500 wildflower and native foliage growers across the country growing Australian native and South African varieties. While they have been hit by the recent drought, gross value of production is still around \$40 to \$50 million per annum. "Our key market is Japan but we are also exporting to the Netherlands, the US, Germany and Canada, among others. This booklet will help flower buyers in those countries, and domestically, to identify species they wish to purchase," Dr Prinsley said.

The book was launched at the 2009 NSW Wildflower conference.

It is available from www.australianflowers.org. The cost to industry members is \$10 per copy (plus postage).

New insect pests

#1. Christmas Bush psyllid finally unmasked

A scientific paper published in the Australian Journal of Entomology formally names and describes Christmas Bush psyllid, one of the main pests challenging Christmas Bush growers. It is a new species of *Cerotrioza* (family Hemiptera), which has been named *Cerotrioza nigromaculata*. The species name is derived from *nigro* meaning 'Black' and *maculata*, meaning 'spot', in

reference to the characteristically black patterned wings.

Details: Gary Taylor, Bettina Gollnow and Ross Worrall: A new species of *Cerotrioza* Crawford (Hemiptera: Triozidae) damaging New South Wales Christmas Bush, *Ceratopetalum gummiferum*, in eastern Australia. Australian Journal of Entomology (2008) volume 47, pages 330-335.

More information on Christmas bush psyllid can be found in a Primefact published on the NSW DPI website - go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au, and search under 'f' for the cut flower section.

#2. New thrips pest of orchids



Helionothrips errans

Very few pest thrips have been associated with orchids in Australia. Species of thrips in the genus *Dichromothrips* are specialist orchid feeders with *D. spiranthidis* and *D. australiae* both recorded as endemic and feeding on the flowers of ground orchids. *Dichromothrips corbetti*, a recent SE Asian introduction, has been recorded from vanda flowers in the Northern Territory. This species has been a regular visitor to our shores as an occasional quarantine intercept on orchids.

Recently, the discovery of *Helionothrips errans* (see photo) damaging orchids in NSW, represents the first record of this species in eastern Australia and the second record for Australia. It is unclear how widespread this species is in Australia. This is a species of thrips that specialises in feeding on orchid leaves and was found to cause extensive damage. More information on this thrips and how to manage it can be found in Primefact 817 'New thrips pest of orchids' available on our website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au and search under 'f' to find the 'flowers' section.

3. New bamboo aphid first to be recorded in Australia

A new exotic aphid has been identified by entomologists at NSW DPI. The species was detected on bamboo growing in the tiger enclosure at Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. The same species has subsequently been identified in Victoria. This is the first species of aphid specifically associated with bamboo to be recorded in Australia.

Although it might affect the appearance of bamboos used as ornamentals, the species is not expected to create any significant damage to the plants.

Soils ain't soils: NSW DPI on the front foot with carbon sequestration potential in soils

With the potential for carbon sequestration in Australian soils such a hot topic at the moment, NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has dedicated two up-to-date and informative web pages to the issue. The first web page

(www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/areas/resources-research/soils-recycled-organics/scientific-outputs/2008/soil_organic) highlights a 28-page Scoping Paper: *Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) Sequestration Potential for Agriculture in NSW*, authored in 2008 by NSW DPI scientists Yin Chan, Annette Cowie, Georgina Kelly, Bhupinderpal Singh and Peter Slavich.

The scoping paper says the highest SOC sequestration potential in NSW exists in pasture land in the higher rainfall regions (>450 mm), both as permanent pastures or as ley pasture in the cropping zone.

"Considerable increases can be achieved by pasture improvement and improved management practices," the paper says. "Significant SOC potential also exists in the low rainfall rangelands which comprises nearly 50 per cent of NSW. Promotion of conservation tillage practices (particularly no-tillage) is important to halt further carbon losses from cropping soils (emission avoidance). In addition, SOC can be sequestered by adopting new land conversion and soil amelioration options such as bioenergy crops from perennial vegetation, recycling organics including biochars, and by ameliorating sodic and acid soils. As a rough estimate, total SOC

sequestration potential from pasture land, cropping land and rangelands amounts to 4.9 Mt C/yr (18 Mt CO₂e/yr), which is equivalent to 11 per cent of the total GHG emission from NSW in 2005. Many of the management practices that are effective in increasing SOC in agricultural soils also improve productivity and profitability, conserve the resource base and protect the environment." The Paper says it is important that soil carbon management in agricultural systems is included in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), to provide an incentive for land managers to increase soil carbon, both for the mitigation benefits and the resulting improvements to soil health. "Inclusion of agricultural soil carbon management in the Australian Emissions Trading Scheme (AETS), whether as an offset or within a covered sector, will require development of cost-effective methods for estimating soil carbon change under changed land management practices."

