

Organics in Canterbury

Issue No 38: July 2008

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This newsletter is published by the Canterbury Commercial Organics Group, in association with Heinz Wattie's, Canterbury Organics and the Biological Husbandry Unit, Lincoln University.

Back issues of the newsletter can be found on our website:
www.organics.org.nz/

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Articles, letters to the editor and advertisements are always welcome.

CCOG & Canterbury Organic celebrate winter!

Organic lunch & speakers July 26, Lincoln University

Everyone interested in organics is most welcome to come to the mid-winter event. This year we have planned an organic buffet lunch (catered by Lincoln University) followed by three speakers: Martin Tickner on Seed Saving, Dr David Scobie on Easy-care Sheep, and Lis Alington on Biodynamic Farming. The afternoon should be of great interest to everyone involved in organic farming and we would love to see a big crowd, so please make an effort to come. Book now!

Following afternoon tea, Canterbury Organic will be holding their AGM (no pressure to stay for this!!).

Lunch: includes vegetarian and gluten-free options

Date: Saturday July 26

Time: 12.00: Lunch

1 - 1.30: Seed Saving – Martin Tickner

1.35 - 2.05: Easy-care sheep – Dave Scobie

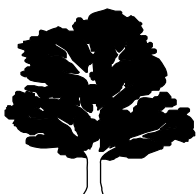
2.10 - 3.00 : Biodynamic Farming – Lis Alington

3.00: Afternoon tea 3.30: Canterbury Organic AGM

Venue: Kauri Room, Lincoln University (directions below)

Bookings: By 16 July please, to mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz, ph 03 3029202 or to Gilda Otway corganic@organics.org.nz

Cost: (pay at the door) Lunch/speakers/afternoon tea \$25, or speakers & afternoon tea only, \$10 (*continued next page*)



CCOG



CANTERBURY
Organic



Directions: Turn in to Lincoln University at Calder Drive (Gate 2). The Kauri Room is in the Students Union Building on the left.

Low Cost Easy Care Sheep Dr Scobie will bring a couple of sheep with him. They will have short tails, bare heads and legs. At this time of year they will not have a bare backside but during the spring and summer they do. This reduces dag formation and that in turn protects them from flystrike.

This year 3% of the sheep that he has been breeding got flystrike, compared to 12 to 20% in other crossbred flocks surrounding them. Some of the other issues he will touch on are the fact that these sheep are easier to shear and their fleece requires less wool handling because there are no oddment wools. The whole concept is about reducing input costs such as docking, dagging, crutching and shearing while at the same time improving sheep welfare by reducing flystrike, which in turn improves production.

Seed Saving Martin Tickner will talk about the Southern Seed Exchange which is a group of mostly Christchurch and Canterbury people involved in growing local and heirloom varieties of vegetable plants so that they will not be lost. About 20 people are involved. One of the oldest varieties in the seed bank are a runner bean that was first grown on Banks Peninsula in the 1820s. He will also talk about how to save your own seeds at home and why this is important.

Biodynamics Lis Alington will talk about biodynamic farming practices, such as making and using preparations, and the benefits they bring to an organic system. Biodynamics is a systems approach where the farm is viewed as a living whole, in which each farm activity affects the others. Management is based on the farmer's own careful observations, plus the results of tests and analyses. This leads to a modern approach that uses traditional knowledge.

Annual appeal – donations please!!

CCOG is asking for donations to help with the running costs of producing the newsletter, copying and sending out DVDs, maintaining the website and organising events. There hasn't been an annual subscription fee for many years now for those on our email mailing list, so please consider sending a donation. Amounts over \$5 are tax deductible (we can send a receipt). Please make cheques out to Canterbury Commercial Organics Group and post to CCOG, c/- Mary Ralston, Back Track, RD 12 Rakaia 7782. (Donations can also be made at the mid-winter event on 26 July.)

Calendar of Events

26 July Mid-winter event, see page 1-2, bookings by 16 July, to mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz

31 July Organic vegetable & mixed farming assn. field day/AGM at Aroha Organic, Sth Canterbury, 11am – 2pm, pot luck lunch. For more info contact Nathan Davis arohaorganic@xtra.co.nz. ph 03 6126092.

