



Well, we are poised to reap another crop in days. Reports from around the country are encouraging, particularly in the Onderberg. This is pleasing after the difficult times last year, where production was anywhere from 70% to 40% down, resulting in very poor revenue collection of some R700 k. SALGA needs at least R1 m to make any serious impact on our research and consequent service delivery to members.

John Spear, Don Wescott and I have spent some considerable time trying to resolve the collection of levies / income issue and get our communication to members up to speed, i.e. membership details, with limited success so far. It seems that there is an engrained culture of avoiding levy payments, which I



believe is experienced by all the associations. Sadly, our size or critical mass of members is small by comparison, so every year we sweat to make ends meet. In the year gone by we raided our reserves to cover the loss of some R200 k, including the R100 k profit made from our world conference.

The success of the Association is directly related to the input from members, be it levy payments or effort in the form of feedback, interest in the activities, admin assistance or physical hours spent furthering our cause. I have to report that the above are extremely poor. As usual this falls on a few dedicated people who carry the day.

The above was illustrated by the poor attendance at the last AGM. From this AGM the following is relevant:

- A proposed new levy collection method based on hectares, supported by the largest players in the industry, mainly from the Onderberg, was sadly not successful. Instead a compromise was reached where the packhouses would apply their administrative skills and muscle to ensure that those who packed with them paid their levies. I thank them for their serious commitment to make this happen. The levy payments will be at R0,43 per carton for this year. In addition "bakkie" sales will attract a levy (2% of sales price), based on the honesty of the member's declaration. We will see how it realises.
- The AGM was held in Tzaneen to more directly involve unhappy members who constantly accuse the Onderberg members of running some private club. These accusations are frankly insulting to the large players from the Onderberg who religiously pay their levies, up to R200 k each, and who in fact carry SALGA year after year. As chairman I have made it clear that on my watch, those who do not at least pay their levies will be struck off the membership roll. Frankly, a tight enthusiastic

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

membership of 40 to 50 members is far more productive (and costs less to administer) than a membership of 100+, most of whom duck and dive, take no interest, do not pay their levies and make all the noise.

- The SALGA executive has drawn a line in the sand with Subtrop regarding services delivered. In support of this the SALGA executive or Board will individually be held accountable for the success of various aspects of service delivery to members. But this will be to no avail if individual members do not step up to the plate and contribute to the common success. It will be more about "what you put in" than "what you take out".
- The good news is that we are making huge progress. Sakkie Froneman has now finally taken possession of some 40 world class cultivars. These are now under quarantine at the ARC in Nelspruit. This is arguably the biggest step SALGA has made in its history and sets a solid platform for the future. These cultivars have been selected for many, many different characteristics and not only early cultivars – which is a common accusation. Some may be cultivated as they are and will be used by the ARC to improve our breeding program.

One thing is for sure – members who have not paid their dues will not be able to purchase this plant material. This statement is underwritten by the sources of these cultivars. The ARC will not release to anybody without the express authorisation of the SALGA Board, and only then after proof of *bona fide* "membership in good standing" Back door stealing will be dealt with; chain saws and prosecution at an appropriate inconvenient time. This process regarding the new R1G22 cultivar is already underway. It is not a good plan to litigate with the government. Some of these cultivars, if our growing conditions and farming practices suit, will vastly improve the already very profitable status of litchis in



Advantages of mycorrhizae

Barry Christie

SUBTROP

Mycorrhizae are fungi that live in a symbiotic, mutualistic relationship with plants in the rhizosphere (area surrounding roots). There are mainly two types of mycorrhizae, namely arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi and ectomycorrhizal fungi. The former grow intercellularly into roots of plants, between cells (usually through root hairs), whereas the latter form sheaths around the surface of roots. A third type also exists, namely ectendomycorrhizae, the name being self-explanatory.

How do mycorrhizae benefit plants?

The first report of the English word "mycorrhiza" was in 1885. Soon after that the word spread and scientists started to look for these organisms on all kinds of plants. It became quite clear that plants that grew in the presence of mycorrhizae usually grew quicker or appeared healthier. Some plant species cannot survive whatsoever in the absence of mycorrhizae. They benefit the plants by growing mycelia into fine spaces where roots do not readily grow and transporting mineral nutrients to the plant root area. In return, the plant supplies the fungus with carbohydrates and possibly other nutrients. The mycorrhizae thus increase the nutrient-uptake ability of the plant.

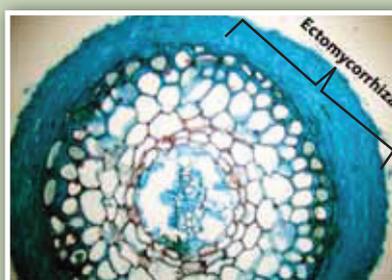


PHOTO: http://sciweb.nybg.org/science2/images/larix_amanita.jpg

the next three to four years. It has been made clear to us that different cultivars require very different farming practices to succeed. These "tricks" are currently being documented.

- More good news is that our intellectual knowledge bank, accessed via a password from the SALGA website, is gathering momentum. Paid up members, in good standing, may apply for their password by contacting Kate Hamilton-Fowle at the Subtrop offices (tel: 015 307 3676; info@subtrop.co.za).
- More good news is that the attendance at our study group functions is increasing, clearly more and more members see the value. Those that missed the session on 29 October, given by our Australian visitor, missed a talk of immense value from somebody whose lifelong passion has been litchi farming and cultivar breeding. We will repeat this in the future. Sadly the attendance was poor.

It is with sincere regret that Dr Deon Begemann has retired. However, fortunately, he has agreed to continue to assist us, particularly from a technical point of view. Deon has made a huge contribution to our progress over many, many years. We thank him most sincerely for his unselfish contribution and wish him and his wife endless years of good health and happiness. *Deon you are an example to us all, thank you.*

Sakkie Froneman needs a special mention. He relentlessly walked the new cultivars through the DAFF mine field in Stellenbosch, until they were safely grafted onto the awaiting rootstock in Nelspruit. The main problem was that they forgot where they had laid the mines! I will not comment publicly on the drama Sakkie experienced, as it will not help, and our Australian visitor's report back is unprintable. *Sakkie you did much more than required of you. Thank you.*

I wish you all a very successful harvest.

Gavin Hardy

Do mycorrhizae hold any value for the litchi?

As early as 1921 the benefits of mycorrhizal association with litchi plants has been documented¹. Since then, several trials have confirmed and demonstrated the positive effects of mycorrhizae on litchi plants. Mycorrhizal associations with various other plant species have been researched. However, the amount of research that has been done on litchi mycorrhizae is limited. *Rhizophagus litchii* was described as a symbiont of litchi roots in 1971². More recently it was demonstrated that mycorrhizal-inoculation of litchi air-layered plantlets enhanced leaf and root growth^{3,4}. Commercial application (or at least experimentation) of mycorrhizae to litchi trees in nurseries, whether air-layered or cuttings, should be considered. When considering yield gain it would be difficult, if not impossible, to speculate the effect that mycorrhizae could have. However, it is clear that overall tree health could benefit from these organisms.

References

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- ⁴Sharma, S.D., Kumar, P., Raj, H. & Bhardwaj, S.K. Isolation of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi and *Azotobacter chroococcum* from local litchi orchards and evaluation of their activity in the air-layers system. *Sci. Hortic. (Amsterdam)*. 123, 117-123 (2009). **ST**