



DECEMBER 2002



WELCOME to our Christmas Newsletter! Petiole season is now well underway and since our last newsletter we have been involved in a number of interesting projects.

OUR MAJOR PROJECTS

Wine Grape Benchmarking

Scholefield Robinson Mildura has expanded its wine grape quality benchmarking to 134 blocks of red grapes from Waikerie in SA to Balranald in NSW, although the majority of the properties are around Mildura. We are setting up a database for vineyard and fruit measurements to allow easier analysis of data and better feedback to the registered growers.

In our Adelaide office, Prudence Honner is continuing her quality benchmarking work with a number of grower groups in the McLaren Vale/Adelaide Hills areas. Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blocks are being assessed.

Plant Breeders Rights

Garth Swinburn has been involved with continuing PBR evaluation of new table grape varieties including a range of Californian varieties being currently processed through quarantine. Several varieties will be registered in Australia over the next 3-5 years.

In our Adelaide office we have been busy with a range of PBR work including potatoes, quandongs and cut flowers.

Rootzone Constraints to Productivity

Ben Robinson has been working as part of a team (partly funded by GWRDC & HAL) looking at research and extension priorities to help manage constraints to productivity resulting from rootzone characteristics. Grapes, citrus and vegetables/potatoes have been looked at in a series of regional workshops, and a recent Strategic Workshop in Melbourne fleshed out some possible R&D topics.

Grape and Wine Extension Review

The first phase of this GWRDC project run by Charles Drew entailed reviewing grape and wine industry extension throughout Australia and writing a Discussion Paper (which is available at the GWRDC website). This report has been well received throughout the industry.

The second phase entailed an industry workshop (13-14 November) and the development of a strategy to guide GWRDC's investment and planning by other industry stakeholders. This will be published in a position paper. Prue McMichael and Peter Scholefield also contributed to the workshop and to the development of the project.

To view the Extension Review Discussion Paper, visit:

www.gwrdc.com.au

(Go to the "Projects/Downloads" page and click on "Downloads")

Expert Determination of Grape Price

Charles Drew carried out a determination of price for Chardonnay grapes delivered, and notional market price for grapes sold, to a third party under the provisions of a Grape Grower Agreement between a producer and a wine company. A key issue was whether fair market price applied to *premium grapes*, or to grapes reflecting the *inherent quality of the vineyard*.

National Vine Health Steering Committee

This committee continues to be productive with issues addressed this year including grapevine leaf rust in NT, a viticulture industry protection plan, the development of a clean planting material technical reference group, and a review of phylloxera status in districts in Vic, NSW & Qld.

Risk Assessment

Prue McMichael recently completed a risk assessment of compost, which included contingency planning for management of fruit fly and other pests and diseases.

Phylloxera Rootstock Project

Many grapegrowing regions in SA have a low percentage of vineyards planted on rootstocks. As part of its risk management strategy, the Phylloxera & Grape Industry Board of SA engaged Scholefield Robinson and EconSearch to prepare some information for grapegrowers that identified the benefits of using rootstocks, other than in the presence of phylloxera

Herb Industry Study - RIRDC

The culinary herb industry in Australia is a very diverse industry with growers spread around Australia. Scholefield Robinson has been engaged by RIRDC to investigate ways the industry body can develop its capacity and service the needs of the industry. This study will be completed in late March 2003.

VTMWGC - Cooling in Vineyards

Scholefield Robinson is reviewing the literature on methods of cooling in vineyards for the Victorian & Murray Valley Winegrape Growers' Council. The purpose of this study is to see if there are practical ways of modifying the environment in vineyards in hot areas. There may be benefits from this study for improving grape quality.

Spray Programs

Prudence Honner has been busy this season reviewing and preparing spray programs for our winegrape clients. For helpful tips on setting up your spray unit, visit our website at:

www.srhs.com.au

(Go to our "Articles" page and download "Is your spray unit set up correctly?" October 2002). Our December article by Garth Swinburn is now available and provides some helpful advice on "Controlling canopies".



Garth Swinburn demonstrating strategies for canopy control in the vineyard.

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BUILDING OUR SKILLS

Conferences, Workshops, Seminars & Field Days Attended

All professional staff at Scholefield Robinson continue to build and improve their skills and knowledge.

Charles Drew

- Wine Industry Outlook Conference in Adelaide on 4th November.
- Wine Industry Environment Conference in Adelaide from 25-26th November.
- ABARE Outlook Conference held in Nuriootpa on 4th September.
- GWRDC Extension Workshop - Plant Research Centre, Waite Campus, 13-14 November.

Ben Robinson

- Conference of the Australian Society for Horticultural Science from 30th September - 2nd October.
- Olive Industry Conference from 9-12th October.
- Strategic Workshop on Rootzone Constraints in Horticulture on 10th October.
- Riverland Field Days on 12th September.

