



W I L D F L O W E R S
A U S T R A L I A

September 2011 newsletter¹

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Australian Government
Rural Industries Research and
Development Corporation

Horsham conference provided great info

Attendees at the conference on August 12 updated their knowledge on a range of industry topics and enjoyed the informal networking with fellow industry members.

Adrian Parsons from WAFEX gave a comprehensive overview of the waxflower industry. He profiled the main producers of waxflower around the world and presented an extensive array of fascinating industry statistics and trends for our key markets. In Europe 'new varieties are more desirable, and European buyers will pay the price if it's special, unique and at the right price', Adrian said. However, demand in the Japanese market has changed in the last 10 years, swinging back to traditional flowers.

The new challenge is 'to get Japanese florists interested in Australian waxflowers, so we need to emphasise the new varieties and the fact that better postharvest care means less risk for them'.

Massive growth in flowers being sold over the internet in the US has boosted demand for product to go into bouquets, but unfortunately 'bouquet makers are highly price driven, and Australian wax probably costs twice as much as they are prepared to pay'.

Adrian also introduced Helix Australia, a sister company to WAFEX, which has set up access and supply agreements with leading Australian waxflower breeders and growers. Helix has developed a portfolio of new varieties to sell to markets around the world. Adrian showcased 9 wonderful new selections, some bred by Brian Jack and others by the WA Department of Agriculture.

Throughout his talk, Adrian emphasised the opportunities for growers in the Grampians region, where there are extensive waxflower plantations. These included comments on market opportunities for waxflower in overseas markets. This is one of the important benefits of attending a regional conference, where information specific to the local industry is presented.

Those attending made the most of the question and answer session, asking Adrian about a range of issues, including the opportunities for selling waxflower in the Australian market. Answering this question, Adrian felt that challenge locally is to get a premium price for the new varieties, which are superior and worth more. However, although supermarket bunches use a lot of wax, 'the big numbers are in export'.

Local speaker **Colin Kemp** from the Wimmera Development Association (WDA) updated the conference on several new resource opportunities in the region, which is seeing a transition from broad acre agriculture to other enterprises. Colin profiled the 'water for the future' program which is providing 800 km of pipeline to bring 'growth water' (a reliable water supply) to the region. The region is also developing alternative energy sources, generated by wind and solar installations.

The WDA has also looked into biomass as a resource in the area. In Europe, conversion of biomass to energy forms a major part of the energy supply. In the Wimmera, there is much biomass available, including straw residue and waste from wildflower farms.

David Michael from Wondu Business & Technology Services presented a detailed analysis of his research into the carbon performance of waxflower and provided delegates with a detailed paper on the topic (and a copy can be emailed to you on request – please contact management@wildflowersaustralia.com.au)

He briefed the audience on the carbon policy setting (in Australia and elsewhere), what's in a lifecycle assessment and why it should be done, data requirements and methodology, environmental performance of the waxflower, likely future policy

scenarios and the impact on wildflowers and risk management of enterprises and lastly, the best carbon bet wildflower crops.

Waxflower sequesters an estimated 11 tonnes of CO₂ per Ha per year, with possibly a quarter of the total carbon stored in the root systems (though more work is needed to verify these figures). 'If you are building soil carbon, you are also building soil fertility and structure, so there are definite benefits to farmers', he said. He felt that the best future opportunities may lie in setting up a new wildflower farm in such a way as to minimise its carbon footprint (looking at fertiliser inputs, cultivation activities, tractor use, whether or not the product is air freighted or sea freighted, etc). This is because making a change to the land use brings the maximum potential carbon credits. A flower product marketed with a carbon footprint label may well be more attractive to the consumer of tomorrow.

The Horsham conference gave David the opportunity to explore different aspects of this topic more fully, compared to the Perth regional conference held in May.

