

SOILLESS AUSTRALIA

Protected Cropping Australia Industry Trade Magazine



2019 conference preview

Medicinal
cannabis

Changing retail
landscape

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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EVENTS

What's new at Berlin Fruit Logistica 2019.....	8
Netherlands tour highlights.....	42

PROFILE

Saskia Blanch.....	14
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COSTA PCA CONFERENCE 2019 PREVIEW

Welcome.....	21
New frontiers in protected cropping.....	22
Medicinal cannabis session speaker profiles.....	23
Retail disrupters.....	30
Key speakers and farm tours.....	33
From our sponsors.....	36
Trade show exhibitors.....	41

PESTS & DISEASES

The spotted wing drosophila story.....	46
Pest and disease updates.....	48

REGULAR FEATURES

Contact PCA.....	3
Calendar.....	4
Welcome.....	5
From the PCA Chair.....	7
News & research.....	16
PCA membership subscription & information.....	28
What's new.....	50
Last word with Jan Davis.....	54

FRONT COVER

At July's Costa PCA Conference 2019 the spotlight is on medicinal cannabis. For an outline of developments in medicinal cannabis in Australia and our line-up of expert speakers for this special session see pages 22-24. Cover photo Adobe Stock Photos



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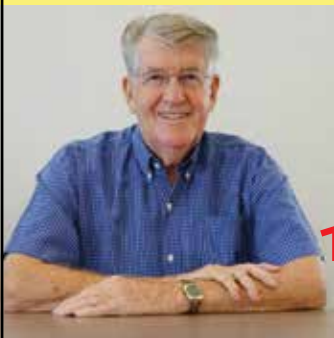
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SOILLESS CALENDAR

Dates for your diary for Australia and beyond.

JUNE

- 11–13 GreenTech 2019
Amsterdam, The Netherlands; greentech.nl
- 15–20 GreenSys 2019 International Symposium on Advanced Technologies and Management for Innovative Greenhouse
Angers, France; greensys2019.org
- 17–20 IX International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops
Matera, Italy; irrigationmatera2019.com
- 19–20 Indoor Agtech Innovation Summit: Connecting Technology & Business to Create Healthier Urban Food Systems
New York, US; indooragtechnyc.com
- 24–26 Hort Connections 2019
Melbourne, Victoria; hortconnections.com.au
- 24–28 III International Symposium on Growing Media, Composting and Substrate Analysis
Milan, Italy; susgro2019.com

JULY

- 7–10 Costa PCA Conference 2019, ‘Seduction by Technology – Knowledge Exchange for Greenhouse Growers’
Gold Coast, Queensland; pca2019.com;
bookings and enquiries
conference@aomevents.com or (08) 8125 2200
(see conference feature from page 20 this issue)
- 23–25 The InfoAg Conference
Union Station, St Louis, Missouri, US; infoag.com

AUGUST

- 14 Fresh Produce Safety Centre Australian & New Zealand 2019 Annual Conference
The Refectory, Level 4, Holme Building, Science Road, University of Sydney, New South Wales; registrations open June 17; fpssc-anz.com
- 23–24 2019 UIC Medicinal Cannabis Symposium
Tweed Heads, New South Wales;
unitedincompassion.com.au
Milan, Italy; susgro2019.com

SEPTEMBER

- 5–8 Asia Fruit Logistica
Hong Kong, China; asiafruitlogistica.com

OCTOBER

- 9–10 Canadian Greenhouse Conference
Niagra Falls, Ontario, Canada;
canadiangreenhouseconference.com
- 17–19 PMA Fresh Summit Convention and Expo
Anaheim, California, USA;
pma.com/events/freshsummit

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In this winter issue of *Soilless Australia* magazine we've put together a comprehensive preview of the upcoming Costa PCA Conference. A particular focus is our coverage of medicinal cannabis but we also take you to Europe to discover what's new there in protected cropping.

Medicinal cannabis is a new crop for Australia but one that has taken off beyond our shores. According to Emily Rigby, PCA board member, medicinal cannabis researcher and coordinator for this session, it has enormous potential for protected cropping in Australia and is attracting lots of attention from growers.

For any growers considering this emerging crop, the conference session on July 8 will cover all aspects of growing and also look at licensing and permits, which have been in place since 2016 and are managed by the Office of Drug Control (ODC).

Emily says that Australia is well positioned to lead the world in medicinal cannabis production however she warns, the ODC has been overwhelmed with applications from companies wanting to get into the industry. For details about this important conference session turn to page 22 where Emily outlines what's happening in Australia and also introduces her stellar line-up of expert speakers.

Industry conferences like this one on the Gold Coast offer so much. With speakers from across Australia and the world, this is our chance to hear the latest in information and technology and to get our questions answered either in Q&A sessions or during the breaks.