Winter - Riccarton & Lyttelton markets are on during winter for organic veges, chickens etc.

6 September Field day/workshop - Setting up a lifestyle block for organic certification at Janet & Jill's, 94 Maskells Rd, Amberley. Other presenters are Nathan Davis and Alvina Murphy. For more info contact Gilda Otway corganic@organics.org.nz

12-14 November Christchurch Show – see advertisement next page

Advertisements email mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz to place your ad in the next issue

FOR SALE: COMPOST: Lots of lovely chicken compost for sale from BioGro certified organic farm. Phone Pete 3426260.

NUTCRACKERS: Uncle George's nutcrackers, suitable for walnuts and hazelnuts. Made from NZ beech. Available from Totaranui Organics, Geraldine. Phone Eleanor & Jim Jolly, 03 693.9906.

GREENHOUSE EQUIPMENT: 2 metal tables with corallite (corrugated plastic) tops, each 10 m long (they come in 3 sections) \$150/table. Growing trays, approx 220. Electric heaters greenhouse (4). Fogger. Bags (PB 40) approx 100. Any offers considered. Phone Mary or Kem 03-3029202 or email kem@xtra.co.nz

WANTED: HAY & ROTARY HOE: Organically grown hay bales (small size), & 50 inch cut Howard Rotary Hoe. Please phone Toshi 03 332.7105 or 027.624.6758. Toshikuni Shibata.

MILK: Raw organic milk wanted (Christchurch area). Please contact Michele Cherry stonecircleorganics@hotmail.com

SUPPLIER OF SPELT FLOUR AND ORGANIC, NATURAL FRUIT FLAVOURINGS WANTED. (e.g. peach, raspberry). Please email aliceboyes@gmail.com

NOTICES: Get a group together and promote your organic products at a site at the Christchurch Royal New Zealand Show. Contact Sharon Lloyd for more information on 03.343.2867 or email sharon@theshow.co.nz

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Minimum tillage DVDs If you would like to see these 3 DVDs and have not yet put your name on the list with Mary, please contact mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz. These are very good and have been extremely popular, so it is taking quite a while to get them to everyone (I haven't forgotten). Also could I remind those who have them to return them promptly (within 2 weeks).

Reducing Tillage in Organic Production Systems

Summary of presentation by Anu Rangarajan, 17 March 2008. To view the Power Point presentation given by Anu go to the CCOG website <http://www.organics.org.nz/> and click on "Reduced Tillage seminar notes" available on the home page under "News".

1. Introduction: Soil quality is very important in organics, and reducing tillage is desirable if we are to improve soil quality. We need to work with whole systems and in some cases, use different systems. Organic reduced tillage systems should have the same yields (or better), and lower fuel and labour costs. *Reduced tillage involves the intensive use of cover crops.* Tillage will still be required in organic reduced tillage systems because of perennial weeds but the objective is to *minimize frequency, intensity and energy* needed for these events.

2. Goals of reduced tillage:

- Enhance soil quality
 - Conserve organic matter, improve tilth, conserve moisture, reduce erosion
- Minimize soil disturbance
 - Minimize weed seed germination, reduce compaction
- Reduce fuel use
- Reduce equipment use
- Minimize hand weeding
- Maintain yields

3. Key features of organic reduced till:

- Cover crops intensively cultivated. Important points are:
 - Seeding and rates
 - Timing of seeding
 - Methods of seeding
 - Methods of killing
- Rotations can be complex
 - Diversified operations
 - Diverse crop types and planting schemes
 - Integration of animals

4. Organic options to reduce tillage:

- Annual strategies – frequency, intensity, spatially
- Multi-year strategies
- Rotations
- Different systems, e.g. - hybrid mulch system, permanent beds

5. Organic reduced till systems are in between conventional farming systems (2 to 4 passes resulting in a clean field) and permanent no-till (herbicides, no-tillage, residue minimally disturbed, maximum soil protection from erosion).

