

# Technology flying high at Future Orchards® Walk



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**L**adycroft orchard in Manjimup was the host for APAL's Spring Future Orchards® Orchard Walk, showcasing a range of strategies, innovations and technology options that may assist with decision-making in the orchard.

The now Pink Lady® royalty funded Future Orchards® program is offering growers a wider range of guest speakers from a local pool of experts, as COVID keeps us operating more locally in Western Australia.

**CSBP's AgTech services**  
Agronomists Andreas Neuhaus and Ashley Juers were the guest speakers for the day, presenting about the value of soil mapping and how it can be used to make decisions for soil and plant health.

The presentation included a demonstration of the Decipher Ag mapping platform which can be used for record-keeping of soil test data, determining management zones, sampling points, and viewing peak biomass.

We joined the virtual National Orchard Talk in the Ladycroft shed, where Craig Hornblow (AgFirst) and Nic Finger (Fruit Help) discussed how to achieve fruit quality outcomes using the data collected during the season.

Crop estimates, fruit size and hand thinning numbers can be useful to make more informed decisions for orchard management and options available (tools, technology) for collecting data. As always, the presentations can be found on the Future Orchards library and on the APAL YouTube channel.

The surprise demonstration for growers was by Christian Sieber from Omnidrones, demonstrating the XAG agriculture solutions. This included their automated

custom-built multipurpose tracked vehicle used to transport equipment around the orchard. Then the Rover, unmanned ground vehicle traversed down the rows and spraying water over the apple trees. This vehicle had only just been unboxed and was very new to their fleet. The demonstration finished with the drone spraying system which was designed for aerial application to seed mine sites and apply plant protection products for agriculture. All were controlled by the operator's mobile

Automated custom built multipurpose tracked vehicle.



▶ OMNIDRONES Rover, unmanned ground vehicle traversing down the rows.



The Future Orchards® program is offering growers a wider range of guest speakers.



► **SOIL** Your Undies Challenge, wall of dirty undies.

phone, with the capability of using either aerial photography or the satellite soil mapping that had been done in the DecipherAg® program that we had seen demonstrated earlier by Andreas and Ashley. Growers were most impressed with the demonstration and keen to see how it could be applied in apple and pear orchards.

Then the undies came out from the Soil Your Undies Challenge; the decomposed undies were pinned up to reveal how decomposition had occurred during the 10-week challenge.

Some looked like thongs with all the cotton eaten away! No firm conclusions were made from the trial, but in any case, the measurement and understanding of soil health and its benefits to the tree made as an interesting discussion within the group.

The presentations were followed by a tour of Ladycroft orchard to explore the new plantings and PIPS3 demonstration site.

Growers were able to see the new planting of 27,000 Cosmic Crisp® apples on a steel framed V trellis, which was very impressive. The progress of the twin leader Bravo™ planting was discussed with Marcel Veens. The PIPS3 soil health demonstration site was viewed by all. This site includes different inter row and under tree treatments monitoring insects and soil properties.

Ladycroft Orchard hosted an extremely successful future orchard event, with many local growers from Kirup — Pemberton attending the day.

Thank you to Bec, Shaun and all the orchard team at Ladycroft for providing us with a great venue and for opening up their orchard to show case the trials and look at the new infrastructure and their exciting young plantings. 🍏

**MORE INFORMATION ►**

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► **BEC** Whittaker, Ladycroft Orchard Manager, talking about training of Cosmic Crisp® apples onto a V Trellis.