The second web page (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/topics/biochar) provides a comprehensive background to biochar, a carbon-rich material which has great capacity to sequester carbon in the soil. This page also outlines the research being conducted by NSW DPI into the potential for this material. Biochar is a charcoal-like substance produced from recycling biomass during a renewable energy production process called slow-pyrolysis. Biomass (such as greenwaste and animal manure) can be recycled by heating to 550 degrees C in the absence of oxygen, generating energy and biochar. Rather than the carbon in the biomass being released to the atmosphere as CO₂ as it would be through normal decomposition or burning, the biochar retains the carbon. Added to soils, the biochar can contribute to soil health and water holding capacity - potentially increasing the productivity of farming land.

The biochar web page says biochar may be an immediate solution to reducing the global impact of farming (and in reducing the impact from all agricultural waste). Biochar can store carbon in the ground, potentially making a significant reduction in atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) levels; at the same time its presence in the earth

can improve water quality, increase soil fertility, raise agricultural productivity and reduce pressure on old growth forests.

A joint study is underway for a slow-pyrolysis plant on the north coast of NSW. If adopted, such slow-pyrolysis plants could recycle biomass waste from urban and rural areas, converting it into energy and biochar for use in farming and forestry.

More information:

ABC Science has devoted a webpage to explanations of biochar production.
<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/03/04/2507270.htm?site=science/askanexpert&topic=enviro>

FarmReady Reimbursement grants

Eligible participants are able to [claim up to \\$1500 per financial year](#) to attend [FarmReady approved courses](#), with additional funding available for associated reasonable travel, accommodation and childcare expenses. Approved courses will focus on areas designed to equip primary producers with the tools to manage and adapt to the impacts of climate change. FarmReady offers two types of support, FarmReady Reimbursement Grants and [FarmReady Industry Grants](#). Industry Grants of up to \$80 000 are available to eligible industry, primary producer or natural resource management groups to develop skills and strategies in response to the impacts of climate change.

For more information about the FarmReady Industry Grants email farmready@DAFF.gov.au or phone 1800 638 746. A part of the \$130 million [Australia's Farming Future](#) initiative, FarmReady is a national program, and available to all primary industries.

A number of NSW DPI's PROfarm courses are now approved under the [FarmReady Reimbursement Grant](#) program. Eligible primary producers, family members (18+), farm management staff and indigenous land managers can access up to \$1500/person/year for training on managing and adapting to climate change. These include courses on Farm Planning, Waterwise on the Farm, Farming in a Changing Climate and Healthy Soils,

Healthy Landscape. Contact Simone Fuller on (02) 6951 2544, or see www.profarm.com.au for details.

Many other providers offer a range of courses approved under the FarmReady program – see www.daff.gov.au/climatechange

Comments needed on new biodiversity strategy

A draft of the new national biodiversity strategy is now available for comment. The main threats to biodiversity are climate change (leading to prolonged drought), invasive species, loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitat, unsustainable use of natural resources, changes to the aquatic environment and water flows, and inappropriate fire regimes. Comments are due by 29 May. Go to <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/strategy/review.html>

Weed watch

NSW plan for invasive plant species

Over 1,350 exotic plant species – weeds – have naturalised in NSW with more than 300 of them having significant impacts on the environment. Weed species pose one of the greatest threats to biodiversity and primary production in NSW. One of the most effective ways to minimise the impacts of invasive plants is to prevent their initial incursion. Once weeds get into a new area, they have the ability to establish rapidly, and successful control often depends directly on a timely and rapid response.

The Incursion Plan for Invasive Plant Species has been developed to address goals 1 and 2 of the NSW Invasive Species Plan – to exclude and eradicate or contain weed species in the State. This Plan will help coordinate the surveillance and identification of weeds and weed pathways, risk assessment of species and implementation of effective barriers to prevent their establishment. The Plan will also outline how responses to weed incursions will be coordinated, implemented, monitored and reported.

The Incursion Plan for Invasive Plant Species provides a whole of Government approach to managing new and emerging

weed species in NSW, and is consistent with the NSW Invasive Species Plan goal of fostering a cooperative culture to minimise the impacts of weeds in NSW. See the plan at

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds/legislation/state/incursion-plan-invasive-plant-species>

More weeds now herbicide resistant

Leading weed scientists are urgently appealing to Australia's farmers to switch to an integrated weed management system after the country recorded its third glyphosate-resistant weed. Of particular concern to NSW producers are herbicide-resistant populations of winter-growing annual ryegrass, wild oats and wild radish, and the summer species, liverseed grass and barnyard grass. Three of these – annual ryegrass, barnyard grass and liverseed grass – are resistant to the popular and relatively cheap Group M herbicide, glyphosate. There are now 34 species of summer and winter weeds with populations resistant to one or more agricultural herbicides.