6. Steps:

- Seeding (drilling) a cover crop (seeding rates are critical). Grains are popular e.g., rye, or use legumes such as hairy vetch, or a combination.
 - Kill cover crop a month before crop needs to be planted, leaving most residue on surface. Mow (flail, sickle or rotary) or use crops that will be winter-killed e.g., oats or peas – these are easy to manage in spring, OR use a crimper/roller or rolling stalk chopper. Timing will be based on maturity of cover crop as well as when following crop should be planted.
 - Establish reduced width planting zone – usually a 15-20 cm band of soil, with machinery such as a subsoiler, discs, or rolling basket. Measure depth of the compacted layer and work 5 cm deeper.
 - Establish transplant or large seeded crop
 - Manage weeds (maintain a minimum weed-free period by handweeding or cultivation)
 - Harvest crop
 - Seed a cover crop
- Remember: start small and try!!**

7. Advantages:

Soils will not be as prone to drought, and if wet, will be better draining.

Notes from field demonstration at the BHU of crimper/roller:

Oats and ryecorn tend to regrow after cutting or crimping, teres will also if done too soon. Ryecorn should be done at milky dough stage. Triticale is a better choice than rye – can be killed earlier and stems don't get as woody. Buckwheat is not a good weed suppressing choice – this crop would only give 3-4 weeks of weed suppression. The buckwheat here is too mature, it needs to be killed at the start of flowering to ensure it will not regrow.

Back mounted crimper/rollers not as effective as front-mounted because tyre marks compromise crimping. Merf's crimper/roller not aggressive enough – the sections crimped 2 weeks and 1 week ago were not killed, blades need to be sharper. If drum were bigger diameter, more water could be carried for extra weight. Speed of machinery is important.

Drilling should be done as soon after crimping as possible so that the crop has a long a weed-free time as possible. Need to drill in the direction of rolling – issues of width of roller compared to width of drill. A Cambridge roller or similar should be used behind drill to ensure good seed/soil contact. Be aware of possible allopathic reactions between cover crop and following one – e.g., squash into rye may have problems.

Organic Transplant Media *Summary of presentation by Anu Rangarajan*

To view the Power Point presentation given by Anu, go to the CCOG website <http://www.organics.org.nz/> and click on "Organic Transplant Media seminar notes".

1. Organic potting media for transplants should have the following attributes:

- Physical Properties
 - Particle size appropriate to container
 - Density that will hold up plants
 - Good aeration and waterholding capacity
 - 20-30% air space, water (40-50% common)
 - Chemical Properties
 - Nutrient levels low to moderate
-

- Salts and EC below 1.5 dS/m
- pH between 5.5 and 7.5

- Biological Properties

- No plant pathogens
- Decomposition rate should be low

- Consistency

2. Nutrients: The challenge when making organic media is to ensure an adequate supply of nutrients – organic sources of nutrients are often inconsistent. Release of nutrients is hard to predict, and some media will “compost” and others will increase salts.

Soluble salts are a very important aspect of media. It is crucial to monitor EC (Electrical Conductivity) levels. In New Zealand EC meters are available from horticultural suppliers for about \$80 or cheaper second-hand (see the Yellow Pages, TradeMe or the internet). To use a EC meter to test for soluble salts, make a saturated paste, 1:2 dilution or 1:5 dilution, based upon dry weight of soil.

Plant based media have a low nutrient charge and animal based have a high nutrient charge. Soluble salts that can be measured are K, Na, Cl, NO₃, NH₄. Symptoms of high EC include poor germination, restricted root growth, restricted water uptake and wilting, marginal burning on foliage, reduced flowering and yields.

3. Compost based transplant mixes:

Source

- Manure based vs. plant based (animal manure in compost will give a higher N content)
- Dairy and horse vs. poultry (poultry has higher N)

Quality

- Curing/maturity to get media C:N ratio between 15-20 (should be allowed to sit for at least 6 mths after composting has finished)
- Particle size (<2-3 mm, 50% of compost)
- Salt content/phytotoxicity (dS/m<3)

Add compost to base mix at a rate of 10-50% of media, 20% is common (a good base mix is 70% peat moss & 30% perlite or vermiculite and 2.5 kg lime per square metre). [Note that in New Zealand many potting media are bark based which may be higher carbon.]

