

# The Olive Hunter

Issue98      Newsletter of the Hunter Olive Association Inc.      July 2006

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Webpage: [www.hunterolives.asn.au](http://www.hunterolives.asn.au)

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## President's Report

The AGM was an enjoyable evening and provided an opportunity to 'catch up' with the members. Many thanks to our guest speaker David Atkinson, he gave an enlightening presentation on the 'farm gate' trails in the Hunter, under the Hunter Harvest label, as an further opportunity for members to market and sell their products. As usual the venue was great.

Welcome to Rob Mackenzie our new executive committee member. Every committee member has experience and strengths in the Hunter olive industry and as such, are providing good leadership for the association.

Marian Waite, who has been on the Committee for many years, has declined to nominate for the Committee this year due to other commitments. Thank you to Marian for all her assistance on the Committee in the past. Also thanks to Geoff Tylor who has retired from the Committee. Both are now more than busy retailing Hunter olive products.

Subscription renewal notices are being prepared for mailing, don't forget that if you want to receive a posted newsletter instead of receiving an electronic copy on e-mail, there will be a small increase in your subscription.

*Ken McCraw*

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## Olive oil Tasting Group – Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August

Now that harvest time has finished for this year and all the oil and olives are in tanks and barrels it is time to enjoy ourselves again and get a few oils into ourselves. So the next oil tasting group session will be held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August. Venue will be Adina Vineyard in Lovedale Road Lovedale.

The theme for the oil tasting will be robust oils and the theme for the table olive assessment will be Kalamata olives. If you produced robust oil this year

or you know of any good robust oils bring them along. Also, if you produced Kalamata olives this year or can get some, then bring them along too.

Starting time 0930h, should go for 3 to 4 hours. Cost is \$10.  
Please contact Stephen Mitchell on 6577 6004 if attending.

## **2006 Hunter Valley Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Table Fruit Show**

The Association is staging the Hunter Valley Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Table Fruit Show again this year. We ran the show for the first time last year which proved to be quite successful with a total of 32 oil and table fruit entries from 13 exhibitors.

There are classes to suit all styles of olive oil as well as infused oils. Classes for table olives include plain marinades as well as flavoured marinades. There are classes for commercial producers as well as those who do a few olives at home for their personal consumption.

Closing date for oil entries is Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, and for table fruit is Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September. Judging for the show will be held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September.

**An entry form and conditions are included in this newsletter and are available on the website.**

This show is quite expensive to run as we aim to set a high standard for the trophies and accommodation for the judges who provide their time free of charge.

This year we are expecting double the number of entries and will require more judges. Hence we are seeking financial support from companies and individuals who would like to sponsor a class in the show or just support the general running of the show.

Any member who would like some more information on entering the show or providing sponsorship for the show please contact Stephen Mitchell on 65776004.

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## **Pruning – why bother?**

Every winter we get to look at our olive trees, now denuded of fruit and our thoughts turn to pruning. There is a huge amount of literature published from all round the olive-growing world dealing with the philosophies and techniques of pruning and I am not going to attempt to summarise these well researched books. This is more a look at what we are attempting to achieve by pruning and what our options are.

There are two main reasons to prune an olive tree – to stimulate new growth and to make the trees more manageable

1. **Stimulating new growth.** If an olive tree is left to its own devices it will tend to become a bush, shooting out suckers from the base. Certainly there are plenty of wild olive bushes around the Hunter that have just this shape. Olives become a tree only because we prune them to make them into trees.

There is one other dominant growth pattern to most trees, olives included and that is that the new growth mainly forms at the tip of existing shoots, so the tree (or bush) slowly expands with new foliage and fruit on the outer “shell” and a shaded centre with little or new growth of fruit. In order to stop the pattern evolving the tree requires pruning to shorten limbs, to remove exhausted shoot tips and to remove old wood. This style of pruning will serve to stimulate new shoots and in turn to create new fruit-bearing wood.

