

Farm Gate Trail Round Up – 11th December, 2004

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IN SEASON ON THE TRAIL

Good Morning Simon, one of my all time favourites available this week – local **raspberries**, as well as all the stone fruit and Valencia oranges. Also lots of strawberries, **rockmelon**, lettuces, (green & red oak, cos, iceberg), tomatoes and corn.

We have another example of how the Hawkesbury played an important role in the promotion of agriculture in the Sydney Basin.

This week I spoke with David Bleakley, The Crepe Myrtle Man, Post Office Road, Glenorie

A bit of background....

He was a lad from the North Shore when he gained entry into Hawkesbury Agricultural College as a boarder in 1943.

After graduating from Hawkesbury Agriculture College in 1946- David spent a few years jackarooing in and around the Moree area. On returning to Sydney he worked within the chemical and photographic industries for many years whilst always maintaining his passion for growing a very productive family garden.

How did he get into growing Crepe Myrtles?

Well, David headed off to raise Murray Greys over the next decade in the Armidale and Gunnedah areas, but when the beef prices dropped dramatically in the late 1980's, he headed back to Sydney and purchased 5 acres at Glenorie. After 2 years of extensive maintenance and clearing, the property was ready to plant and the search was on for that “ something different and unique ”. It was after reading an article in a horticulture magazine that David's passion for the Crepe Myrtle began.

How many trees does he have on the property....

He originally purchased 20 trees but today he has a staggering 3000 trees of all sizes from 2 in. to fully grown specimens which, as they are planted in bags, he just digs out your choice. He has propagated many varieties and the colour range is sensational from whites through the deep lavenders and hot pinks.

These are enjoying a bit of a revival today with gardeners....

Yes they certainly are, because they are hardy, as well as being weather and disease resistant and they require little maintenance and limited pruning.

Events

Today - Hawkesbury Harvest Farmers and Gourmet Food Market – last for this year starts 8.00 am – there lots of goodies from our farmgaters such as Kurrajong Australian Native Foods, Darling Mills Farm, Nati Bros Roses, Pepes Duck, Town and Country Gardens, Willowbrae Cheeses, Mandalong Lamb and the Coffee Warehouse

Update on fruit and veges in season

We have juicy – apricots, yellow and white flesh nectarines & the yellow and white peaches and Valencia oranges, plums and of course those delicious strawberries, raspberries, and rockmelons.

In the way of veges – There's corn, potatoes, squash, zucchini, capsicums, bok choy, lettuce, spring onions, cauliflowers, silverbeet, cabbages, rhubarb, fresh olives, olive oil, cucumbers, beetroot, mushrooms and tomatoes.

For the latest update of fruit and veges in season from our farms and to download any of the seasonal itineraries as well as the whole map, go to the website

www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au

If your listeners haven't been able to download the map from the website they can call into the Visitor Centre at Clarendon (opposite the RAAF Base) and pick up a copy.

All the information on the Farm Gate Trail will be on the website or from Hawkesbury Valley Tourism Office at Clarendon on **4588 5895**, where along with the Farm Gate map, your listeners can pick up the notes of today's roundup. Or **visit our website go to**

www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au

Best Days to Drive the Trail

Friday or Saturday are the recommended days for self-drive tours of the Farm Gate Trail or, if you prefer not to drive, take a guided tour, all the details are on the back of the map.

Vegetables on the Trail

Corn, tomatoes, squash, lettuce, beetroot and rhubarb, sweet potato, leek, green capsicums, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, cabbage (savoy & plain), silverbeet, bok choy, Lebanese & gherkin cucumbers; parsnips, butternut, jap & Qld blue pumpkins, both red and white radishes, potatoes, flat and swiss brown mushrooms

Fruit on the Trail

Valencia Oranges, Nectarines, Peaches, Plums – Penrith Valley Oranges, Enniskillen Orchard and Orange Spot, Basha's Orchard

Apricots – Enniskillen and Orange Spot

Pajeros Strawberries – fresh and frozen – Strawberry Farm, Vineyard, Galston Strawberries, Enniskillen Orchard

Raspberries – Enniskillen Orchard, Orange Spot

Other Produce – Food & Wine

Wine, port including white port, aleatico; Verjus; Goat cheese & yoghurt; baked crisp breads including lavosh, honey, apple juice, free range eggs, ice cream with real fruit, fruit rollups with fruit fresh from the orchard. Jams, pickles and sauces and the range from the native bush tucker foods. Peking ducks, also sausages, breast fillet, Maryland & whole ducks; abattoir and butcher – large range of beef, pork and lamb, goat, venison and ostrich. Spring Water and Silver Perch.

Other Produce – Fibre & Flora

Koi and Goldfish, silver perch, field roses, Crepe Myrtles, pelargoniums and geraniums, alpacas & alpaca products such as jumpers, scarves etc. Open gardens and galleries with pottery, paintings and bowls and platters.