Storage

- Don't store wet or the media will continue to decompose

Growth tests for phytotoxicity: use cress or Chinese cabbage as indicator crops and compare germination in +/- amended peat mix, count emergence after 10-12 days.

4. Use of amendments in media:

Compost is biologically active and so is continually changing. Nutrient sources that can be added to the base mix include thermophillic compost, vermicompost (from worms), alfalfa meal 5%, soy meal, sesame meal 1%, blood meal. Trials using these different nutrient sources showed that growth rates were best with vermicompost at a rate of 20% and 30%. Analysis of the mixes showed nitrate N was significantly higher in the vermicompost than the others.

What rates of nutrients should be added to the base mix? Bloodmeal mix: Base plus 3 kg bloodmeal, 3 kg rock phosphate, and 3 kg greensand per cubic metre of mix.

The vermicompost and thermicompost were sieved to a 4 mm size, and the plant meals were ground to a 2 mm size. By grinding, similar surface area of these meals is exposed to microbial attack. It is also important because such low rates (1 to 5%) are added to the mixes. Grinding allowed for more uniform distribution of the amendments through the mix. In some cases, this may be the problem with home made mixes - poor uniformity in the mixing process and particle size of the components too large.

5. Trial results: Tomatoes were grown in the base mix (control) and in the vermicompost added mix. Growth rates of the plants was hugely better in the mix with the vermicompost addition. However by mid-season the plants grown in the mix with sesame meal added had highest plant weight although yield was highest from plants grown in the vermicompost mix.

6. Suggestions for improving organic transplant media formulation:

- Vermicompost provides more consistent performance than thermophilic compost
- Use combinations of plant and compost amendments
- Reduce vermicompost rates and combine with blood meal or alfalfa (lucerne) meal (1%)
- 1 to 2.5% of plant meals support vegetable seedling growth for 6 weeks
- Alfalfa meal most readily available source

7. Suggestions for improving organic transplant media management:

- Record amendment wt and volume added
- Mix nutrient source into media 1 week prior to use
 - Fill flats (trays or pots) and wet/leach if possible
 - If mixed in advance, store dry
- Screen all amendments to a uniform size
 - Grind plant amendments to 2 mm mesh for better distribution
- Monitor EC prior to seeding and then for minimum of first two weeks. Leach if high EC.

New intake for Organic Horticulture course in October

The Organic Training College, based at the BHU, Lincoln, will be starting its next Organic Horticulture course on October 20. Starting the course in October means the students follow the growing year – they will begin in spring with the sowing of seeds and preparation of vegetable beds, and be able to take advantage of the whole summer growing season.

The highlights of the course for many of the students is the practical sessions on sowing seeds, orchard pruning, compost making, worm composting, etc. The students have their own vegetable plot in Year 1, and in Year 2 they have a “mini-commercial” sized plot. Work experience is also part of the course so that students get a taste of a particular sector of the organic industry – students this year have gone to cropping farms, orchards, and wholesale and retail outlets.

There are no fees. The current course has 16 full and part time students who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Of these students, Bill Martin, Course Director hopes that 6-8 will carry on to do the Year 2 course.

For more information on the Organic Horticulture course, please contact Bill Martin, Course Director, on 325.3684, or email college@bhu.co.nz or see the website www.bhu.co.nz.

Kowhai Farm - Heinz Wattie's Organic Farm at Lincoln University

Farm Report for 2007-08 Summer Season

Summary Kowhai Farm, under the management of Tim Chamberlain (Harts Creek Farm), produced five different organic crops during the 2007-08 season. These included peas, carrots and potatoes processed at Heinz Wattie's Hornby factory, and carrot and radish seed for export to Europe. Organic sheep and cattle grazed the remaining three permanent pasture paddocks (A1, A3 and A6) and various crop residues following harvest.

