

NOVEMBER 2020



Growing Undercover

PROTECTED CROPPING AUSTRALIA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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A message from our Chair

Nicky Mann • PCA Chair

Welcome to the November Undercover newsletter. The Protected Cropping Australia Directors hope you enjoyed reading the "sit-reps" they wrote in last month's Undercover newsletter and you found it interesting & informative. This month, we have contributions from the following Directors:- Emily Rigby, Marcus van Heijst and Matthew Plunkett – so we hope you enjoy what we have to share with you.

Well, it's hard to believe – it is nearly Christmas (just over a month away) and then we will be hurtling into 2021. I just wanted to take this opportunity to remind all our fabulous members and subscribers that our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is coming up on Tuesday 1st December, 2020 at 1:00pm (AEST).

We have also sent out a call for nominations for 5 vacancies on the Board. There are 5 of the current Board going up for re-election but for good governance & to maintain compliancy with our constitution, we must all relinquish our positions and earn them back by being voted onto the Board to serve for another term.

However, as Chair of PCA and I know I am supported by the rest of the Board, I really encourage those of you who are passionate about our industry and feel a strong urge to be a voice for PCA members – to submit your written nomination & photograph to Kerrie Harris-Spencer (Company Secretary) – kerrie.h.s@asnevents.net.au – before close of business on Thursday 19th November, 2020.

It is extremely healthy for any organisation that there is diversity on the Board and that it is competitive to get a seat at the table. The current Board are fabulous and focused on what needs to be done to take the organisation forward, so you will be joining a strong team. The voting will open for all current financial members on Saturday 21st November, 2020 and will close on Monday 30th November, 2020. Please get online and put your votes in – let your voice be heard of who YOU want representing YOU going forward. The new Board of Directors will be announced at the AGM on Tuesday 1st December, 2020. Good luck – we wish all our nominees the very best of luck. Being a Director of PCA is an extremely rewarding honour, especially to serve your fellow peers, growers, allied trade, researchers, etc but we definitely expect you to work hard for our members and our organisation – so it's not for the faint-hearted! (lol)

We have lots planned for 2021 – kicking off the farm tours and workshops again and then we go into trying to get a PCA conference underway in October/November 2021. Please look out for a conference survey coming into your inbox soon – we REALLY need YOUR input and feedback so we can make sound decisions that please you – our valued members!

Until next time, take care – keep safe.....wishing you a fabulous season, fair prices and skilled teams!

See you online for the AGM on Tuesday 1st December 2020.

Cheers,
Nicky Mann

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Situation Reports - Industry Update

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It has been an exciting year in the Australian medicinal cannabis industry. At Cannatrek we have had a successful and challenging year learning and fine-tuning a new crop and navigating an overly regulated industry. All of this has been achieved in the face of COVID-19, as the confidence in the north American market continues to fall. Regardless we are proudly preparing to have our Australian grown medicines hit the shelves before Christmas!

The current climate has certainly led to additional challenges for the Australian industry, and a number of necessary lessons have been learned, paving the way for a successful Australian industry. Despite these challenges, the Australian Medicinal Cannabis industry is still advancing, albeit slower than anticipated. We now have a total of 13 licenced and permitted medicinal cannabis (MC) cultivators in Australia, out of a total of 52 MC licence holders (note you need a MC permit to actually start growing and on average it takes 2 years between licence approval and receiving your permit). In addition, the Office of Drug Control (ODC) has issued 76 licences for manufacture or research purposes, with 47 of these receiving permits to begin related activities. As this is out of a total of 300-400 applications the ODC is still working through a backlog of licence applications.

It is by no means an easy task being a pioneer in a new industry – so it's lucky I am a passionate advocate, researcher and grower of medical cannabis – it's rewarding to now look back on how far we have come and what we have achieved. At Cannatrek we have worked closely with the regulator to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and been involved at all levels to remove the stigma surrounding the cannabis plant and improve patient access and education. The industry welcomes the regulatory reforms and additional resources allocated to the ODC however the industry needs more support on all fronts to achieve its full potential. With record numbers of Australian patients accessing medical cannabis and export opportunities opening up, Australia has the potential to be a global leader in high quality cannabis medicines. With a new peak industry body formed (AMCA – Australian Medicinal Cannabis Association <https://ausmca.org/>) and a passionate and dedicated industry, I look forward to seeing where the next 12 months takes us – I hope to see more Australian growers come online and high quality Australian-grown products available to patients at affordable prices.



Should you like to know more about the Australian medical cannabis industry or are interested in becoming a contract grower or sourcing legal cannabis genetics for your licenced facility, please feel free to get in contact at emily.rigby@cannatrek.com.

Marcus van Heijst • PCA Director and Melbourne based Account Manager for Priva Oceania

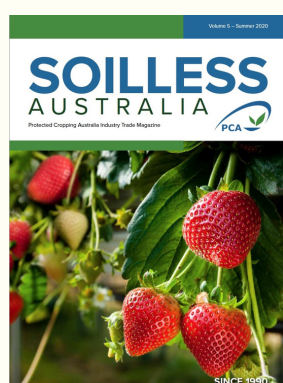
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The gradual warmer weather and higher light levels this month has seen a significant increase in crop activity across all states. This means many of our grower members have been getting a lot busier.

This has put more pressure on their resources, not in the least of which being labour. The easing of restrictions between some states may help a little, however for many states this is still to come into effect.

We've also noted an upturn in optimism across several markets. This has seen renewed interest in upgrading, expanding or even developing new sites. Most notable markets are nurseries, vegetable producers and medical cannabis facilities. This is exciting to see and is certainly a positive sign among the many reports of doom and gloom in the media.

