

# HORTICENTRE HAPPENINGS

February 2026



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## AGLUKON REGIONAL VISIT

Andreas Theisen from Aglukon, the German manufacturers of the WUXAL® range, visited NZ to meet with Horticulture-TasmanCrop and Luisetti to discuss current and future WUXAL® foliar fertiliser options. The week-long visit involved technical presentations alongside Grower site-visits with Horticulture Group staff. Current, well-established application strategies were discussed but the new, highly-innovative WUXAL® formulations attracted keen interest from staff and growers! A big thank you to all staff and growers who participated in making this a very interesting and worthwhile week!

*Pictured are some of the stops made on the WUXAL® tour around the regions with Andreas. It included visits with staff and growers in Motueka, Luisetti in Christchurch, Hawke's Bay, Bay of Plenty and Pukekohe (top right around to bottom left).*



*Growing Better Crops Together*



## HORTICENTRE TRUST SPONSORSHIPS

### Horticulture Conferences

The Horticulture Trust is proud to return as Gold Sponsor of the [Horticulture Conferences](#) again in 2026. This year both the RSE Conference and the Horticulture Conference combine as an integrated event to take place over two days, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July.

*By bringing both audiences together, this combined national conference creates a single powerful platform for growers, industry leaders, researchers, employers, and policymakers to connect, collaborate, and shape the future of horticulture in Aotearoa.*



The Horticulture Trust are supporting the Horticulture conferences again in 2026.

### International Plant Propagators' Society Conference & Six Pack

The Horticulture Trust is again supporting the [International Plant Propagators' Society](#) (IPPS) Conference as the Principal Sponsor of the event, to be held in Dunedin on the 30<sup>th</sup> April.

*The International Plant Production Society (IPPS) is a global association of plant production professionals, including those in horticultural research and education. It was founded in 1951 when approximately 70 plant propagators gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, with the goal of sharing knowledge. The Society's core value, embodied in its motto "to seek and to share," continues to guide its activities, and over time, IPPS has expanded into an international forum for exchanging expertise in plant production.*

The sponsorship also allows six interested young people ('the six pack') to join the conference and network with nursery owners, be involved in discussion papers, attend field trips and make connections in the industry.



The Six Pack of 2025 sporting Horticulture Trust supplied clothing.

### Organic Wine New Zealand EcoVineyards Tour

The Horticulture Trust is proud to be the Principal Sponsor of the [OWNZ EcoVineyards Tour](#) with Dr Mary Retallack.

Organic Winegrowers NZ will bring Dr Mary Retallack to NZ for regional workshops within our major wine producing regions. Each workshop will consist of a morning of theoretical knowledge on functional biodiversity, vineyard and soil health of vineyards followed by a practical session after lunch.

Growers will take home knowledge and tools to allow them to start monitoring and use practices to track biodiversity, vine and soil health within their own vineyards.

Save the dates: Hawke's Bay 21<sup>st</sup> July, Marlborough, 28<sup>th</sup> July and Central Otago, 4<sup>th</sup> August. Tickets on sale in April; with more information coming soon.



## Summerfruit Technical Transfer

The Hortcentre Trust is pleased to support two [NZ Summerfruit](#) technical transfer meets to be held in both Hawke's Bay and Central Otago late May. With the Trust's support, Summerfruit NZ are bringing Dr Mark O'Connell, Senior Research Scientist at Agriculture Victoria - Tatura SmartFarm, from Australia to speak to NZ growers on orchard, this will be followed by a growers dinner that Mark will attend.

Dr Mark O'Connell is a leading horticultural researcher specialising in precision orchard management and smart agri-technologies for stonefruit production. His work focuses on improving fruit quality, yield, and consistency through innovations in high-density orchard systems, regulated deficit irrigation, and rootstock and training trials.

Mark brings practical insights from decades of research into tools and strategies that help growers optimise water use, enhance fruit sweetness, and meet export market standards. His expertise in integrating technology with orchard management makes him a valuable voice for growers looking to boost profitability and sustainability.

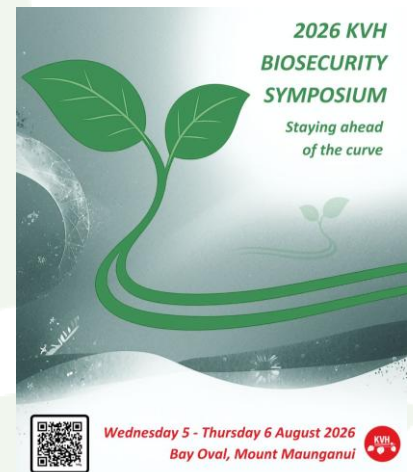


## Kiwi Fruit Vine Health Biosecurity Symposium

The Hortcentre Trust is proud to sponsor the [2026 KVH Biosecurity Symposium](#) to be held in Mount Maunganui on the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> of August.