The most outstanding crop on Kowhai Farm for the 2007-08 season was the organic potato crop which exceeded all expectations yielding 55 tonnes/ha and grossing over \$15,000/ha, giving an estimated gross margin of approx \$10,000/ha. In contrast, while the organic carrot crop produced an impressive gross return of over \$10,000/ha, high growing costs (especially handweeding following wet weather) resulted in a gross margin of less than \$1000/ha.

Three paddocks are expected to remain in pasture during the up-coming 2008-09 season with planned crops likely to include peas, carrots, carrot seed and radish seed.

Crop Summary	A2a	A2b	A3c	A4	A5a	A5b
2007-08 Season	Carrot Seed	Potatoes	Carrots	Peas	Peas	Radish Seed
Yield (t/ha)	NA	55.0	52.5	7.1	5.4	NA
Income (\$/ha)	NA	\$15,405	\$10,642	\$3,253	\$2,736	NA

Paddock A1 – Permanent Pasture

- Permanent pasture since being drilled in autumn 2007
- Irrigated on several occasions during the summer
- Regularly grazed with ewes/lambs over the last 12 months
- Will remain in pasture

Paddock A2 – Potatoes, Carrots & Carrot Seed

Potatoes

- The area destined for potatoes and carrots was ploughed and power harrowed in late September 2007 then cultivated to prepare a false seedbed
- Rows/beds marked out and several weed strikes controlled using roller-undercutter bar (on tractor steered using GPS)
- Potatoes planted late October, emerged late November then grubbed and moulded in December. Good weed control achieved
- Crop flowered early January and watered regularly until late March
- Autumn harvest delayed due to wet weather. Finally harvested in mid June
- Crop yielded 55 tonne/ha producing a gross return of \$15,045/ha
- Growing costs estimated at around \$5000/ha (based on previous crops grown on Kowhai Farm). Gross margin estimated at approximately \$10,000/ha!

Carrots

- Repeated passes with roller-undercutter bar to control successive weed strikes prior to planting in October 2007.
 - Steamweeded early November just prior to emergence.
 - Basket-weeded (to control weeds between rows) several times during Nov and December
-

- Wet weather delayed hand weeding, which finally took place in late December. This resulted in a much larger than expected handweeding cost. Old lesson: timing is vital (but sometimes the weather messes up good plans!)
- Good crop growth during summer and autumn. Irrigated multiple times
- Harvested 20th-21st May, yielding 52.5 tonne/ha with a gross return of \$10,642/ha however high growing costs, particularly the high handweeding cost, resulted in a modest gross margin of around \$600/ha
- Peas are the next crop currently planned for the entire area in paddock A2

Carrot Seed

- Ground ploughed and prepared during late August 2007
- Carrot sticklings (transplants) hand planted into prepared beds in September
- Small carrot plants interrow hoed numerous times during October/November
- Irrigated over summer months. Flowered during January/February 2008
- Windrowed in late March and harvested in April
- Crop residue grazed and area left fallow over winter

Paddock A3 – Permanent Pasture

- Remained in permanent pasture during 2007-08
- Grazed frequently and irrigated several times over summer
- Will continue to remain in pasture

Paddock A4 – Peas → Wheat Leaf

- Permanent pasture (since February 2004) top worked with rotary hoe then ploughed early October 2007 and followed with the roller-undercutter bar
- Peas drilled 24th October and tine weeded on 31st October, prior to emergence
- Tine weeded after emergence to control annual weeds (incl. cornbind & fathen)
- Peas grew well with some fathen, borage (grown as a crop in 1999) and Californian thistles (which required topping by hand) present in the crop leading up to harvest. Irrigated once prior to harvest
- Crop harvested 8 January 2008, yielding 7.1 tonnes/ha and returning \$3,253/ha
- Pea vine baled, remaining crop residue grazed then paddock was cultivated
- Drilled in wheat for possible wheat powder production (made from dried wheat leaf)
- Insufficient growth for autumn harvest
- Currently being grazed. Possible next crop: carrots for seed