At PCA we're planning to meet the demands of our members for more information and networking. Keep tuned for upcoming events in your area and online.



Soiless Australia Magazine

Keep an eye out for the upcoming Summer edition of Soiless Magazine.

The edition will be released on
1 December 2020.



What's happening IN NSW?

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Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank all our growers who provide healthy and nutritious food for our nation every day. And thanks to our Corporate and Allied Trade who have seen major disruption in their supply chains but still providing essential services to our growers under very difficult circumstances to ensure produce can get to markets.



It has been a tough year for many of our producers in the Sydney Basin after 3 years of drought and flooding followed by COVID-19. The pandemic, as you would expect impacted on plantings with volumes significantly down at the Sydney Markets.

In addition to COVID-19 restrictions and labour issues, production has been further impacted by the discovery of the Exotic Pest Serpentine Leafminer (*Liriomyza huidobrensis*) in the South West of the Sydney Basin in October.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and partners are currently undertaking surveillance to determine how widespread the incursion is.

Serpentine Leaf Miners are small flies that lay eggs on a variety of host plants. Larvae feed internally on plant tissue creating mining trails. Larvae then pupate in substrate and hatch out as flies which continues the reproductive cycle. Leaf mining damage is particularly harmful to leafy vegetables and cut flowers making them unsaleable.

If any of our members see anything unusual, please contact the Exotic Pest Plant Hotline on 1800 084 881.

On the mid North Coast of NSW, more specifically around Coffs Harbour has seen a rapid expansion of the protected cropping industry in recent years.

There is strong demand for training with many new vegetable growers thirsty for new knowledge. More specifically in the areas of water and nutrient management together with spray application, integrated pest management and ways to recycle and minimise waste.

Many vegetable and berry growers are looking at alternatives to cucumbers with interest in niche crops such as beans, ginger and so on. I am constantly amazed at the adaptability and resilience of our growers to try new crops with a range of different growing techniques and technologies.

The VegNET project, funded by Hort Innovation and delivered by Local Land Services in partnership with industry has delivered a range of field days and workshops extending levy funded vegetable research since 2016. The VegNET team are also working with the NSW DPI to minimise nutrient runoff into sensitive Marine Parks through education activities and a grants program that will hopefully be announced in the near future.

On a personal note, it is rewarding to see the high calibre of applicants applying for scholarships and internships as part of the Emerging Leaders in Protected Cropping project. Please encourage members of our industry who maybe interested to contact Zhonghua Chen on 0466 544 696 or z.chen@westernsydney.edu.au.

Further information on the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs can be found at:

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/future/study/courses/postgraduate/graduate-certificate-in-protected-cropping.html>

or

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/future/study/courses/postgraduate/graduate-diploma-in-protected-cropping.html>

Until next time, happy growing and stay safe.

Warm Regards,
Matthew Plunkett



The larvae of serpentine leafminers attack a wide range of plants including chrysanthemum (leaf shown) and vegetable crops.



The serpentine leafminer is a small black fly around 2mm long. Photo courtesy Central Science Laboratory, York (GB) - British Crown

Serpentine leafminer confirmed in New South Wales

Jennifer Stackhouse

Editor Soiless Australia

Residents and growers in the Greater Sydney Region, a major horticultural and vegetable growing region in New South Wales, are urged to look out for signs of damage and the presence of fly larvae following the detection of serpentine leafminer in an in-ground vegetable crop.

New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Manager Biosecurity Prevention & Preparedness, Dr Chris Anderson, said the pest had been found in the region. Since the initial findings monitoring for the pest has spread to other parts of the state.

“Serpentine leafminer, also known as pea leafminer (*Liriomyza huidobrensis*), poses a serious threat to melons, vegetables, onions, grains, cotton, ornamentals and production nurseries,” Dr Anderson said. “Leafminers look like tiny blackish flies, but the most obvious sign is the distinctive trails or squiggle patterns the larvae leave behind on plant leaves. “The larvae feed internally on plant tissue, particularly the leaf, creating the classic mining trails that are associated with infestation. “The larvae then pupate in soil, hatching out as flies, which lay eggs on surrounding host plants spreading infestation and increasing damage.

“Damaged plants commonly have reduced yield and in some cases are completely destroyed. “It’s important for growers to be alert and report signs of this unwanted pest species in vegetable crops and nursery production.”

PCA Board Director, Jonathan Eccles, says the arrival of this new pest is a wakeup call for protected cropping growers. Serpentine leafminer has a wide host range including cucumbers, tomatoes, capsicums, leafy greens vegetables, herb and many cut flowers including chrysanthemums.

As the larvae feed inside leaves, they are protected from most pesticides applied to crops Jonathan explains. He notes that NSW DPI and Greater Sydney Local Land Services are now undertaking extensive surveillance surveys across Greater Sydney vegetable and cut flower growers, and nurseries. This is to determine the extent of the incursion and help determine the feasibility of eradication.

Report any signs of leaf mining in vegetables to the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881** or send clear photographs with contact details to biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

What to look for

Diagnostic images and a detailed pest description are available on line at www.padil.gov.au/pests-and-diseases/pest/main/136237.

- Small (1-2.5mm) black fly with yellow head and yellow spots on thorax.
- Larvae mine under the surface of stem or leaf tissue.
- Mines are white with dampened black and dried brown areas.
- Mines are typically serpentine, of irregular shape and increase in width as the larvae mature.
- Spread occurs with infested plant material.

There’s more information on new and emerging pests and diseases in the Summer issue of *Soiless Australia* magazine, which is being mailed to members at the beginning of December.