*This year's symposium dives into what it takes to be prepared: proactive readiness, fast response, and smart collaboration. You'll experience real-world insights brought to life through dynamic presentations, practical case studies, and forward-thinking discussions designed for growers, industry leaders, technical experts, and government partners.*

Join Hortcentre Technical Advisors at the symposium to make sure you're at the leading edge of what's coming next.



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# Hortcentre TasmanCrop

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## AROUND THE REGIONS

### Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association Awards Celebration

The annual [Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association](#) Awards Celebration was held this month – an event that always brings the vibes!

Each year the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association Charitable Trust and the Horticulture Trust co-fund scholarships for 31 recipients. Funding is provided towards three scholarship courses at Level 3 & 4, Diploma and Degree level. These scholarships are provided for Hawke's Bay based individuals to undertake further education in horticulture studies, based on the pipfruit, summerfruit and kiwifruit sectors. Representing the Trust, Horticulture Technical Manager Chris Herries, had the honour of presenting the scholarships to the successful recipients.

Congratulations to all of those recognised and celebrated during the evening. It is always wonderful to see so many people thriving in this great industry.



*Chris Herries was on hand to present the scholarships to the many successful recipients.*

### NZ Tamarillo AGM & Field Day

Supported by the Horticulture Trust, February saw the annual NZ Tamarillo AGM and Field Day take place; this year it shifted from its Northland location for the past number of years to the Bay of Plenty. Local Regional Manager, Erik Thomas, went along in support. Orchard walks took place in Te Puke, Katikati and Whakamarama where the latest research into Tomato Potato Psyllid, fertilisers and growing practises was discussed.



*Members of the NZ Tamarillo Grower's Association were shown around tamarillo orchards in Te Puke, Whakamarama and Katikati during the recent annual tamarillo growers meet.*

## International Cool Climate Wine Symposium – with Aaron Carter from Marlborough

The recent Cool Climate Wine Symposium brought together growers, winemakers, and researchers to explore the challenges and opportunities facing cool climate viticulture. The symposium focused on how producers can adapt to environmental, market, and technological changes while continuing to enhance wine quality and regional identity.

A central theme was the increasing variability in weather patterns and its impact on cool climate regions. Presentations highlighted shifts in growing seasons, frost risk, rainfall intensity, and disease pressure. Speakers emphasised the need for adaptive vineyard management strategies, including canopy management, site selection, and flexible harvest timing.

There was strong focus on disease pressure in cool climates, particularly fungal diseases driven by humidity and variable conditions. Research updates covered integrated pest and disease management, resistant varieties, and the importance of precision monitoring to reduce chemical inputs while maintaining vine health.

Discussions reinforced that cool climate regions remain well positioned to produce high-quality, distinctive wines with freshness, balance, and site expression. Winemakers shared insights into managing lower alcohols, acidity, and phenolic ripeness, particularly in varieties such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling, and sparkling wine bases.

Sustainability was a recurring theme, with emphasis on soil health, water management, and reducing the carbon footprint of vineyard and winery operations. Speakers noted growing consumer expectations around sustainable practices and the opportunity for cool climate regions to lead in this space.

The symposium highlighted the value of collaboration between industry and research institutions. Emerging tools such as climate modelling, remote sensing, and data-driven decision-making were presented as practical ways to support long-term resilience and consistency.

One of the strongest takeaways for me was the importance of applying smart chemistry, not necessarily more chemistry. Precision timing, better monitoring, and integrated strategies are becoming essential. This aligns strongly with how I aim to add value, supporting growers with practical, efficient, and economically sound solutions.



## Horticulture Group Promotional Video

Recently a fantastic new promotional video has been put together to showcase the expertise at Horticulture and TasmanCrop at events and on our website. The video features many of our team including Erik, Tim, Alex, Lucky, Paddy, Mags, Julian, Steven, Bittu, and Katherine, with narration by Erik. Thank you to all for your contributions.

Check out Horticulture Group's new promotional video on our website [here](#).



## Regenerative Shift Field Day for Kiwifruit and Avocado - with Rhod Mitchell from Northland

The Regenerative Shift Field Day was recently held at Three Peaks Orchard in Maungatapere, hosted by Boyd and Linda Matson. The orchard includes both conventional and organic kiwifruit blocks, making it the perfect setting for discussions about regenerative growing. Northland Technical Field Advisor, Rhod Mitchell went along in support.



While the day was aimed mainly at kiwifruit and avocado growers, it was great to see a few other crop sectors represented as well. There was a great turnout, plenty of discussion, and to top it off some great weather, finally.