Paddock A5 – Peas/Radish Seed → Wheat/Fallow

Peas → Wheat

- Oats that followed the 2006-07 season bean crop were grazed off last winter
- Thereafter the paddock was treated similarly to paddock A4 in terms of cultivation, drilling, tineweeding and irrigation
- The crop was also harvested on 8th January but yielded and returned less than A4 (ex pasture) at 5.4 tonnes/ha and \$2736/ha, respectively
- Pea vine raked, baled and removed then the paddock was grazed and left fallow until March when it was cultivated and drilled into wheat for green feed
- Wheat grazed on several occasions during autumn and winter
- Likely to be followed with a radish seed crop

Radish Seed → Winter Fallow

- Area grazed after harvest of carrot crop in May 2007
-

- Ploughed in August and cultivated during early September then planted
- Emerged in the presence of a lot of annual weeds – at this stage replanting of the crop was considered however it was decided to persevere!
- Inter-row hoed several times during October and early November using a hoe guided by a Garford Robocrop which *“utilises a digital video camera to view the crop ahead of the hoe toolbar. Images from the camera are analysed at a rate of 25 frames per second by the cab mounted console. Using predetermined data relating to the crop row configuration to create a grid, the images are compared to this grid to give a best match scenario. Using this technique, deviations due to weed infestations can largely be ignored. The resulting information is used to steer the hoe via a hydraulic sideshifting hitch.”*
- Crop was still very weedy by late December by which time it was too late to carry out any more weeding
- Radish crop flowered (and was irrigated) during January and February
- Windrowed in March, covered with netting and left to dry, then harvested

Paddock A6 – Permanent Pasture

- Grazed with ewes and lambs during the latter part of 2007
- Further grazing and irrigation as required during summer and autumn 2008
- Will remain in pasture

Paddock A10 – Permanent Pasture

- Ex quarantine paddock. Permanent pasture, for grazing only, since 1999
- Potential to grow a crop next season such as organic carrots

Organic Updates Don't forget to read the Organic Updates – they cover a wide range of topics: from weed management, cover crop mulching and minimum tillage, to animal health, growing organic process peas, undersowing, and Kowhai Farm. The updates are available as PDF files from the CCOG website <http://www.organics.org.nz/> or can be purchased as a bound copy for \$10. Send a cheque to Mary Ralston, Back Track, RD 12 Rakaia, 7782.

OANZ News – Organic Advisory Programme

Mentorship Programme Continues After a very successful first season, the organic mentorship scheme is continuing to help new organic producers this year, funded by the OANZ Organic Advisory Programme. In Canterbury both vegetable/mixed growers (including fruit trees, arable, etc) and livestock farmers can participate. New organic growers pay to join the mentorship programme and then receive visits and advice from experienced organic growers. The mentors are paid. Last year both the "mentees" and the mentors reported positive experiences learning and sharing knowledge. This included 26 new organic growers in Canterbury, Otago, and Southland, ranging from permaculture/mixed vegetable growers to large scale sheep & beef. Anyone interested in participating, please contact Rebecca Reider, rebecca.reider@gmail.com, 03 525 6111.

Organic Dairy & Pastoral Group – Canterbury update

The Organic Dairy & Pastoral Group (ODPG) has expanded to the South Island and this means a range of programmes are now available to support organic livestock farmers here. The ODPG started off as a North Island-based dairy group but is now expanding to include organic sheep & beef farmers around the country. At present there are over 100 members. The ODPG received a major grant from the OANZ Organic Advisory Programme this year to support a variety of activities such as regional field days, local discussion groups for new & experienced organic farmers and small mentorship groups for new organic farmers.

In the last week of June, the first three South Island public events were held. There is potential to form discussion groups in both North & South Canterbury, depending on farmers' interest. The North Canterbury group has decided to meet quarterly at different farms. We are also in the process of setting up mentorship groups to help new organic farmers. This involves a small farmer-led group who visit each other's farms, and group members can contact their mentor as needed for advice. There is a small fee to join and the mentors are paid. Anyone interested in joining these discussion groups, having a mentor, or being a mentor, please contact me, Rebecca Reider, South Island coordinator for ODPG, rebecca.reider@gmail.com, 03 525 6111.