2. **Make the trees manageable.** In a commercial olive grove we need to be able to spray the trees to control pests and diseases and we also need to be able to pick the fruit quickly and efficiently. Pruning a tree to shape is therefore a major part of any grove management system. Many groves in the Hunter have a problem with black scale and sooty mould, some also suffer attacks from Olive Lace Bug as well as both anthracnose and peacock spot. All of these problems can be controlled using sprays, but the sprays have to be able to hit their target in order to be effective. This means keeping the height of the tree down to the level at which the sprays can reach – this figure varies with the different styles of equipment but 4m is probably as high as most spray rigs can reach. Any foliage over this nominal 4m height has no protection from disease and once an infestation becomes established it will usually spread into the rest of the tree and even into surrounding trees.

Many of our trees are still hand-picked and this again imposes limits on how high the pickers can reach. 3m high trees are able to be picked by hand from the ground without use of ladders, but much more than 3m and there can be serious problems reaching the fruit.

Some groves have been harvested using tree shakers, and once again there are limitations on the efficiency of fruit removal if the trees are not shaped to suit the technology.

So there are two compelling reasons why olive trees should be pruned regularly – to ensure the trees continue to regenerate and to give fruit and to be able to effectively look after and to eventually harvest that fruit. Pruning need not be done every year, but certainly every few years most trees would benefit from some attention.

### **Technology to the rescue?**

There are two main technologies for pruning olive trees – by hand or by machine. Pruning by hand is the old, established and proven technique whereby secateurs and hand saws are employed by skilled pruners to shape the tree, removing superfluous timber to give a shape suited to the purposes.

Depending on how long since the tree was last pruned and how much work is required, this can take from mere seconds to several minutes, but 5 minutes per tree is fairly “normal”. This doesn’t sound like much, but 5 minutes per tree x 1000 trees is 83 hours or about 14 solid days work.

Once trees reach over 4m the reduction of height can become a major issue for growers, and machine pruning becomes a viable option. To try to get a 5 or 6m high tree down to 3.5 or 4m by hand pruning will take a fair bit longer than 5 minutes per tree if it is done by hand using ladders and hand saws. This can rapidly blow out to become a major expense, but machine pruning is an option.

Pruning using a contractor to reduce the height of the trees was used by Steve Goodchild at Pukara Estate in Muswellbrook recently to good effect as Steve didn’t really fancy pruning 27,000 trees by hand! The contractor, John Gallard of Renmark in SA has a contract pruning business managing olives, citrus, macadamia and other fruit trees throughout Australia. He is prepared to prune groves in the Hunter and there are two quite different times of the year when his pruning service can be a very effective tool in managing an olive grove.

*Winter / Spring Pruning* – pruning trees after the worst of the winter frosts but before the spring growth will reduce the height of the trees and create new vegetative growth lower down in the tree. This is ideal for trees that have grown too tall to manage and need to be made more bushy.

*Spring / Summer Pruning* – pruning after fruit set will lop off any tall foliage and prevent vegetative growth, directing the tree’s energy into the developing fruit. This is ideal for trees that are already set up (probably by pruning the pervious season) for machine harvesting to maximise the crop.

John Gallard has indicated that he will be prepared to carry out machine pruning in the Hunter this season if there is enough interest. *See below.*

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## **Machine Pruning**

As mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, we do have the option of having a contractor come into the Hunter area to prune olive trees by machine. In order to facilitate such a visit the HOA is prepared to help coordinate his visit to allow as many groves make use of this service and help spread the cost.

The contractor, John Gallard is based at Renmark in South Australia, some 1500km away so it isn’t really worth bringing him here to just do one grove. I spoke to John recently to get an idea of what it would cost to bring him here and he gave me some idea of the costs:

His machinery can prune around about 2 acres per hour if he does a run up both sides of the trees. At the standard spacing of 5m x 8m rows, this works

out to be 100 trees to the acre, so John can effectively prune up to 200 trees per hour. He charges \$150 per hour and has a minimum charge of \$200 to come to a grove. However there is a significant float fee of \$1.50 per kilometre plus accommodation expenses required to bring John into the area. A realistic figure would be close to \$1.40 per tree according to Steve Goodchild of Pukara Estate based on the results of John's pruning at their large grove in Denman last season, but I would be more comfortable estimating \$2 a tree.

