



A message from our Chair

A warm welcome to the March edition of Growing Undercover.

As I write this article, we are days away from our PCA 2022 conference in Coffs Harbour. Excitement is building in what promises to be a great event.

If you are a grower and haven't registered for the Grower training workshops on Monday the 28th of March or the free Exhibition Trade show passes on Tuesday 29th or Wednesday the 30th of March, please be quick as places are filling up fast. To register, please click here— [ASN Events](#) or email Fiona.c@asnevents.net.au for assistance.

I visited many growers and allied trade in the Coffs Harbour region recently and pleased to report that on the mid North Coast, recent flood damage to crops and structures is minimal. However, southeast Queensland, the Far North Coast of NSW and the Greater Sydney region have not been so lucky, and assessments are underway to determine the damage.

PCA have communicated feedback to all levels of Government to ensure our sector receives the support it needs. Please reach out to our team if you require assistance finding the relevant support in your state for natural disaster assistance measures.

PCA have also raised concerns with the Australian Government about rising input costs, including raw materials and escalating sea freight costs. Hopefully there will be some relief measures for businesses in the upcoming federal budget.

The Membership and Marketing Committee are finalising Regional Tours and will soon be reaching out to all our corporate partners to co-sponsor running these events. Events are planned for Bundaberg, Greater Sydney and South Australia in 2022 and another two events in the first half of 2023 in the leadup to our conference in July 2023.

Similarly, the Education and Training Committee are planning a national training roadshow and would love to hear from our members on relevant topics for



Matthew Plunkett • PCA Chair

grower training. Our team will be talking to growers and industry at the conference seeking feedback and sending out a short survey post the conference to gauge the most suitable topics.

In pleasing news, the Australian Building Codes Board have released their business plan for 2020-2023. Commencing in 2022-23, technical review work will be undertaken on fire safety of horticultural buildings. As communicated previously, it is the PCA's understanding that a code for Horticultural buildings is scheduled to be classified in the National Construction Code (NCC) in 2025. Whilst this is several years away, sustained advocacy by PCA has ensured that this work has been scheduled around fire safety in preparation for the 2025 release.

PCA have also been working with Berries Australia and NSW Department of Primary Industries to assist in understanding the recent NSW Agriculture Commissioners report around definitions for nets and tunnels and how they fit into the NSW planning system. The planning framework is very complex and PCA are having ongoing discussions with various state and local government jurisdictions about issues and challenges in this space. Land use planning is a key area the Board are developing policy positions on to ensure our advocacy efforts are targeted and effective.

At a Board level, I would like to thank Neil Miles for his service and welcome Kaela Bonomi from Western Australia. Kaela brings a wealth of Association experience to the role and congratulations on your appointment.

I look forward to seeing many of our members at PCA 2022 and have a great month.



Grower training on irrigation fundamentals will be held on Monday 28th of March as part of PCA 2022

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- Discounted water and nutrient laboratory analysis at AgVita Analytical Centre
- 12.5% discount on Growcom's specialised industrial relations products & services – growcom.com.au



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

Individual Member

Stephen Andrews, Micro Harvest Pty Ltd
 Michael Berryman, Croft Structures
 Onoriode Coast, University of New England NSW
 Glenn Sargent, Boratto Farms Pty Ltd
 Libby Skipworth, Cyngus Agriculture
 Chris Wilkins, LLEAF

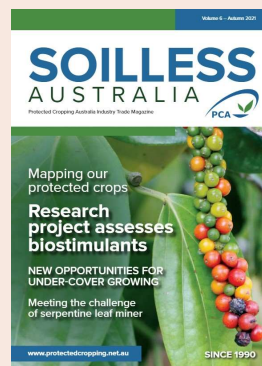
Student Member

Olivia De La Mare, Charles Sturt University
 Tyson Peterswald, Department of Primary Industries
 Alex Wong

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We look forward to many successful years together!



PCA 2022 Conference

We are now only days away from the 2022 PCA Conference so now is the last chance to complete your registration. Attending the conference provides you with an unmissable opportunity to connect with likeminded people driving protected cropping in Australia. Attending the conference will enable you to share new experiences and advancements in knowledge and practice, catch up with suppliers and connect with other growers in the industry.

The four-day conference includes a mix of keynote speakers and breakout sessions based around major industry concerns and interests such as pollination, water use, technology, pests and disease management, medicinal cannabis and the berry sector.

