FARM GATE ROUNDUP Saturday 15 April 2006

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What's happening on the Farm gate trail this weekend?

What in season in the Hawkesbury:

1. Fruit – apples of course, kiwi fruit, nashi, pears, persimmons. There should be raspberries as well but the extra hot weather we had in February caused the leaves to fall off many of the vines.
2. Veges – Beans, broccoli, cabbage, Lebanese cucumbers, leeks, lettuce, parsley, radish, rhubarb, silverbeet, spinach, white turnip

Persimmons – two types:

- Old fashioned astringent type - due to tannic acid, and must ripen fully – can be eaten when it becomes jelly-like - very sweet
- Newer non-astringent – eat them like an apple.

Lebanese cucumbers – some details

- Example of how we benefit from new cultural groups coming to Australia
- Introduced by Lebanese who went into market gardening when they came to Australia – agriculture is a valuable mechanism to enable new immigrants to assimilate into Australian society. The green house LC industry in the Sydney Region is worth more than $30 million a year farm gate value

News from "Chestnut and Walnut Country" - Mt Irvine:

Chestnuts - Bev Carruthers from Nutwood Farm advise that her chestnuts have finished as have Bill and Ruth Scrivner's at Kookootonga .
Kookatoonga: a Maori name - New Zealand family settled up there and there and as result there are a number of farms with NZ names.

Walnuts – Bev advises that her walnuts will be about another week maybe two. Ruth was saying that her walnuts are mature and people have picked from the tree to about 9 metres. However they are waiting for rain for those at a higher level to fall. Kookatonga will be open over Easter however if there is no rain there will be no walnuts.

HH 6 year anniversary this month:

At the beginning of April 2000 a meeting of 12 people representing economic, social and environmental interests in the Hawkesbury was convened by Hawkesbury Cuisine, a sub-committee of the Hawkesbury Food Program to consider ways to advance the role of sustainable agriculture in the Hawkesbury. Its genesis lies in the intersection of three major forces:

Global - Agenda 21 Healthy Cities Program which came out of the International Development and Environment Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992
Regional - Strategic Plan for Sustainable Agriculture – Sydney region – released in 1998
Local - A number of surveys done in the 1990s where it was very clear that one of the major reasons that people wanted to live in the Hawkesbury was because of the rural amenity.

Why has it been so successful?

In one sentence – relationships based on mutual trust:

Between people - eg consumers and producers, producers and producers
Between disciplines - eg. tourism and agriculture – agritourism; between agriculture and the hospitality industry – restaurants, B& B's etc
Between organisations – eg. tourism organisations such as Tourism Hawkesbury Incorporated, GWSEDB, Local Councils, government agencies such as DPI and SARD, and at the Federal level GROW and DTRD, ABC Radio, and the Lend Lease/GPT/Hornery Institute group.

The Corporate world? LL/GPT/HI – corporate social responsibility – Rouse Hill Regional Centre

What is beginning to be recognised is the many economic (enterprise viability), social (eg health – access to fresh food), and environmental benefits that occur through communities having access to the produce and products of local agriculture. British agricultural policy is orienting itself to this realisation

Reminder:

The second Collectors' Plant Fair that will be held at Bilpin next Saturday & Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

Autumn Harvest Fair – Mount Tomah Botanic Garden the following weekend 29th and 30th April

All details: www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au