The other topics discussed at the conference mirrored those presented at the Perth regional conference. **Bettina Gollnow** outlined the aims of the new RIRDC project aimed at enhancing

communications in the wildflower industry, and described how the wildflower quality specifications and postharvest manual can be used by growers. She also reviewed current and future R&D needs.

In addition, she presented an update on Myrtle rust, outlining the results of recently completed host testing experiments and giving an overview of conditions believed to favour spread of this disease. She advised local growers to 'be more careful of quarantine and hygiene on your farm, and monitor crops regularly, especially when conditions favourable to Myrtle rust are experienced.' 'Be ready, know what the disease symptoms look like and test the permitted fungicides to ensure there are no adverse effects on your plants'.

Recent seasonal conditions (more rainfall) in the Grampians have increased humidity and leaf wetness, two of the conditions needed for Myrtle rust infection. Bettina encouraged growers to consider developing a project to learn more about Myrtle rust and wildflowers, and tap into matching funding available from RIRDC.

Participants also enjoyed the final discussions on current industry topics, where the focus turned to export licensing and the challenges of 'taming the piles of paperwork'.



Farm visit at Stollers



Waxflower at Big Spring Mount

Many of the attendees met for dinner at a local Chinese restaurant. The following day, there was a farm tour to Julian and Jan Stoller's 'home plantation' and to Big Spring Mount, operated by Colin and Lorena Flack. This gave a better appreciation of the wide range of species grown successfully in the Grampians, and the challenges of dryland growing (so that sometimes 2 years of growth may be needed to attain a marketable stem length). At Big Spring Mount we also gained a good understanding of the importance of a well

designed packing shed to allow large volumes of product to be handled efficiently.

New WFA board elected at AGM

Congratulations on the following WFA members who were elected to the board for 2011-2012. The AGM was held at the Redlands Research Facility of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation in Cleveland (Brisbane) on August 26.

Elected were: Paul Dalley (NSW), Colin Flack (Victoria), Mark Irwin (Qld), Robyn McConchie (NSW), Ben McInnes (NSW), Lodi Pameijer (Qld, representing Corporate level 3 member Flower Association of Qld Inc) and Daniel Stean (WA, representing WAFEX).

Audrey Gerber and Craig Musson did not seek re election and are thanked most sincerely to their contributions to the WFA board during their terms of office. Audrey has been a member of the WFA Board since 2007, while Craig joined more recently.

Profiles of the newly elected board members are as follows:

Lodi Pameijer:

Lodi started growing native flowers in Maleny QLD in 1998 after working in the Information Technology industry for just

under 20 years. Since then we have made many mistakes and also learnt a lots of lessons. We grow NSW Christmas Bush, Kangaroo Paw and have started to diversify our business with new plantings to be able to supply our customers for more of the year. We started when Waratah blooms were about \$3.50 each, Kangaroo Paw was over \$1.00 a stem and Christmas Bush was very sought after in Japan. Since then, all this has changed and we have had to change our business.

I think the future belongs to those who can build resilience into their business plans and who are prepared to work together to connect to our collective customers and consumers.

I am the President of the Flower Association of Queensland Inc, (FAQI) and together with the current and past Executive Committee members we are delivering valuable project outcomes to the industry in QLD and well as to flowers industry members in Australia.

I joined the WFA board because I am keen to work with the other Board members to expand the quality, value, variety and range of the wonderful Australian wildflower products. I believe that as group of people who grow wildflowers, we have a great variety of seasonal products that can make any florist's work even more sensational. I

believe that this applies both within Australia and internationally. I support strategies that will increase consumer demand for flowers.

As President of FAQI I am starting a journey together with Flowers Victoria and the Flowers Growers Group of NSW to address issues of national significance, including increasing the demand for flowers no matter what their origin.

I look forward to the challenges ahead and I seek the support from all flower and foliage based businesses to join WFA and the State flower association in your state to support the demand creation activities that are and will be carried out. This will benefit your business and also the many businesses that supply products and services to the flower and foliage industry. Most importantly it will provide job opportunities to a diverse range of people in rural, regional and urban Australia.

