



## A message from our Chair

A very warm welcome to the February edition of Growing Undercover.

Excitement is building towards our conference in late March and our hard-working Committee are finalising arrangements to welcome all our attendees, exhibitors and sponsors to sunny Coffs Harbour.

Of course, if you can not make it in person there is a virtual registration option, and all the details can be found on the conference website at:

[www.pcaconference.net.au/registration](http://www.pcaconference.net.au/registration)

At the time of drafting this article, 300 delegates have registered, our popular farm tours are almost fully subscribed and over 60 exhibitors and sponsors will showcase their products and services to delegates.

The conference dinner entitled “Festival Under the Stars” promises to be a great evening where we can all let our hair down and celebrate everything that is great about our industry. A special part of the evening is announcing PCA 2022 award winners. These awards recognise individuals who have made a significant contribution in their relevant field within the protected cropping sector.

A big thank you to all our partners and exhibitors together with delegates who have registered to date.

Without your support, PCA cannot bring you a fantastic event full of learning, networking opportunities and connecting face to face with friends and colleagues.

At this year's conference, PCA have several incentives for our growers to attend – including subsidising half the costs of a full registration.

On Monday the 28th of March, there will be up to 40 places available for growers to attend training that also includes complimentary entry to the Exhibition and Welcome Reception on the Monday evening.

The first workshop will focus on the Essentials of Irrigation for Hydroponic Protected Cropping delivered



**Matthew Plunkett • PCA Chair**

by Levi Nupponen and Tony Bundock.

The second workshop will focus on Integrated Pest Management in Berry Production and delivered by Stuart Doyle with support from Melinda Simpson. Growers must pre-register to attend with details to be communicated soon.

PCA would like to acknowledge the support of Local Land Services, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Hort Innovation for co-hosting these training sessions to coincide with PCA 2022.

The options for growers do not end there. In addition, there are also options for growers to attend the Exhibition only on either Tuesday the 29th of March or Wednesday the 30th of March of the conference.

On another front, PCA are also finalising our PCA 2023 conference venue, which will be announced at our conference.

On behalf of the PCA team, have a great month and very much looking forward to catching up with all our members and delegates in Coffs Harbour.



*Rhod and Annie Cook's new irrigation system will feature as part of the Greenhouse Vegetable Tour at PCA Conference 2022*

Click here to download copy of newsletter



The PCA Board would like to extend our warmest welcome and good wishes to our new members.

**Individual Member**

- Jacoby Beech, Piccolo Patch
- Harjot Bhatti, Corindi Farms
- Rohan Davies
- Sylvia Jelinek, Greater Sydney Local Land Services
- Sudhee Satyan, TCL Hofmann Pty Ltd
- Kelly Scarlett, The University of Sydney
- Aaron Teoh, Green Camel
- Andrew Young, Faralli Fresh
- Rod Zakostelsky, Cannaponics Ltd

**Student Member**

- Jack Mooney, Provenance Propagation

We look forward to many successful years together!



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The 2020/21 edition of the Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook provides the most up-to-date production, international trade, processing volumes and fresh-market distribution insights available to help you plan for the future.

View it now at [www.horticulture.com.au/hort-stats](http://www.horticulture.com.au/hort-stats)







## PCA 2022 Conference

Will you be joining us in Coffs Harbour for PCA2022? I am getting very excited to welcome you all to Pacific Bay Resort at the end of March for PCAs bi-annual conference. I was very fortunate to be able to travel to Coffs a few weeks ago to visit the conference venue and growers in the region. The venue at Pacific Bay Resort is absolutely stunning and will provide the perfect backdrop for us to come together after almost two years with the energy in the region growing with excitement as the conference is fast approaching.

The last few years have been challenging to say the least and we are all well and truly overdue for an in-person catch up. There is certainly something Zoom meetings and online events just can't offer in comparison to catching up in person. I sincerely believe the magic of conferences happens in the connections we make and the conversations we have at the coffee cart or at the bar once the formal proceedings are done.



**Emily Rigby** • PCA Director

So register today and join me in Coffs Harbour as we reconnect with friends and colleagues, make new connections and learn what's new in PC. PCA2022 is an event not to be missed - from the trade show and social functions through to the conference talks and farm tours and the chats in between.

I am really looking forward to catching up with old friends and colleagues and making new connections. So if you haven't registered yet, get onto it and meet me for a drink at the coffee cart or perhaps I'll see you at the bar later...