The machinery has an effective cutting distance of 3.4m with 5 powered circular saw blades on a star-shaped cutting head. This head revolves with the cutting and throws the cut wood out of the tree and into the row. The height can be adjusted to suit, and the machinery can also be used to hedge the trees by tilting the cutting head through 90 degrees.

According to both Andrew Waite & Chris Iacono – operators of tree shaking harvesters based in the Hunter and prepared to offer contract harvesting services next season, the efficiency of fruit removal is directly related to the shape and height of the trees. Both found that the top branches of tall trees tended to tie themselves into a knotted ball during attempts to shake trees over 4m to 5m high. They are both very keen to see growers shape their trees to suit the harvesters and regard this pruning technology as the ideal tool to work in with the harvesters.

To date I have had interest from several growers in using this contract pruning service, some growers are keen to make use of a visit in late winter or early spring, probably August – and others for a later visit, probably November. Pruning in winter/spring should encourage vegetative growth; pruning in spring/summer should encourage fruit development.

If any other growers wish to consider using this service should get in touch with **Mike Wilson on 0419 244785** to further discuss requirements. This technology will not suit every grove and every application, but after a long chat to various experienced people I have a feel for what is feasible.

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## **BIGGER HARVEST DESPITE THE DROUGHT**

By Jim Morgan

Despite the drought the quantity of olives harvested in the Hunter Valley this year is higher than last year. 570 tons of fruit was processed into oil yielding approximately 120,000 litres. This was a rise from 2005 season of 440 tons (91,000 litres).

Although this is a 30% rise over last year there was an expectation that growth in production would have been greater. The following factors have affected the size of the harvest:

- The continuing drought has affected the ability of many groves to irrigate at the critical times reducing fruit set and size. Almost throughout the region rainfall was less than half the average for the six months to May;

- The closure of the Hunter Olive Co-operative has forced some growers to send their fruit out of the region for processing;
- More Manzanillo fruit has been sent to table fruit production while little of the remainder was used for oil; and
- Some groves were not harvested at all due to poor quantity, quality, hail damage, lack of an outlet or a combination of all of these.

.....The value  
 The value of table fruit is starting to be realised with 30 tons of fruit under brine by the end of the season. The major portion of this quantity has been processed by Hunter Boutique Olive Growers and Pukara Estate but many others are producing table fruit on a much smaller scale.

A feature of the 2006 harvest was the debut appearance of two smaller self propelled trunk shakers ideally suited to medium and small sized groves. The large groves were once again harvested by over-the-row machines.

**ATTENTION HOA MEMBERS**

**YOUR ASSOCIATION**

**NEEDS YOU**

**TO SUPPORT THE**

**2006 EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL**

**AND TABLE FRUIT SHOW**

**AS EXHIBITORS OR SPONSORS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
**READ ELSEWHERE IN THIS NEWSLETTER**  
**OR SEE THE HOA WEBSITE**  
**CONTACT STEPHEN MITCHELL ON 65776004**

**Diary Dates:**

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Friday July 28, 2006</b>      | Committee Meeting at Broke   |
| <b>Monday August 7, 2006</b>     | HOA Oil Tasting Group, Lovedale  |
| <b>Friday August 18, 2006</b>    | Entries close for Hunter Valley Extra Virgin Olive Oil Show  |
| <b>Friday September 1, 2006</b>  | Entries close for Hunter Valley Table Fruit Show   |
| <b>Friday September 8, 2006</b>  | Entries close for AOA 10th National Extra Virgin Olive Oil Show  |
| <b>Thurs-Fri Sep 14-15, 2006</b> | Olive Harvest Workshop, Rylstone NSW<br>Entries close for Olives SA Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition |

**Thursday September 28**  
**Sep 30 – Oct 1, 2006**  
**Oct 26 – 28, 2006**

Hunter Olive Awards announced  
Feast of the Olive, The Vintage Golf Club, Rothbury  
Australian Olive Expo, Canberra

# HUNTER OLIVE ASSOCIATION INC

## 2006 HUNTER VALLEY EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL AND TABLE FRUIT SHOW

Closing date for entries: Olive oil: Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2006.  
Table fruit: Friday 1st September, 2006.  
Judging date: Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.  
Announcement of awards: Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.

