

Subject: Growing Undercover - March 26

Date: Friday, 27 March 2026 at 4:35:48 pm Australian Central Daylight Time

From: PCA

To: Jade Lewis



GROWING UNDERCOVER

MARCH | 2026

UPDATES

IDO Update

Matt Plunkett

Welcome to the March edition of Growing Undercover.

With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, we are seeing surging fuel prices, rising input costs and many growers scaling back their production due to these uncertainties.

With inflation and interest rates rising sharply, unfortunately we are likely to see these shocks in the supply chain for some time.

With our growers already suffering from depressed market prices, high energy, and labour costs, these rising costs must be passed on to the consumer.

It has been reported that urea has almost doubled in price since the conflict began. Diesel prices have skyrocketed and of great concern is reports that some crops are now uneconomic to harvest.

This crisis, much like COVID-19 has highlighted the need for a National Food Security Strategy that future proofs our industry in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

AUSVEG have surveyed over 150 growers in the last two days and found that since the conflict began:

- 27% of growers have reduced or stopped planting.
- Fuel costs have risen by 74%.
- Freight surcharges up 38%.

- Concerns over shortages of supply of crop protection, seeds, irrigation and other inputs.

This study has also recommended that growers start discussions with their customers about passing on price increases if you haven't already done so. The survey has shown that growers, have only been able to pass on an average price increase of 12%.

It is obvious that energy security is critical to the growth and development of our industry. PCA, through the Protected Cropping 2021-2030 Strategy have advocated for targeted research and development in this area with an announcement pending on a new project in the coming months.

PCA are currently gathering data and consulting with our Industry Advisory Council about next steps. We thank the National Farmers Federation Horticulture Council, AUSVEG and other peak industry bodies for representing our industry. More than ever, we need to unite to ensure we get through this crisis together and out the other side.

Our members are encouraged to reach out if you are experiencing hardship or wish to share feedback and most importantly, please stay safe.

Do You Have A Spare 10 Seconds?

We're keen to understand the sustainability priorities in the industry. Click the button below to complete our quick 2-question, 10-second, anonymous poll. Thank you!

[TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

EVENTS

JUNE



National Agritech Week 2026 - Brisbane

[Learn More →](#)

APRIL

WEBINAR WEDNESDAY
MANAGING INVASIVE SERPENTINE LEAFMINER IN PROTECTED CROPPING

Wednesday the 26th of November at 4:00pm

Serpentine Leafminer (*Liriomyza huidobrensis*) is an invasive pest that threatens Australian horticultural industries, especially in protected cropping. This webinar features presentations from experts working in the Hort Innovation funded project, using the part of the Hort Frontiers program initiative developed by Hort Innovation, with co-investment from Macquarie University and the Australian Government, 'Behavioural and biological management of serpentine leafminers in protected cropping systems (BY22001)', showcasing progress in the development of sustainable control approaches:

- action and model trap development** — a novel trap combining colour, shape and scent for improved monitoring and control.
- novel attractants and repellents** — identification of volatiles to support lure-and-kill strategies.
- sex pheromone and vibrational mating disruption** — testing substrate-borne signals to disrupt mating.
- control** — evaluation of parasitoids such as *Neochrysocharis formosa* and their role in biological control of SLM.

The webinar will discuss findings, practical implications for growers, and next steps toward developing more resilient protected-cropping systems.

Dr. Peter Dreyer brings applied entomological expertise across multiple pest taxa, including key biosecurity threats such as Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Fall Armyworm, and *Liriomyza* spp. His research focuses on the biology of insect physiology and survivability, and informs the development of alternative pest management strategies. He also leads major Australian IPDM programs for avocado and macadamia, working closely with governments on pest prioritisation, preparedness, and risk mitigation.

Dr. Dreyer is a chemical scientist specializing in chemical ecology and sustainable pest management. His research focuses on the development of novel plant-derived attractants, repellents, and toxicants, integrating physiological, and behavioural approaches to advance pest control solutions in protected cropping systems.

PCA Webinar Wednesday: Achmea Insurance

Coming Soon

OCTOBER

Myplant & Garden Middle East
Save the date: October 21–22–23, 2026
Dubai Exhibition Centre (UAE)



Myplant & Garden Middle East has opened a new chapter for the global green industry. In Dubai, **business, innovation, sustainability, and international networking** came together to create a unique event for the worldwide floriculture and nursery market, as well as for the future of landscape and urban sustainability.