As well we've rounded up plenty of exhibitors for this year's trade show with more than 60 companies taking part. The good news is that the trade exhibits can be viewed from July 7 when registrations open. To help you plan there's a list of exhibitors on page 41.

Overseas news

This issue isn't just about what's coming up. PCA Board Chair, Nicky Mann, has been travelling across Europe to discover what's new in protected cropping. She reports on the exciting Berlin Fruit Logistica (see page 12) and also covers the highlights of her visit to The Netherlands on an AUSVEG grower tour (from page 42).

Some of the innovations she saw include pepper (another exciting new crop for protected cropping and pictured right), a 'bubble wrap' skin cover for greenhouses and the use of internal plastic screening that follows the pitch of the roof for better light penetration. She was also bowled over by Rob Baan the passionate owner and CEO of Koppers Cress, who is growing crops for flavour and health. His catch cry to consumers is to visit the 'Farmacy' not the 'Pharmacy' for good health.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone on the Gold Coast in July for the conference and reporting on it in future issues of this magazine.

Jennifer Stackhouse, Editor

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Pepper: a hot new crop under trial in Europe for the protected cropping industry. Photo Nicky Mann



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Chair's REPORT

BY NICKY MANN

A lovely big hello to our valued Protected Cropping Australia members! I hope this issue finds you all well and that the season and market has been kind to you.

I want to send our sincerest well wishes to Andy Swan of coir producer Galuku who is a very long term and active member of our organisation. Andy, who is based in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, has been very unwell these past two months and indeed is lucky to be alive after an infected foot turned really nasty.



Nicky Mann with a thriving cucumber crop.

We are like a big family in the protected cropping industry so I am sure I speak for everyone when I say it is never easy hearing bad news from our members but we ask everyone to be supportive of Andy and his family on his road to recovery. Remember to hug your family a little tighter and count your blessings everyday.

Yes, I know we all get stressed when the market and prices are depressed yet our costs are continuously rising or you get all the plastic torn off your greenhouse or your pump or cold room breaks down...again. We all know the frustrations of being a grower but we are a resilient bunch (we have to be to keep in this game) but we must keep focused on the good we do and the satisfaction we get from doing what we do.

We provide nutritious, healthy food for our families, our communities, our country and other countries in some cases. We have a small land footprint, we are exceptionally efficient with water and nutrient use, especially if we are running a closed system, and we provide employment opportunities for our communities and for backpackers or seasonal workers, which in some cases changes lives enormously.

Stand proud of what we do and the exceptional produce we provide and remember life is precious so enjoy the journey. Take a minute to watch the bees pollinate your berry flowers, look at your glasshouse vents or screens elegantly open, study a ravenous orius predator devouring thrips, listen to your employees sing along to the radio while busy at work, see people buying your flowers or eating your fresh, locally grown food and know our calling is very noble and vital to the world that we live in.

On that note, we look forward to seeing you all in July at our biggest and best conference yet on the Gold Coast July 7-10. Find out more about the Costa PCA 2019 Conference in this issue where we give previews from some of the speakers including information on medicinal cannabis and how changes in retailing may affect your business. For an overview of the program see pages 20-41.

Get registering now, book your accommodation and arrange your transport early so you don't miss out! Remember it will be warm on the sunny Gold Coast in winter so why not bring the whole family along for a much-needed break at the same time. Look forward to catching up soon and until then happy growing and keep safe!

Nicky Mann, PCA Chair

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Fruit Logistica Berlin 2019 showcases new ideas



Fruit Logistica is held each February in Germany's capital, Berlin. It brings together new concepts and technologies and inspires excitement and new ideas. Nicky Mann visited this year's event and shares the highlights from 2019.

With the focus on fresh fruit and vegetables and new technology, the 2019 trade show brought together 3200 exhibitors from 90 countries and attracted around 78,000 visitors from 135 countries. Exhibitors and visitors represented growers, importers and exporters, wholesalers and retailers along with specialists in packaging, handling, transport and logistics. The show also offered opportunities to taste produce and for the presentation of awards in innovation.

Fruit and vegies enter the snacking industry

Although people's lives are very busy and they are extremely time-poor they don't want to compromise on their health and nutrition. To meet this demand, fresh, easy-to-eat pieces of fruit and vegetables prepared in snack portions were trending at Fruit Logistica. These healthy snacks are perfect to eat on the run or literally toss into a salad or meal without cutting, peeling or mess. Snack tomatoes, snack cucumbers, mini capsicums, celery, radishes, mini carrots, beans and of course berries led the fresh snack charge.



Sliced, diced, shredded or mixed vegies: it's all about convenience.