REGISTRATION INCLUSIONS

FACE-TO-FACE FULL REGISTRATION

- Access to all sessions
- A ticket to the Welcome Function and Conference Dinner
- All morning/afternoon teas and lunches during the program
- Certificate of attendance post conference
- The registration fee covers and includes all Australian Government taxes

FACE-TO-FACE SINGLE DAY REGISTRATION

- Access to all sessions on your nominated day of attendance
- Catering during the breaks on your nominated day of attendance
- Certificate of attendance post conference
- The registration fee covers and includes all Australian Government taxes

VIRTUAL FULL REGISTRATION

- All proceedings papers and presentations, including live streaming from Coffs Harbour, NSW
- Real time chat with attendees and fellow presenters.
- Group networking video calls
- Access to virtual exhibitors and sponsor specials

FROM \$825

FROM \$570

FROM \$225

Protected Cropping Australia 2022 Conference

PACIFIC BAY RESORT,
COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

28 – 31 MARCH 2022

www.pcaconference.net.au



GROWER WORKSHOPS

MONDAY 28 MARCH 2022 – 1:00PM – 5:00PM

There is no cost to attend but you must pre-register using the link below

ESSENTIALS OF IRRIGATION FOR HYDROPONIC PROTECTED CROPPING

Levi Nupponen

- Practical aspects of irrigation monitoring and management: drip-irrigated hydroponics

Tony Bundock

- Initial system set up for irrigation



Local Land
Services

Hort
Innovation
Strategic levy investment

VEGETABLE
FUND

AUSVEG



National Vegetable
Extension Network
NEW SOUTH WALES

IMPROVING PEST MANAGEMENT FOR THE BERRY INDUSTRY

Stuart Doyle

- Integrated pest management basics
- Developing an IPM strategy for your farm
- Practical examples on how to implement IPM on farms



Department of
Primary Industries



berries
AUSTRALIA

Hort Innovation BLUEBERRY FUND Hort Innovation RASPBERRY AND BLACKBERRY FUND Hort Innovation STRAWBERRY FUND
This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using research and development levies from the Blueberry Fund, Raspberry and Blackberry Fund and Strawberry Fund and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the funds and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

Only 40 spaces available for each workshop – confirm now!
www.members.asnevents.com.au/register/profile/a745e1c372ff

For any enquiries or registration assistance please email
fiona.c@asnevents.net.au

Protected Cropping Australia 2022 Conference

PACIFIC BAY RESORT, COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

28 – 31 MARCH 2022 www.pcaconference.net.au



MONDAY GROWER TRAINING PASS

- Attend the below workshops
 - Essentials of irrigation for hydroponic Protected Cropping
 - improving Pest management for the Berry Industry
- Ticket to the Welcome Function

Pre-registration is required for attendance and catering purposes



TUESDAY 29/3 GROWER EXHIBITION PASS

- Attend the PCA 2022 Exhibition on Tuesday
- Access to conference catering for Tuesday
- Option to purchase a Conference Dinner ticket for Tuesday night at an additional charge

Pre-registration is required for attendance and catering purposes

WEDNESDAY 30/3 GROWER EXHIBITION PASS

- Attend the PCA 2022 Exhibition on Wednesday
- Access to conference catering for Wednesday
- Option to purchase a Conference Dinner ticket for Tuesday night at an additional charge

Pre-registration is required for attendance and catering purposes



Only 50 spaces available for each attendance option
www.members.asnevents.com.au/register/profile/a745e1c372ff

There is no cost to attend but you must pre-register using the link above

For any enquiries or registration assistance please email
fiona.c@asnevents.net.au

Herald Sun/Transurban Run for the Kids

Sunday 3rd April 2022



Tony Bundock • PCA Deputy Chair

As you may well have seen, Tony Bundock (Deputy Chair) and a team of colleagues from the Narre Warren Fire Brigade are taking part in the Herald Sun/Transurban Run for the Kids on Sunday the 3rd of April.

The team are fundraising to support the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal Ltd a cause that is close to their hearts and an organisation that is doing some very important work.



However, they are aiming to complete the course in their 'Running Fire Engine' because apparently just running 14.8kms isn't challenging enough! (Yes, they probably are mad!)

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**We look forward to seeing you all in Coffs Harbour at the PCA Conference
28th - 31st March!**

Biocontrol advance: Sachet technology now in Australia for slow-release of predatory mites

By Biological Services

In an Australian-first, Biological Services is trialling sachet technology for the slow-release of predatory mites to improve commercial Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices – and the trial results are very promising.