Daniel Stean

I started working at WAFEX in April 2000 as a Receivals Manager and quickly found myself within the sales department. In 2002 I was promoted to Sales Manager, looking after all domestic purchasing and sales of native flora. During this time as Sales Manager, I spent a lot of time dealing with both growers and customers, which has

given me a solid education about the flower industry within Australia.

In 2009 I was promoted to General Manager, with responsibility for 35 employees, and overseeing the Finance, Marketing and Operational sectors of the business. Whilst working at WAFEX I have continued my personal development, and have completed the following courses:

- Understanding the ISO system - 2002
- Internal Auditing - 2002
- Managing Occupational Health and Safety - CCI 2009
- Alumni Entrepreneurial Growth Program - Curtin University 2007-2008
- Alumni Entrepreneurial Masters Class - Curtin University 2010 - 2011
- Certificate in Small Business Growth Management - Curtin University 2011

I'm currently undertaking my MBA at Curtin University. I am also a Member of the Australian Institute of Management (2009) and a Member of TEC - The Executive Connection (2010).

The reason I have joined the WFA board is two fold:

1. To use my business acumen and knowledge of the industry to help WFA achieve its strategic goals

2. To learn and develop from my fellow colleagues within the industry

The AGM was preceded by a special presentation, "Good quality mulch saves water and reduces labour in Christmas Bush production", on the HAL Wildflower Mulch Project by Dr Rachel Poulter, Industry Development Officer (Water), Flower Association of Queensland Inc. More details of this project will be included in next month's newsletter.



WFA members with Rachel (third from left) looking at the mulch trial.

Board business

Following the AGM, the WFA board held a business meeting. The following matters were discussed:

1. Election of office bearers for 2011-21:
President: Paul Dalley (NSW)
Vice President: Ben McInnes (NSW)

Secretary: Robyn McConchie (NSW)
Treasurer: Mark Irwin (Qld)
Board members: Colin Flack (Victoria), Lodi Pameijer (Qld, representing the Flower Association of Qld Inc) and Daniel Stean (WA, representing WAFEX).

2. Potential flower promotion activities, including floristry workshops and overseas study tours
3. Future projects
4. New alliance of flower industry associations
5. Regional conferences
6. Membership, membership categories, costs and benefits
7. Budget 2011-12
8. Website improvements
9. Native product licensing and tagging requirements

Planning the future

Two documents to guide WFA into the future have just been added to the website. The updated **WFA strategic plan** is now available for viewing at

<http://www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au/joi>

[n-wfa/strategic-plan](#). It lists the following 5 objectives:

1. To strengthen WFA as the national industry Body
2. To develop and support marketing and promotion initiatives
3. To support the development and marketing of improved varieties
4. To promote farm productivity and profitability
5. To expand production of wildflowers to create a more significant export industry

Look at the complete plan online to see the many goals identified under each of the objectives.

The many and varied benefits of being a **member of WFA**, important especially to support objective 1, can also be found on the website at

<http://www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au/membership/register/membership-benefits>

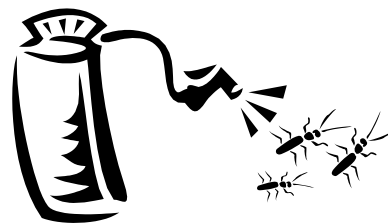
Take a look - you might be surprised at the long list and become aware of opportunities you haven't yet embraced.

Proposed suspension of dimethoate

The APVMA has advised WFA that it is conducting a comprehensive review of dimethoate. On completing the latest Residues and Dietary Risk Assessment (released 22 August 2011), the APVMA

found that its use on many crops exceeds the health standard established in January this year. The assessment concluded that some of the estimated exposures for consumers are above the health standard, reducing, but not breaching the margins of safety that are normally in place to protect consumers from short-term dietary risks.