### Classes:

#### Commercial Extra Virgin Olive Oil

- 1 Mild Oil
- 2 Medium Oil
- 3 Robust Oil
- 4 Flavoured Oil

#### Non-commercial Extra Virgin Olive Oil

- 5 Mild Oil
- 6 Medium Oil
- 7 Robust Oil

#### Commercial Table Fruit

- 8 Green Table Olives
- 9 Black Table Olives
- 10 Spiced or Flavoured Table Olives
- 11 Tapenade

#### Non-commercial Table Fruit

- 12 Green Table Olives
- 13 Black Table Olives
- 14 Spiced or Flavoured Table Olives
- 15 Tapenade

**Awards:**

- Best Entry in Class – Classes 1 to 15
- Best Entry in Class produced from Hunter Valley fruit – Classes 1 to 15
- Best Commercial Oil of Show – Classes 1 to 3
- Best Commercial Oil of Show produced from Hunter Valley fruit – Classes 1 to 3
- Best Non-commercial Oil of Show – Classes 5 to 7
- Best Non-commercial Oil of Show produced from Hunter Valley fruit – Classes 5 to 7
- Best Commercial Table Olives of Show – Classes 8 to 10
- Best Commercial Table Olives of Show produced from Hunter Valley fruit – Classes 8 to 10
- Best Non-commercial Table Olives of Show – Classes 12 to 14
- Best Non-commercial Table Olives of Show produced from Hunter Valley fruit – Classes 12 to 14
- Most successful exhibitor of show

**Definitions:**

- Mild:** The oil must display a zero to low (overall combined) degree of bitterness and pungency. The oil may also display aromas and flavours that are soft, fresh and distinctive.
- Medium:** The oil must display a moderate (overall combined) degree of bitterness and pungency. The oil may also display fresh and complex aromas and flavours of moderate or better intensity.
- Robust:** The oil must display a high and distinct (overall combined) degree of bitterness and pungency. The oil may also display intense, fresh and complex aromas and flavours.
- Commercial:** Products intended for sale to the public or other commercial producers.
- Non-commercial:** Products not intended for sale to the public or commercial producers.

### Conditions of Entry:

- i) Entries must be 100% Australian origin
- ii) To qualify for an award, oil entries must have a Free Fatty Acid (FFA) < 0.8%.

- iii) A sample of each oil entry will be sent away for FFA analysis to a NATA accredited laboratory unless the exhibit is accompanied by a certificate of FFA analysis from a NATA accredited laboratory
- iv) For the Oil Show two bottles of either 375ml or 500ml of oil must be provided.
- v) For the Table Olive Show two jars of approximately 300ml must be provided.
- vi) In Class 4 - Flavoured Oils, the flavour should be nominated.
- vii) Olives in Classes 8,9,12 and 13 can be whole, pitted, sliced or cracked but must have no other ingredients other than the preserving brine or brine/vinegar solution.
- viii) Olives in Classes 10 and 14 can be whole, pitted and stuffed and flavoured with any appropriate matter (flavour should be nominated).
- ix) Exhibits in commercial oil and table fruit classes – Classes 1 to 4 and 8 to 11 must be commercially packaged and labelled; and, either available in the Australian marketplace or intended for release in the near future.
- x) Award winning entries will be publicised during the Feast of the Olive on 30th September and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006.