Integrated weed management combines herbicides with other cultural tactics for weed control, maximising the opportunity to prevent seed-set and to reduce the weed seedbank. This includes non-chemical tactics for stopping replenishment of the seedbank which will result in substantially fewer problems in the future.

Source: FarmOnLine Newsletter Aug 25 2008 and April 27 2009.

On farm biosecurity brochures

'Biosecurity' is protecting the economy, environment and people's health from pests and disease. It includes trying to prevent new pests and diseases from arriving, and helping to control outbreaks when they do occur. While robust response arrangements are in place to combat outbreaks, preventing pest and disease incursions in the first place, remains a national priority.

The Federal Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has released brochures to promote on-farm biosecurity practices. The brochures are *Vital information for plant producers*, *Vital information for plant producers*, and *Vital information for small rural landholders*.

Go to <http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/pests-diseases-weeds/biosecurity>

APVMA news

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) provide additional product safety information for a range of chemicals growers use, such as pesticides. Product suppliers are required to make these sheets available at the point of sale. It's a good idea to keep all the MSDS for products you use on file as a reference. If a sheet is not available, notify the product manufacturer and the state authority responsible for occupational health and safety. There are also a number of [online resources for msds](#), for example www.msds.com.au. You can find them via the links on the APVMA website – www.apvma.gov.au

Curiosities - world's smelliest flowers?



Most flowers typically attract humans and insects alike with their enchanting beauty and luscious fragrance. But some rather perverse stinking flowers entice flesh and faecal-loving insects to their foul-smelling blooms in the guise of meat by their colours and fetid scents. These include some of the largest and most bizarre flowers in the world. One of these is *Ceropogon distictus* pictured here. It is native to Africa and a member of the milkweed family (Asclepiadoideae).

(Reproduced with acknowledgement from [Newsletter] Enviro Hort News - 13 2008 September)

What's ON?

Conference

Sun July 19 to Wednesday July 22. 2009
Australian Hydroponic & Greenhouse Association Conference. Sydney Showgrounds, Homebush.

Field days

Fri 24 to Sat 25 July 2009
Mudgee Small Farm Field Days

Tue 20 to Thu 22 Oct 2009
Australian National Field Days (Borenore -
15 km west of Orange)
Both field days are extremely popular and
crowd attendance for both events is
normally above 26,000

Waratah Festival 2009

Mt Tomah Botanic Garden September 26
for 2 weeks

Useful contacts

National flower industry organisations:

*** Wildflowers Australia**

Contact: Lodi Pameijer
Email:
management@wildflowersaustralia.com.au
www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au

*** Australian Flower Export Council**

Contact: Sally Sutton
Phone: 03 9258 6150
Email:
exportcouncil@australianflowers.com.au
Website: www.australianflowers.org

NSW:

**Australian Native Flower Growers &
Promoters**
PO Box 4327
East Gosford NSW 2250
www.anfgpa.com

Blandfordia Research & Extension Group

Contact: Lyn Johnson
Email: myallausflowers@bigpond.com

Central West Flower Industry Association

Contact: Rob McGregor
Phone: 0429 371 791
Email:
stoneycreekwildflowers@bordnet.com.au

Flower Growers Group of NSW (Inc.)

Contact: Rob Giansante
Phone: (02) 9620 1498, 0419 285 223
Fax: (02) 9620 2057
Email: lintonfreshflowers@bigpond.com.au
www.nswflowers.net.au

GrandiFlora Growers Pty Ltd

(a group of NSW and interstate growers
who support the Grandiflora brand)

Contact: Paul Dalley
Address: Mountain Nursery
Trappaud Rd
Kempsey NSW 2440
Phone: (02) 6562 7450
Fax: (02) 6563 1389
www.grandifloragrowers.com.au

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

Contact: Bob Rogers
Phone/fax: (02) 6566 5560
Email: "Shannon & Bob Rogers"
<bookworks@tsn.cc>
www.australiannativeflowers.com.au

NFG Co-op

Contact: Harry Kibbler
Phone: 02 6567 4266
Email: info@goldengecko.com.au
or
Contact: David Mathieson
Phone: 0417 448 667
Email: info@goldengecko.com.au
www.goldengecko.com.au

NSW Farmers Association

Address: Level 25, 66 Goulburn Street
Sydney 2000
Phone: (02) 8251 1700
Fax: (02) 8251 1750
www.nswfarmers.org.au

Waratah Industry Network

Contact: Paul Nixon
Address: 13 Merino Drive
Elderslie NSW 2570
Phone: (02) 4658 1187
Email: paulgnixon@yahoo.com.au

Additional contacts

GrowSearch Australia
*A specialist information service for the ornamentals
industry which has a wealth of information available
on a fee-for-service basis.*
www.dpi.qld.gov.au/growsearch

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