As a result, the APVMA proposes to suspend dimethoate products as an interim regulatory action while it completes further assessments on the chemical. This would effectively prohibit the use of dimethoate on certain edible horticultural crops.



However, there is currently no proposal to suspend uses that are not on food crops. This is good news for wildflower growers because dimethoate labels do have some ornamental crop and wildflower use patterns. On ornamental hosts, these include uses to manage a wide range of insect pests (including aphids, thrips, spider mites, leaf hoppers, leaf miners, mealy bugs, scarab and leaf beetles, moth caterpillars, gall insects and wingless grasshoppers). There's even a (very rare)

label inclusion specifically for wildflowers and proteas to manage aphids, thrips, leaf hoppers and Rutherglen bug (but permitted in WA only).

Nevertheless, the APVMA is interested in feedback from the wildflower industry on the most important uses of dimethoate. What are the key hosts and target pests? What are the typical use patterns (how often is dimethoate used in a season and at what rate)? What personal protective equipment or work clothing is worn and what are the work rates (the amount of dimethoate used per person per day)?

If you currently do use dimethoate on your wildflower crops, please get in touch with Bettina at management@wildflowersaustralia.com.au so this information can be compiled and submitted.

Introducing Corporate Level 3 members

Members of WFA include several industry associations who are Level 3 Corporate Members. These associations are mostly regional in focus and conduct a range of activities for their members. These events are a great opportunity for growers and allied industry members to meet, learn new things, solve problems and establish contacts. Attending a meeting can provide new and potential growers with more

information about the commercial wildflower industry.

Association members benefit from their links to WFA in several ways, including access to the latest news and information, public liability insurance cover for the activities they run for their members, and a rebate from WFA when one of their members joins WFA as a full member.

Here we introduce WIN. You can also find this information in a new section on our website, and we plan to add details of other association members soon. Go to <http://www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au/join-wfa/association-members>



Mission Statement: To grow and promote the Wildflower Industry in NSW, which is based on Australian native flowers and foliage, as well as selections from South African Proteaceae.

Background:

The Wildflower Industry Network NSW Inc. has evolved from the Waratah Industry Network which commenced in 1994. As the name implied, the focus of the Waratah Industry Network was waratahs. Over the

years the Waratah Industry Network undertook a number of projects to enhance grower understanding of waratahs, to promote the waratah as a cut flower and to liaise with NPWS over grower concerns relating to tagging and grower registration.

Over this last decade many changes have occurred in the wildflower industry in NSW. With the demise of the former State organisation, it seemed appropriate that the Waratah Industry Network should evolve to represent the interests of all NSW wildflower growers. With the support of Native Flower Growers Association (Mid-North Coast), the Wildflower Industry Network NSW Inc. came into being in June 2011.

Currently (2011- 2014), the Wildflower Industry Network NSW Inc. in conjunction with RIRDC and the University of Sydney, and with the support of WFA, is undertaking a Waratah Flowering Project. The aim of the project is to identify flowering trigger/s with a view to growers eventually being able to manipulate waratah flowering.

Objectives of the Association: To support the interests of commercial growers and other parties with a commercial interest in wildflowers throughout NSW by:

- Exchange of commercial information
- Exchange of technical information

- Initiation of technical research
- Collective action on industry issues.

Contact Person:

Secretary: Frank Allatt

Phone: 02 4567 2093

Email: fallatt@bigpond.net.au



Farm visit – inspecting Grevillea



Flowering project underway – data collection

Waratah surveys – last chance to reply

Waratah growers were contacted in July to take part in a short grower’s survey coordinated through the University of Sydney. This aimed to collect information to help understand the flowering patterns in Waratahs. Bronwyn Woodward, the student who is coordinating the survey, has

been in touch to thank everyone who has returned their survey or let her know that they are no longer growing.

However, it is getting close to crunch time now and she does not have very much data. If you have forgotten to fill out and return your survey, or would like help to complete it, or would like another copy, please contact Bronwyn on 0424 398 449.

