

SOILLESS AUSTRALIA

Protected Cropping Australia Industry Trade Magazine



**Technology
drives second
generation
blueberry
growers**



**Mapping project
in final stage**

**GOOD VENTILATION
IS ALL IN THE BAND**

contents

FRONT COVER

Prabjot Sandhu, Kuldeep Chouhan, Dexter the dog and Karmjit Sandhu on their blueberry farm in northern New South Wales. See the full story on page 16.
Photo Phil Dudman.



ISSN 2209-3567

DISCLAIMER

Soiless Australia is published by Protected Cropping Australia Ltd
ABN 40 153 372 635

All editorial matter and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author. The PCA does not accept or assume liability or responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from the correctness of such information. The publishing of advertisements does not imply the endorsement of those products or services. All ads must comply with the Trade Practices Act and state regulations.

Any correspondence concerning the magazine should be sent direct to the editor: editor@protectedcropping.net.au

GROWER PROFILE

From bananas to berries, we go on farm at Bucca, New South Wales 16

EVENTS

PCA 2023 Conference preview – the next PCA conference is in July in Brisbane. We reveal keynote speakers and farm tour destinations 22

MAPPING PROJECT

Get involved with mapping protected cropping across Australia as the project reaches completion 28

PROFILE

Meet Jo Cave, who is now at the wheel for Greenlife Industry Australia 32

REGULAR FEATURES

Welcome	5
Board members	5
From the PCA Chair	6
Across my desk with Sam Turner	8
News	10
Events	14
Calendar	15
Nitty Gritty – Q&A with Tony Bundock	34
Jon Staunton on the life cycle of thrips	36
Pests & diseases updates	37
Membership subscriptions	38
Movers & shakers	39
Last word with Sam Turner	42
Advertisers' index	42



Sharing our world experience in greenhouse projects with Australian growers since 1995.

We design, manufacture and install fully equipped greenhouses for sustainable agriculture with optimal climate control and resource management, respecting people and their environment.

Our project manager :
Julien Fitte

✉ julien.fitte@richel.fr
☎ (+66) 811 728 630
🌐 www.richel-group.com

It's all in the family



Left to right: Prabjot Sandhu, Kuldeep Chouhan and Karmjit Sandhu.

From bananas to blueberries, Phil Dudman visits a second-generation farming family creating opportunities with new crops and up-to-the-minute technology.

The landscape around Coffs Harbour, in northern New South Wales, has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Hills once covered with bananas are massed with the latest boom crop, blueberries (move over Big Banana... here comes Big Blueberry!).

Having grown up on banana farms, Karmjit Sandhu (32), younger brother Prabjot (26) and older cousin Kuldeep Chouhan (40) have been a part of that change.

Family ties

"Mum and dad farmed bananas in Coffs from 1988 and in 2002 started transitioning to growing cucumbers," says Karmjit.

In 2014, the lads bought their own 28-hectare (70-acre) farm in Bucca, 17km northwest of Coffs, and established Sandhu and Chouhan Produce. They set up 20 hot houses for growing substrate cucumbers (and later raspberries), then started planting blueberries in the ground. With a lot of hard work (and occasional advice from their parents), they have quickly built up a successful enterprise.

To keep things family friendly, each has their own department. Karmjit drives the growing, Kuldeep does the finances and Prabjot looks after purchasing.

"It works well. There are so many moving parts in a farm, none of us can be expected to oversee everything," Karmjit says.

"Our parents get involved with packing and managing harvesting teams, and of course, making sure we are working hard, not kicking back at the café," he adds.