Garth Swinburn

- Took part in the Produce Executive Program at Mt Eliza Business School, Monash University in Late September (1 week duration).
- Riverlink Workshops on wine grapes, table grapes, dried fruit, and vegetables - August-October.

Peter Scholefield

- Australian Nut Industry Conference at Coffs Harbour in NSW.
- Australian Almond Industry Seminar in Denmark, on 1st November.
- AAAC/APEN Workshop in Tatura, Victoria, 8th November, on "Managing in a Time of Climate and Landscape Change".

Presentations

Ben Robinson

- Presented a short paper on "Wine Grape Nutrition and Fruitfulness" at the Adelaide Hills Regional Meeting of the PGIBSA on 26th August. This has been published as a short article in the November edition of The Australian & New Zealand Grapegrower & Winemaker (No. 466 p26). You can also view this article at their website:

www.grapeandwine.com.au

(Go to "Latest Issue News" and click on "Grapevine fruitfulness and nutrition")

- Presented a TAFE Seminar on "Decision Making - Vineyard Nutrition" on 19th September.

Charles Drew

- Charles Drew made a keynote presentation on the findings of the Grape & Wine Extension Review at the Riverlink Information Transfer Network Workshop in Mildura, on 28th August.

Peter Scholefield

- Speaker at the Australian Property Institute Conference on "Horticulture: Fruitful or Not?"



LOCAL NEWS

Olive Industry R&D Plan

The R&D Plan for the Australian Olive Industry for 2003-2008 has been released by RIRDC and the Australian Olive Association. It contains some interesting information on the present state of the industry and future R&D needs:

- Nursery statistics show that there will soon be 7.5m trees planted across Australia. NSW has 25%, WA 21%, Vic 20%, SA 16% and Qld 14%.
- These trees equate to over 30,000 ha with the potential to produce 40,000-60,000t of olive oil by 2011.
- 30,000t of olive oil was imported into Australia in 2000/01. Table olives worth \$30m were also imported.
- Clearly, the rapid development of the market for Australian olive oil is critical to allow the Australian production to be sold at profitable prices.

Olive Industry Conference

Ben Robinson attended a workshop on close planting in modern orchards and was most impressed by the quality of the information provided both in the workshop and in the general sessions. It was exciting at this conference to see how the industry focus has shifted from getting trees into the ground, to managing them profitably. Advances in training, mechanical harvesting and managing oil quality were discussed in depth. A range of marketing issues were discussed, including the idea of an additional quality classification exceeding Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Conference of the Australian Society for Horticultural Science (AuSHS)

This conference aims to delve a little deeper into the science and research upon which we will all rely as a basis for better decision making in years to come.

Here too there were some exciting stories:

- Commercialisation of the Wollemi Pine as a conservation exercise.
- Improved approaches to disinfestation of export produce.
- Does partial rootzone drying work the same way in other woody perennials as in grapes?
- Where to for horticulture? - a perspective from the USA.

The AuSHS seems to be at a cross roads and the society's role is partly but not completely filled by the plethora of industry conferences where research papers are presented. Ben Robinson would like to see a national Horticultural Conference with combined industry involvement every, say 5 years. There is so much good science going on whose relevance crosses industry boundaries that such a meeting would be of great benefit to us all (eg vegetable growers would surely be fascinated by the Precision Viticulture story). Wouldn't it be good to understand the extent of crop loss and quality losses in the weaker parts of a centre pivot?



STAFF NEWS

Lucy Thompson - New Technical Officer

Daniel Smith left Scholefield Robinson in October and Lucy Thompson has taken his place as Technical Officer.

Lucy has a First Class Honours degree in Environmental Science from the University of Adelaide and brings another set of skills to SRHS. We are delighted with the way Lucy has quickly fitted in with the SRHS way of doing things. Many of you will have already talked with her about grapevine petiole testing.



Amanda Schapel

Amanda returned to work in October for three days a week. She is juggling baby Nicholas (about 1 year old), work, and travelling between Birdwood and Adelaide with amazing skill.

Peter Scholefield

Peter will be "off the air" for all of December, recuperating from an operation. He hopes to be back with a vengeance in early January.

Ben Robinson

Ben's contribution to the consulting profession and plant nutrition was recently acknowledged with the award of a Fellowship of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology. Congratulations Ben!



SEASONS GREETINGS FROM ALL AT SCHOLEFIELD ROBINSON!



Peter Scholefield
Garth Swinburn
Amanda Schapel

Ben Robinson
Charles Drew
Lucy Thompson
Anne-Marie Broughton

Prue McMichael
Prudence Honner
Cheryl Jenkins