The success of the first edition — the only exhibition in the Middle East dedicated to landscape and ornamental greenery — was made possible thanks to the active participation, strong interest, and high-quality dialogue.

Myplant & Garden Middle East

[Learn More →](#)

MAY



Hydroponic Farmers Federation

CONFERENCE 2026

Protected Crops -

Doing More with less

4th - 6th May 2026

Pullman Hotel, Albert Park, Melbourne



The Victorian Hydroponic Farmers Federation (HFF) are holding their Bi-annual conference on the 4th to the 6th of May 2026.

The conference itself will be held at the Pullman Hotel, Albert Park, Melbourne - offering excellent conference and trade show facilities as well as first class accommodation. The program has been carefully designed to address the key issues facing hydroponic growers today including-

- Greenhouse and berry crop production insights
- Regional development and biosecurity preparedness
- HR and agri-talent solutions
- EU innovation and high-tech investment
- R&D grants and funding pathways
- Crop nutrition under stress conditions
- Pollination efficiency and crop protection
- Labour management (PALM scheme)
- Seed industry innovation panel
- Market insights and retail perspectives

The event itself commences at 4pm on the Monday with the opening of the trade show followed by the welcome function between 5pm and 7pm.

On the Tuesday the conference commences with the official opening followed by a packed speaker program including some industry leading identities, and the ever popular 'Grower Forum'. The conference dinner will be held on the Tuesday evening and will feature none other than Brian Nankervis from Rockwiz as the host.

Wednesday morning will commence with a sit down breakfast including a presentation from Michael Simonetta followed by more presentations until the conference concludes on Wednesday afternoon.

Throughout the event the trade show will be open providing a perfect opportunity to catch up with suppliers.

Registrations can be made at <https://pecbookings.eventsair.com/hff2026/register>

So do yourself a favour – lock in your tickets to this great event!

[Learn More →](#)

APRIL

Apex Greenhouses training event

17th April 2026

Introduction to Basic Priva Computerised
Climate & Irrigation Control

 **VIRGINIA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA**



Apex Greenhouses Training Day – Priva Computerised Greenhouse Management

Apex Greenhouses is hosting a one-day training event in April at its Demonstration Facility in Virginia, South Australia, featuring two introductory courses in Priva computerised greenhouse management systems.

Both courses are designed to provide practical, foundational knowledge for those working in — or entering — the commercial greenhouse industry, introducing participants to the Priva Office system used alongside Priva Compass, Compact, and Connex systems.

The first course, *Introduction to Basic Priva Computerised Climate Control*, covers the fundamentals of operating and navigating the Priva climate control system, including understanding system components, working with climate data, and maintaining basic strategy settings.

The second course, *Introduction to Basic Priva Computerised Irrigation Control*, focuses on irrigation system management, covering topics such as closed versus open systems, sterilisation equipment, and the operation of key Priva strategy and recipe settings pages.

Both sessions will be delivered by Tony Bundock, Project Manager with Protected Cropping Australia and Priva's only registered trainer in the Oceania region. Tony brings over 45 years of experience in the protected cropping industry, with an extensive background in both commercial horticulture and industry training across the UK and Australia.

Places are limited. For more information and to buy tickets, visit: <https://ahr.com.au/news-events-1/an-introduction-to-the-principles-of-plant-empowerment-djys3>

[Learn More →](#)

INFORMATION

NATIONAL


NEWS



Berries Australia - The Burst March 2026


[Learn More →](#)

NEWS



Tendrils
Your monthly round-up of plant biosecurity news

Plant Health AUSTRALIA



Message from the CEO

Welcome to the November edition of Tendrils. In this edition, I share highlights from a busy period of national engagement for PHA, including our participation in key biosecurity events, recognition of industry leadership at the Australian Biosecurity Awards, and important updates to the EPPRD and our Constitution. You'll also find a wrap-up of our AGM and 25th anniversary celebrations, along with the release of our 2024-25 Annual Report. It's been a productive month that reflects the strength of our partnerships and the collective effort behind Australia's plant biosecurity system.

[Read more](#)

Member meetings

PHA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 28 November 2025. Visit our [website](#) to view the AGM presentation, performance video, and the Chair's address.