**Judging:**

Oil judging will be carried out by panels of two to three experienced judges using the Australian Olive Association's 20 point judging system. The Best in Class and Best in Show awards will be based on these scores and further tasting if necessary. Other awards to be granted are:

Gold: 17.0+  
 Silver: 15.0 to <17.0  
 Bronze: 13.0 to <15.0

Table olive judging will be carried out by two or three suitably qualified people using appropriate guidelines.

**Display of Award Winning Exhibits**

A display of the winners of Best of Show awards for Classes 1 to 3 and 8 to 10 and Best in Class awards for Classes 1 to 4 and 8 to 10 will be set up at the venue for the Feast of the Olive over the weekend of the 30<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 for public tasting. Winners of these awards will be required to supply to the Hunter Olive Association free of charge sufficient quantities of winning product for this display.

**Entry Fees:** Olive oil entries accompanied by a certificate of FFA analysis:  
 \$27.50 per entry for members of the Hunter Olive Association  
 \$49.50 per entry for non-members of the Hunter Olive Association  
 Olive oil entries not accompanied by a certificate of FFA analysis:  
 \$55.00 per entry for members of the Hunter Olive Association  
 \$77.00 per entry for non-members of the Hunter Olive Association  
 Table Olives: \$11.00 per entry  
 All fees include GST.

**How to Enter:**

Fill out the Entry Form; available from the HOA website: [www.hunterolives.asn.au](http://www.hunterolives.asn.au), or by  
 Contacting the Show Steward: Stephen Mitchell – phone: 0265776004

Email: [stephen@lisbornepark.com](mailto:stephen@lisbornepark.com)

Mark each entry with your own Exhibit Identification Code, different code for each entry  
 Securely package the entries.

Include appropriate payment. Cheques should be made payable to the Hunter Olive Association Inc.

Packages can be sent by mail, courier or hand delivered to:

|                              |    |                              |
|------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| The Steward                  | or | Hunter Valley Olive Oil Show |
| Hunter Valley Olive Oil Show |    | C/- Sandalyn Estate          |
| 562 Glendonbrook Road        |    | 162 Wilderness Road          |
| Glendonbrook NSW 2330        |    | Lovedale NSW 2321            |

The Hunter Olive Association wishes to thank The Hunter Olive Centre for their sponsorship support of the 2006 Hunter Valley Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Table Fruit Show.

Sponsorship funds supplement entry fees and help defray costs of trophies, judges' expenses, printing and other expenses associated with staging the Show.

**Hunter Olive Association Inc**  
**2006 Hunter Valley**  
**Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Table Fruit Show**

**Entry Form**

Name of Exhibitor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Trading or Commercial Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

| Exhibit Identification Code | Class No. Entered | Class Description | Other Details<br>Eg Flavour | Commercially Packaged & Labelled (Y/N) | Commercially Available (Y/N) | Tasting No. (Official use only) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                             |                   |                   |                             |  |                              |                                 |
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**Payment Details**

No. of oils entered with FFA analysis (HOA members) = \_\_\_\_ @ \$27.50/entry = \$  
 No. of oils entered with FFA analysis (non HOA members) = \_\_\_\_ @ \$49.50/entry = \$  
 No. of oils entered without FFA analysis (HOA members) = \_\_\_\_ @ \$55.00/entry = \$  
 No. of oils entered without FFA analysis (non HOA members) = \_\_\_\_ @ \$77.00/entry = \$  
 No. of table fruit entries = \_\_\_\_ @ \$11.00/entry = \$  
Total Payment = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment can be made by cheque payable to Hunter Olive Association Inc, or

by credit card:      Mastercard      Visa      Bankcard  
 Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_      Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
 Card Holder Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Exhibitor: \_\_\_\_\_      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mark each entry with your Exhibit Identification Code

Securely package the entries

Enclose entry fee with entries

Send or deliver to:

|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| The Steward<br>Hunter valley Olive Oil Show<br>562 Glendonbrook Road<br>Glendonbrook NSW 2330 | OR | Hunter Valley Olive Oil Show<br>C/- Sandalyn Estate<br>Wilderness Road<br>Lovedale NSW 2321 |
|---|----|---|