The day focused on four key topics, each combining practical demonstrations and discussions:

### **Soil Biology**

A discussion based on whether soil biology should be a priority in orchard systems. The group explored the critical role soil life plays in overall orchard health. There was also practical advice on how to measure and monitor soil biology.

### **Humates and Compost**

The role of humates and compost across production systems — from orchards and vineyards to vegetables, nurseries and arable crops. He also focussed on improving soil carbon levels and understanding the importance of humic and fulvic acids in building more productive soils.

### **Cover Crops**

The “why” behind planting them, the benefits they bring, and how to get the timing right. Species selection, mowing and mulch cutting, and incorporating plant material back into the soil were all covered. The session also looked ahead to end-of-season planning and transitioning into perennial mixes.

### **Moving Beyond Glyphosate**

Boyd Matson shared his experience of moving away from herbicide use, particularly glyphosate. He spoke about the benefits and what to expect during the transition away from spray strips.

Thanks again to Boyd and Linda for hosting and to everyone who contributed to making it such a worthwhile event.



*Northland kiwifruit and avocado growers met recently for a day of practical discussion around regenerative growing practices.*

## HORTICENTRE EXCLUSIVE PRODUCT FEATURE

### WUXAL® Amino & WUXAL® Calcium

For more than 60 years, WUXAL has been setting benchmarks in plant nutrition with high-quality foliar fertilizers and proven results. Over the last two decades, they have expanded our innovation pipeline with advanced biostimulants, pushing the boundaries of what crop care can achieve.

With WUXAL® Functional Nutrition, they are entering a new era. This product group goes beyond supplying essential nutrients – it provides targeted solutions to address modern agricultural challenges.

*Check out WUXAL®'s refreshed branding below and for more information take a look at the Spotlight video.*



## HORTICENTRE STAFF PROFILE OF THE MONTH

Meet the Team: Julian Williams, Senior Technical Advisor, Nelson

### How long have you been with Horticulture?

*I started with Tasman Chemicals in 1991, which was then bought by Tasman Crop Protection, then later by Veg-Gro Supplies, who evolved into Horticulture - 35 years!*

### What crops are you passionate about?

*Over the years a number of crops have been my focus, I suppose you evolve with change, hops in the 90's became berry fruit, then blackcurrants, which have reverted into hops again. The two mainstays are apples and kiwifruit.*

*Apples for me are by far the most technical crop to get to market, bringing everyday challenges and requiring constant problem solving.*

### What inspired you to join the horticulture industry?

*I come from a fourth-generation family of orchardists, starting in Evesham, UK. In the 1940s, during World War II, the family shifted to New Zealand and bought land in Braeburn, Lower Moutere, establishing Braeburn Orchards. Green fingers and strong connections prompted me to join the industry.*

### What do you like most about your work?

*I most enjoy finding solutions to problems.*

### What's a common challenge in your role, and how do you handle it?

*Compliance is an ongoing challenge, which is best handled by delegation.*

### What do you enjoy doing outside work?

*I am a builder by trade; I seem to become involved in community and church projects, which tend to fill any free time.*

### If you weren't in Horticulture, what would you be doing?

*Building... and enjoying a good whiskey at the end of the day...*

### What's a fun fact people might not know about you?

*I have a strong interest in motorsports, SVG, V8s and all things fast.*

*Thank you for sharing your journey, Julian, your experience, knowledge and commitment is valued!*



*Julian Williams has a wealth of knowledge with many crops, but Pipfruit and Kiwifruit are his specialities.*



*Julian is pictured here surveying crops with Tasman-based growers, and alongside local technical colleagues Mags and Alex. With an abundance of industry expertise, Julian is an integral part of the Horticulture team, supporting many growers daily with practical and trusted advice.*

## HORTICENTRE HEALTH & SAFETY FOCUS POINT

### Bunding Safety: The First Line of Defence Against Chemical Spills



Bunding is a critical health & safety control that helps contain chemical spills and prevent them from spreading. By keeping hazardous substances contained, bunding protects our people, the environment, and our workplace.

#### Why it's important:

- Limits exposure to hazardous chemicals
- Reduces slip, fire, and reaction risks
- Prevents chemicals entering drains or the environment
- Supports legal and safety compliance

#### Our responsibility:

- The integrity of the bunding should be checked daily
- Look for cracks, damage, or signs of wear
- Report and arrange prompt repairs
- Keep banded areas clear and fit for purpose
- Operate forklifts carefully in and around banded areas
- In addition, ensure all relevant staff attend spill training annually



*Horticulture Bay of Plenty Storeman, Bittu Mall, at work in the Tauranga branch storeroom.*



*Whangarei branch staff undertaking annual spill training this month, with Driver, Jack Rewha demonstrating correct spill procedures.*



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# Horticulture TasmanCrop

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