Board meeting

PHA's Board of Directors convened at the PHA Offices in Canberra for Board Meeting 121 (BM121) on Thursday, 27 November 2025. [View the summary](#).

PHA - Tendrils Newsletter March 2026

[Learn More →](#)

NEWS



Biosecurity Response - Red Imported Fire Ants

[Learn More →](#)

NEWS



9 M

Additional webinar announced for Northern Basin Connectivity and Minimum Inflows



The department has listened to stakeholder feedback and scheduled a third webinar to provide updates for the Northern Basin Connectivity (NBC) and Minimum Inflow (MI) programs.

NEW - register here for Monday 30 March, 12.00pm - 1.30pm webinar

Register here for Wednesday 11 March, 12.00pm - 1.30pm webinar

Register here for Wednesday 11 March, 3.30pm - 5.00pm

Northern Basin Connectivity & Minimum Inflows Webinar

[Learn More →](#)

NEWS

Your monthly horticulture newsfeed

[Online](#)



Dear Matt Plunkett,

From climate-positive cultivation to the future of indoor farming, this issue explores how horticulture is reinventing itself. We spotlight Koppert C's ambition to capture more CO₂ than it emits, hear leading voices on the scaling challenges of CEA and vertical farming, and dive into the latest LED lighting research shaping tomato production. This month's news offers you practical insights, bold ideas, and a clear focus on what's important.



'We are capturing more CO₂ than we use'

Alongside cresses and edible flowers, Koppert Cress contributes to the future of horticulture through practical solutions. With full Scope 3 CO₂ calculations, geothermal energy saving 400,000 m³ of gas annually, and innovations developed via its spin-off Division Q, sustainability is built into the core of the business.

GreenTech March 2026 Newsletter

[Learn More →](#)

RESOURCES


Supporting the needs of industry with mapping tools. [Craig Shephard](#) is a land-use mapping expert and Senior Researcher within the [Applied Agricultural Remote Sensing Centre \(AARSC\)](#), playing an instrumental role alongside Prof. [Andrew Robson](#) in creating Australia's first map of protected cropping systems.

In the following clip, Craig outlines his experience in land-use mapping and the development of the Australian Tree Crop Map, noting that industry feedback showed it needed richer information. This led to a new project, building on the Protected Cropping Map, to enable tree crop industries to create more detailed, fit-for-purpose spatial maps.

To learn more and to watch our full video with the AARSC mapping team, click here: <https://lnkd.in/g/q7m7mnf>

[#treecrops](#) [#spatialmapping](#) [#remotesensing](#) [#mapping](#)

The Australian Protected Cropping Map Dashboard is a collaboration led by [Hort Innovation](#) and the [University of New England \(UNE\)](#)'s Applied Agricultural Remote Sensing Centre (AARSC), alongside [Protected Cropping Australia LTD](#), NSW Local Land Services, industry bodies and Future Food Systems.



Protected Cropping Mapping Project

[Learn More →](#)

MEMBER ADVERTISEMENTS

AIPH - FLORACULTURE INTERNATIONAL



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WWW.FLORACULTUREINTERNATIONAL.COM

MARCH 2026

FROM SURGE TO STRUCTURE

**Markets recalibrate after
the pandemic boom**

COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF PLANTS

**Why consumer engagement
now matters more**

BREEDING THE NEXT GENERATION

**Inside the genetics shaping
tomorrow**

BEYOND THE HOUSEPLANT BOOM

How the indoor plant market is evolving in 2026

CHOICE ENERGY - \$5,000 CASH BOOST



As energy experts, we understand that businesses' are feeling the crunch. Energy costs are climbing, but your overheads don't have to.

Choice Energy, PCA Energy Partner, is giving one small business a \$5,000 cash boost to help ease the pressure*.

Real support, no strings, & a chance to reinvest in your growth.

Entering is easy! To join the draw, simply:
Email your bill to sudha.kandarpa@choiceenergy.com.au and reference the promotion
OR
Scan the QR code, and upload the bill using the code **PCA\$5K**.



Once we review your current rates to find you a better deal, you're officially in the running for the \$5,000 prize.

**New customers only. ABN required. Excludes SA, NT, and WA.
Terms and conditions apply. Offer ends 31st March 2026*



[Unsubscribe](#)

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