

AROUND THE NELSON REGION...

HARVEST DATE

Over the past few weeks we have had some interesting discussions around maturity progression and harvest dates.

Especially comparing harvest dates rather than maturity parameters can be problematic. The reason for this is that in most cases the first pick will happen once a sufficient amount of fruit have a foreground colour development that would justify a pick. Therefore, once minimum SPI is achieved, colour becomes the key driver in harvest management. We are thus more comparing colour development rather than starch conversion.

When we discuss harvest dates and maturity in each season, I think we should use a SPI value rather than a pick date.

The historic Royal Gala chart below shows that for the years displayed minimum SPI (2.6) was almost always achieved on 26th February – although first pick dates in these years might have differed.

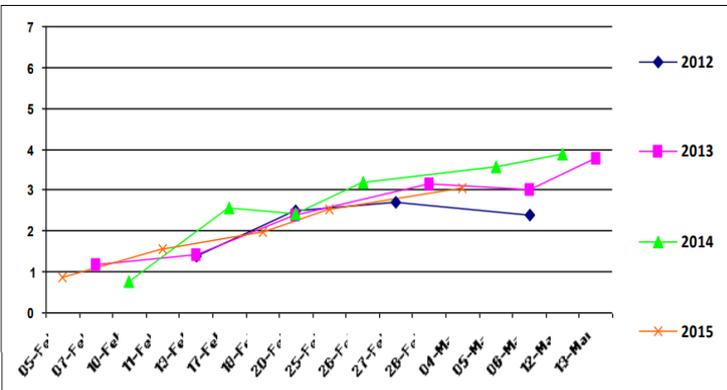


Figure 1: Historic Royal Gala chart.

Uif

BUMBLEBEES IN ABUNDANCE

I had an interesting call from a long-time client of mine today who wanted me to call out to his property and look at this innocuous shrub he had on the side of his orchard.

Upon closer inspection I estimated this small shrub had an estimated thousand or more bumblebees working the flowers.



We both have never seen so many bumblebees in once place and it just goes to show we can all do more to attract better habitat for pollinators if we pay attention.



Figure 2 & 3: Shrub covered in bumblebees (right, photos don't do it justice).

Steve

KIWIFRUIT GIRDLING

The time for the last summer (February) girdle is nearing for Gold3 and Hayward growers now.

I usually target around the 20th of this month to commence the last girdle (include females and males). However, check previous girdles from last month have healed sufficiently as many blocks I've seen need to delay this February girdle a little longer so that these girdles can better heal.

Dry weather hasn't helped the healing. This girdle is



in my opinion the most important and needs to be done correctly to get the full benefit. I recommend checking every trunk is girdled correctly as this is the biggest cause of variable dry matter results to many orchards in past seasons. Take your time and check every trunk afterwards.

Figure 4. Well healed trunk girdle.

Steve

Disclaimer: Agfirst Consultants Nelson Ltd (Agfirst) have exercised reasonable skill, care and diligence in obtaining and preparing the information contained in this newsletter, however Agfirst do not make any representations about or guarantee the accuracy of the information, or the performance of any of the products mentioned therein. Agfirst will not accept liability for any losses arising in any way from the use of the information or the products referred to in this newsletter. Articles written in a region do not necessarily apply to other regions.

AROUND THE HAWKE'S BAY REGION...

SUNBURN LEVELS LOWER THAN USUAL

In spite of a number of days well into the 30's, sunburn levels on Hawke's Bay apples are low so far this season. Several of these hot days were windy so under these conditions, fruit surface temperatures remain close to ambient air temperatures.

For well acclimatised apples, apple skin temperatures need to get into the high 30's or low 40's for significant sunburn to occur.

Under calm clear conditions, exposed skin temperatures can be up to 7°C above air temperature so we can experience sunburn problems once air temperatures exceed 30°C. It did not happen this season which indicates direct sunlight did not have its normal radiant energy. I suspect our low sunburn incidence has been due to the impact the Australian smoke has had on the intensity of sunlight reaching us this year.

John

HAWKE'S BAY FRUIT SIZE LARGE THIS YEAR

Indications are that average fruit size is larger than usual this year. For instance, Scifresh fruit size appears to be running 3mm larger than the same time last year. Fuji and Scired are definitely much larger than previous seasons.

Although flowering was late, the very good temperatures and sunlight we experienced through late October and November led to excellent conditions for fruit growth over the post flowering cell division period. These conditions were probably responsible for our larger fruit size.

Incidentally, pears were particularly responsive to these higher late spring temperatures. Early pears have been larger than normal. The spring conditions also favoured summer fruit crops which have had good size and superb flavour. Plums, however, have been small due to excessive crop levels.

John

VIGOUR MANAGEMENT

There has been a lot of comment about the dry conditions in Hawkes Bay and the need to keep up the irrigation water, this is correct but only to a point.

I have been walking a number of blocks recently doing quality assessments, in many blocks there has been significant use of Regalis™ to help keep vigour under control and in some blocks this vigour suppression is starting to let go.

In a block where excess vigour is an issue one of the easiest management options is to cut back the water until the tree terminates the new growth.



Figure 5: Tree displaying vigour.

Jonathan