Joining ODPG All organic pastoral farmers are invited to join the ODPG. The benefits of membership include an email discussion group, where farmers ask each other questions, share information and exchange goods and services. Membership costs \$110 per year plus GST.

The ODPG also has the potential to become a national voice for organic sheep & beef farmers who have previously been without representation. At the North Canterbury field day, and in Southland, farmers expressed concern about the way meat companies are dealing with organics. Some have suggested uniting organic sheep and beef farmers in order to bargain with meat companies collectively and ensure fair treatment. We are looking into this. Anyone with thoughts on this please contact me (Rebecca). For more info on ODPG: The local farmer rep on the ODPG executive committee is Ian Turnbull, ieturnbull@ihug.co.nz, 03 314 8155.

ODPG Field Day 24 June – Mixed Pastures *Thanks to Kelly Simelhay for this report*

A field day organised by the Organic Dairy & Pastoral Group Inc was held at David Musgrave's farm, Waihi Bush near Geraldine. David has been farming the property organically for the last 20 years and is passionate about mixed pastures. He did however highlight the positives of a rye grass pasture: they establish quickly in cool conditions and have high productivity, but are susceptible to weeds and insects and don't hold well with frosting or in a drought.

David includes chicory in the mix which is high in zinc (10 times more than ryegrass), potassium and calcium. Plantain is included which is high in magnesium and calcium. David has found that facial eczema and footrot responds to high levels of zinc, and he has had none of these animal health issues since including these herbs in the pastures. Furthermore he has noticed a decrease in Californian thistles in his pastures, he believes this is due to having lucerne, chicory and other deep rooting plants in the pasture which break down compacted soils which the thistles thrive in.

David has completed an analysis of the cost (2 years ago) of a ryegrass pasture which equate to \$180/ha to \$235/ha. A dairy mixed pasture would cost \$243.70/ha to establish. This pasture would be productive for 4 to 5 years. A typical pasture mix for David's property which is in a high rainfall area (rainfall -approx 850 mm pa) would be:

Dairy Pasture	Kg/ha
Tall Fescue	10
Kahu timothy	4
Gala Grazing brome	10
Vision Cocksfoot	0.5
Choice Chicory	1
Maru Phalaris	0.3
Colenso Red Clover	2
Supreme Red Clover	2
Tribute White Clover	1
Tonic Plantain	0.5

Sheep & Beef Clover based mixed pasture Kg/ha		Lucerne based	Kg/ha
Tall fescue	12		8
Kahu Timothy	4		2
Gala Grazing brome	8		5
Vision Cocksfoot	0.5		0.5
Colenso Red clover	2	Wairau Lucerne	6
Maru Phalaris	0.3		0.3
Supreme red clover	2		2
White Clover	1		0
Choice Chicory	1		1
Tonic Plantain	.05		0.5
Costings (2years ago)	\$287.60		\$237.90

David adds trace elements to the soil, including boron, copper, selenium and lime. He has noticed a 20% increase in productivity and has had no bloat since using mixed pastures. A mixed pasture requires a sound management strategy. David has noticed that to achieve the desired results on his property he establishes the pasture in autumn (by the end of March ideally) i.e. sow early. He plants the seed shallow (1-2 cm), and uses a heavy roller to restore the capillary action in the soil. Furthermore he buys and uses only top quality seed.

The pasture is topped once in the second spring to control thistles and is rotationally grazed. Lucerne is allowed to reach flowering at least once a year. The day was very informative and the results can be seen in the quality condition of the stock on the property. The stock grazed are dairy heifers belonging to a local organic dairy farmer.

Organics in Canterbury

Newsletter

C/- Mary Ralston

Back Track

RD 12 Rakaia 7782

If any of your details are incorrect please contact Mary at the return address.

Disclaimer. While every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this publication is accurate, the Canterbury Commercial Organics Group, and the members thereof, do not accept any responsibility or liability for error of fact, omission, interpretation or opinion which may be present, nor for the consequences of any decision based on this information.