Drawing on its experience as pioneers of IPM in Australia, the team chose to trial the sachet packaging first with the predatory mite, *Cucumeris*. This beneficial is effective in controlling thrips in crops such as cucumbers, capsicums, eggplants, strawberries, other berryfruits and ornamental crops.

James Altmann, Director of Biological Services said the new sachets simplify releases for growers, ensuring a more even placement, and provide a continuous emergence of predators for about four weeks because they still breed inside the sachets once placed into the crop.

“Until now in Australia, the standard approach for releasing most predatory mites into crops has been with loose material shaken over the plants,” said James. “The current approach works and will continue to be used for many situations but applying loose materials is often difficult to calibrate, and we know that the more even the distribution over the crop, the better the results.”

“We can already see how much effort the new sachets will save growers. It is quick and easy to space sachets evenly throughout crops which saves labour. The formulation inside the sachet also provides a continuous release of predators for several weeks, reducing the need for multiple applications of loose material. A hook is supplied attached to each sachet and growers simply hang them every few meters on a leaf-stem, string, or wire. The mites walk out onto the crop from a small hole at the top of each package.”

“50 years since we began, our team today is just as passionate about reducing the use of chemicals in agriculture by improving IPM practices and approaches. The sachets are emerging as an exciting new option to simplify IPM for commercial growers across the country.”

These trials and the commercialisation of sachet technology has been made possible with the support of our international partner Biobest. This project is an example of the benefits Biological Services can deliver to our customers through greater access to global technology and the ability to fast-track ideas that would have taken much longer on our own. Sachets have been used successfully overseas for many years, but the cost of the machinery didn't match the market potential in Australia. Biobest has helped a lot in making this a reality here.

With thorough first phase testing complete, the Biological Services team is now collaborating with key commercial growers with monitored field trials. This is the final stage in the process of bringing the benefits of this technology to all growers early next year and expanding the range of predators available in sachets. Whilst *Cucumeris* is the first product, we will release both *Californicus* for Spidermites, *Montdorensis* for Whitefly/Thrips early in the new year, and then continue trials with *Doreenae* in almonds/grapes for various mite pests at the same time.

If you would like to learn more about sachet use please call 08 8584 6977 or email info@biologicalservices.com.au.



Get to know some of our new members!

Chris Wilkens, LLEAF

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

LLEAF provides light shifting diffusers for growers to optimise the light spectrum inside their greenhouses.

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

Currently I see a lot of growers over shading their plants in an effort to prevent sunburn. Improving light quantity and quality, harnessing the abundant solar resources to produce crops economically for export.

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

Most people in the industry are open minded to new innovations and growers often have trial areas where they conduct ongoing experiments. As an innovator myself and as a company providing new products, being well received is really enjoyable.

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

To network, with the upcoming conference it is good timing to start connecting.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Doing precisely what I am doing now, only on a much larger scale.

Tell us an experience or funny story about yourself.

While living in Scandinavia, I enjoyed chasing the Aurora Borealis with my camera. Once while driving to Lapland, I captured some stunning colours only to discover it was LED lights from a local glasshouse reflecting down from the clouds.

Onoride Coast, University of New England NSW

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

Lecturer and Researcher in Horticulture (Controlled Environment Cropping)

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

Adapting to climate change

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

Use of technology to improve production

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

Research, networking

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Director of Research Institute for Protected Cropping

Michael Berryman, Croft Structures

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

Greenhouse Fabricator and builder

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

Acceptance of ROI & building regulations & do they suit the applications of horticulture and agriculture

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

Potential opportunity

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

Greater awareness of industry

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Fabricating greenhouse structures and more

Stephen Andrews, Micro Harvest Pty Ltd

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

Micro Harvest is a high-health, high-tech vertical nursery, based on the Sunshine Coast in QLD. We propagate seedlings for farmers and genetic owners indoors and provide agronomic support to growers across Australia.

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

Energy use management and increasing maintenance costs.

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

The endless possibilities and growth potential.

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

Networking and collaboration between members

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Enjoying retirement

Tell us an experience or funny story about yourself.

Was a pilot, met my wife, now I'm scared of heights (she's an agricultural scientist)

Libby Skipworth, Cyngus Agriculture

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

New entrant

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

Sustainable inputs, market access, consumer expectation management

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

Currently, the learning curve

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

Improve understanding of industry & challenges

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Sustained and sustainable growth

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

