

AOA 'healthy soils' field day at Lentara Grove well received.

A small but enthusiastic group of 12 olive producers representing 9 Tasmanian olive groves attended a very successful field day hosted by EVOO and table olive producers Martin & Sophie Grace of Lentara Grove situated in the Tamar Valley at Exeter.

Participants travelled from across Tasmania including Flinders Island and the Tamar Valley in the north to the Huon Valley and Bruny Island in the south of the state.

The Australian Olive Association (AOA) is convening this series of ground-breaking field days to be held across Australia with a refreshing 'in the field' demonstration approach – definitely no PowerPoint! The field day series emphasises the important role of healthy soils in producing healthy trees and lifting grove productivity.

Noting a 2019 AOA grower survey that revealed that Australian grove productivity ranges from zero to 15 tonne / ha, with median production <1.0 tonne / ha, and average production of 3.3 tonne / ha, clearly demonstrating the low productivity of many groves in Australia, reflecting the need to address critical grove management issues.

AOA is also emphasising the value of benchmarking grove performance - setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for improved grove productivity and profitability, including:

- Grove productivity KPIs: kg / tree, tonnes / ha ;
- Cost of production - cost \$/tonne;
- Gross margin - \$/ha

The value of participating in AOA's *OliveCare*® Best Practice Program was also covered, including the use of best practice management checklists, and having access to technical time critical management information.

Download AOA's talking points on the *OliveCare*® best practice program [here](#)

TAS field day participants were treated to a grove walk that covered important grove productivity topics including practical demonstrations covering a range of grove management issues, including:

Canopy Management with olive grove specialist Andrew Taylor (SA)



Andrew Taylor pointing out 25 year old wood that needs to be rejuvenated over a 6- 8 year cycle

Andrew Taylor is a horticulturalist previously based in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, on a 53 ha property just outside Napier with his wife Delyth and two children growing olives, apples and grazing stock; as well as providing harvest contractor and grove advisory services to the NZ olive industry. Andrew also held the position of President of Olives New Zealand for a period of 9 years retiring from this role in 2018. Being a grower himself Andrew is familiar with the risks and rewards of horticulture and the need for groves to be well managed for positive financial outcomes. In 2018 Andrew and his family moved to South Australia, where Andrew now provides grove management services to SA largest olive producer Pendleton Estate situated in the Limestone Coast region.

At the field day, Andrew explained and demonstrated:

- Pruning for sunlight/shade pattern
- Pruning for tree row volume
- Pruning for harvest method
- Pruning for leaf/wood ratio
- Pruning as cultural practise for disease control
- Pruning for renewal
- Pruning for frost reduction
- Pruning for consistent production
- Use of temperature data loggers

View Andrew Taylor in action [Video](#) (7.5 mins):

Soil health and leaf and soil nutrition monitoring with Peter Briscoe from Bioptiv (VIC)



Peter Briscoe demonstrating a 'microbiometer' that measures the ratio of soil bacteria to fungi

Peter Briscoe is head of global sales of Bioptiv. (Bioactive Soil Solutions was sold to Bioptiv (AUS) in April 2020). Bioptiv (AUS) has the IP, licenses, permits, product range and customer base of

Bioactive Soil Solutions and we are continuing the 10+ years of great work Bioactive Soil Solutions began in the agricultural biological industry. We have a range of exciting new initiatives to ensure that we can provide a more holistic approach to biological farming methods and soil improvement amendments including an expanded range of biological offerings and plant based carbon products.

Peter explained and demonstrated:

- How do you maintain productive groves while streamlining nutrient requirements?
- How do you manage applications of fertilisers to optimise plant uptake and minimise losses to run-off, leaching or gas emissions?
- When should I take soil and leaf tests?
- What fertiliser methods should I use?
- How do I improve soil biology and carbon in my soils?
- Building soil nitrogen and nitrogen fixation
- The use of soil amendments to correct sodic and acidic soils

Download Peter's talking points on soil health and grove nutrition [here](#)

Making and using compost with John Barton from Charton & Bang, Research & Development (NSW)



John Barton grew up on a rice farm near Griffith, NSW and worked in agriculture across a range of crop types. After sustaining a back injury John retrained in horticultural science, specialising in soil function and farm ecosystems. He has worked for 10 years in commercial composting at every level from machinery operator to business owner. He has been involved in the production of 1 million cubic metres of compost and has been involved in the commissioning and staff training of 5 new composting sites around Australia. John is passionate about creating sustainable farms and soils that can produce food forever with degrading.

John explained and demonstrated:

- Composting
 - Compost recipe
 - Compost application rates
- Soil water
 - Collecting more water
 - Holding more water
 - Giving back more water
- Soil carbon
 - Living carbon
 - Simple carbon
 - Complex carbon
 - How we lose soil carbon
 - How we can build soil carbon
 - How to keep soil carbon
 - Measuring soil carbon

Download John's talking points on composting and soil carbon [here](#)

Click [here](#) for more on compost and composting including useful resource links.



TAS field day participants described their experience as 'awesome' and 'best field day ever'