

Raspberries Will Ripen

International Himbo Top[®] Expert Visits the Australian Rubus Growers Association

Hans Wicki, International raspberry expert from Switzerland spoke at Dean Chapman's farm, Fairview Hills, in Silvan, Victoria. Hans is the expert on the variety known as Himbo Top[®], a primocane grown by many farmers around Australia.



Twenty farmers, growers from Western Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria attended the farm walk. Hans was able to address some of the issues that growers have been having with the crop.

Problem of Soft Fruit

Reduce watering. The plants have a strong root system so it is necessary to stress the plant.

Example - Stress the plant 2 days before picking. With no water to the fruit, it will harden up. Best approach when picking every second day is 2 days of watering and one day without.

Crumbly Fruit

Crumbliness can be caused by

1. (usually blamed on) RBDV coming through tissue culture process

2. selection of mother stock

In Switzerland they select new mother plants every year.

3. inherent problem of tissue culture process if there have been too many replicas – i.e. there are too many steps from the 1st culture.

4. At flowering time (6 -7 weeks)

- poor pollination

- different temperatures experienced during flowering

Note: Hans did not consider fertilizers to be a problem.

Production Tips

Hans suggestions:

- reduce the number of canes from 15 plants per metre to 10-12. This will increase production per plant. Choose the middle canes, not the strongest canes. This also helps reduce problems with insects at the base of the plants.
- In Europe:
 - o everyone covers plants and therefore there are no sunburn issues. They use moveable A frames.
 - o Plants grow to about 2.5 metres. Need to use a higher wire to support plants – this helps the plant to yield more laterals.
 - o Growers prefer not to use weed sprays such as ‘Basta’ as weed sprays stress the plant and they only grow to 1.3m high. They use hand weed control to dig out weeds. Hand weed if plants are without plastic on mound. They also use a narrow mound making it easier to control the weeds.
- In US they tip prune to encourage branching. Hans says that you can cut the tops in early stage of growth and the laterals will increase.
- In southern Germany the plants have 2 crops (dual cropper – June and August) 1st crop in June (their Summer) has 4 to 6 canes per metre. Must have good root growth to bring up enough strong canes for second harvest in August (their Autumn). This relates to leaving enough strong primocanes, after your weed control, to give a good primocane harvest.
- Himbo Top[®] can be replanted in the same soil if there is not enough land to rotate, due to it’s Phytophthora resistance. This reduces work and replanting costs. No problems have been found in growth. Plants last from 6,7 to 10 years.



Tissue Culture

Hans has had best success with root cuttings.

Tissue Culture versus Traditional Propagation (trial in Germany)

- Under Traditional propagation, resulting plant growth is better
- Tissue culture led to lots of young shoots growing beside rows which took some energy out of the plants, leading to smaller fruit and reduced flavour.

In Europe – Tissue culture use changed to root cuttings.

Plants propagated by tissue culture had more vegetative growth than with Root propagation. Also from Tissue culture prop plants, fruit is softer, smaller, and has less taste.