On behalf of the PCA family, we look forward to celebrating and reconnecting with you at PCA2022.



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# What's the value of venting polytunnels?

By Haygrove



When and how to vent your polytunnels is a regular topic of conversation, and frustration, amongst berry growers. How often have you found yourself compromising a crop because labour was short, or you are assessing the cost vs benefit of venting?

Have you ever stopped and quantified the impact of NOT venting? What's the impact on yield and quality, ultimately on the bottom line by selling less Class 1? What's the impact on picking speeds, motivation of harvest team, P&D pressures, shelf life, buyer confidence, the list goes on...?

Sending a team of workers to manually push the plastic covers up the hoop is an expensive process and rarely is it possible to do at the optimal moment or with satisfactory frequency. What are the overall benefits to timely venting of polytunnels?

Management of the temperature and humidity to create the optimal growing environment has been shown to lead to overall increase in both crop yield and quality.

A 5% increase in yield on a 60t/ha strawberry crop equals an additional 3t/ha. To put this into context, an average berry weight change from 20g to just 21g represents a 5% yield increase and an additional 3t/ha would give the grower roughly a 3–4-year payback on a Haygrove venting system investment.

But is an additional 5% achievable through better venting? You need to look at the marginal gains. What is the percentage gain through maintaining optimal photosynthesis rates? Through reducing the incidence of powdery mildew or other fungal pathogens through better climate management? In picking speeds through better quality? Through reducing leg row wastage from wind and rain events? It all adds up.

The economics of horticulture are changing. Labour costs are rising rapidly, and labour availability is decreasing. Investment in technology is needed to replace manual labour and those investments need to

be maximised. The expense of compromising crop yield, quality and timing through not venting is becoming less justifiable.

EZvent is Haygrove's solution to mechanised venting at field scale simplicity. Although an increased capital investment (compared to manually vented tunnels) EZvent optimises return on investment. With EZvent management of the internal environment allows each plant to thrive and reach its peak yield potential.

EZvent allows you to regularly operate the vents at the optimal moment without accumulating labour bills throughout the season. Growers using the EZvent endorse the increase in frequency of venting report impressive yield uplifts. EZvent users in the UK have seen up to a 20% reduction in leg row fruit wastage when connected to automated venting.

The patented design of the EZvent means that the installation time and cost is low compared to other mechanised venting systems. The vents can either be operated by mechanical chain drive or fully automated with electric vents connected to climate control sensors.

It's not just the economic environment that's changing, but the climate too. With rain becoming less predictable, the benefits of mechanised venting go beyond improving yield and quality, and season extension. The combination of EZvent tunnels fitted with Haygrove's rainwater gutters maximises the rainwater collection and mitigates the risk of irrigation failure through drought. By closing the vents during rainfall, the water catchment area increases to be the entire covered area.

Looking to the future, will you be able to afford NOT to mechanise venting your polytunnels?

To find out more, get in touch with [alan.bissett@haygrove.co.uk](mailto:alan.bissett@haygrove.co.uk)  
[www.haygrove.com](http://www.haygrove.com)



## Get to know some of our new members!

**Sudhee Satyan, TCL Hofmann Pty Ltd**

**Tell us about your farm and/or your role in the protected cropping industry.**

Supplier of materials

**What do you see as current and future challenges for the protected cropping industry?**

Contacting the growers and builders

**What do you enjoy most about working in the protected cropping industry?**

Love horticulture industry

**Why is it important to be a member of the PCA, and why did you join?**

To get stakeholders contact

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

As a General Manger of a company

**Tell us an experience or funny story about yourself.**

Love agriculture industry

**Jacoby Beech, Piccolo Patch**

**Tell us about your farm and/or your role in the protected cropping industry.**

New grower. Just setting up a greenhouse in Northern Rivers region.

**What do you see as current and future challenges for the protected cropping industry?**

Rising Costs

**What do you enjoy most about working in the protected cropping industry?**

New technologies

**Why is it important to be a member of the PCA, and why did you join?**

Latest industry news and networking

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

Successful farmer



PCA Directors' Emily Rigby and Marcus van Heijst visiting Parvinder Lalli's berry farm.



Blackberry Cravo at Parvinder's berry farm - part of the PCA2022 Berry Farm Tour

# THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT



Knowledge grows



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