For more on waratahs, go to this link from ABC Science Online

[Waratahs warm to climate change](#)

This report explains how Australia's native flora maybe more adaptable than previously thought. A study of the waratah by researchers at the [Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney](#) shows it has survived and adapted during previous long-term climatic fluctuations. Studies of the waratah's leaf shape and form and its DNA show a marked difference between populations of the plant in the upper mountains west of Sydney and those along the coast.

Flower term of the month

What's the difference between grow through and bypass growth?



Bypass growth is when a side shoot below the flower or flower head grows out and past the flower/flower head, e.g. in *Banksia* and *Protea* (e.g. above).

(Photo reproduced courtesy of NSW Primary Industries).



Grow-through is when shoots at the stem tip grow through the flowers, e.g. in *Ceratopetalum* (see above) and *Chamelaucium*.

(Photo reproduced courtesy of NSW Primary Industries).

Both are unsightly and undesirable, and such growth often wilts after harvest.

Reprinted with acknowledgement from *Postharvest Handling of Australian Flowers from Australian Native Plants and Related Species. A Practical Manual* Second edition by John Faragher, Bettina Gollnow and Daryl Joyce November 2010

RIRDC Publication No. 10/027 RIRDC Project No. PRJ-000331

New research booklet available from RIRDC

A free booklet summarising Research in Progress - Wildflowers and Native Plants 2010-11 has just been published by RIRDC. It lists recently completed projects and gives details of current research in progress. You can download a pdf or order your copy via the website at

<https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/11-113>

Our website – what's it worth?

www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au, the WFA website, comes up at or near the top of the list in Google and other search engines when you type in 'wildflowers'. Consider the value of this for your industry and your business if you are listed there. There are a number of categories in which you can list your business details, accessible by other WFA members (found in the **member login** section of the website):

Supply chain members: plant breeder, nursery, grower, wholesaler, exporter, importer.

Service providers: farm management, farm nutrition, industry association (not for profit), industry support, packaging products.

Florist members can also list their business details.

WFA website – new additions

Under wildflower FAQs: 'I'm interested in exporting flowers from Australia – what do I need to know?'

Don't be a pest promoter!

One of the main ways that unwanted pests spread around Australia is with people. Travellers carrying fruit, cut flowers, and vegetables between states pose a significant risk of carrying unwanted pests and diseases that can seriously damage agricultural production. If you are travelling interstate, it is your responsibility to know what you can and can't carry. And share this information with friends and family. Visit the [Quarantine Domestic Website](#) for more information or call 1800 084 881.

(Reprinted from NSW Plant Biosecurity News 11 August 2011)

Events and diary dates

October 13-15: IFEX 2011 Tokyo, Japan.

The latest IFEX brochure is posted on the website at

www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au/what-s-new-

December 15-18: Flower Show Istanbul, Turkey: Plants, Landscape and Sub-industries Specialization Fair.

Details at

<http://www.flowershow.com.tr/en/about-fair>

March 28 –April 3, 2012: Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show.

The organisers advise exhibitors to register early for next year's event, which is ranked as one of the top 5 flower shows in the world. Over 110,000 visitors attend.

Download an application form at

www.melbflowershow.com.au

April 22-26, 2012: International Protea Association (IPA) Conference -16th IPA Conference and XIth International Protea Working Group Symposium. Santa Cruz, Chile. View more details at <http://www.ipa-protea.org/events/chile-invitation>

Changing your contact details? Please let us know.

If you are changing your email, contact phone number or moving to a new address, please let Sylvia Gleeson at the WFA Secretariat know (contact details below).

How to contact WFA:

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Mobile: +61 4 3426 5817/0434 265 817 please note this is a new number.

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If you wish to join WFA to receive the newsletter, weekly update emails and other member's only benefits, please go to the website - www.wildflowersaustralia.com.au - and complete a membership application.

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