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EDITION #10 | WINTER | 30 JUNE 2026

The Vine is the official bi-monthly newsletter for Australian sweetpotato growers and forms part of a broader communications project funded by Hort Innovation through the Sweetpotato research and development levy, with contributions from the Australian Government.

Our goal is to keep growers informed, supported and connected, while showcasing the value of levy-funded R&D and extension. We encourage you to read, share and engage with The Vine, and welcome your feedback. Please contact Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc (ASPG) Executive Officer Bree Watson on aspg.sec@gmail.com or 0403 616 702 with suggestions or content for future editions.

In this edition

- Industry Updates
- Biosecurity News
- Market Reports
- Levy Project Updates

INDUSTRY UPDATES

Hort Connections Conference

ASPG Committee Members Russell McCrystal and Claire Maslen along with ASPG Executive Officer Bree Watson attended Hort Connections Conference in Adelaide on behalf of the Australian sweetpotato industry.

Bree and Russell attended the cross-vegetable industry SIAP where Bree spoke on a panel and Bree also attended the Hort Frontiers Breakfast and a networking session with the Hort Innovation Board and other peak industry bodies. Opportunities like this strengthen the role of ASPG as the peak body for sweetpotatoes and support cross-industry collaboration.

Image below: Russell McCrystal, Bree Watson, Claire Maslen

Payday Super now applicable

From 1 July 2026, employers must pay their employees' superannuation contribution each payday instead of at least once every 3 months. Take a look at the Payday Super Checklist for Employers form → HERE

Payday Super for Employers

Horticulture Award Rates

The Fairwork commission have increased wages by 4.75% and are effective from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2026. Sole Traders, Partnerships and Incorporated bodies (i.e. Pty Ltd businesses) that have not entered into a Workplace Agreement must use the Horticulture Award 2020.

Horticulture Award Pay Guide

Training and Development

Freshcare Food Safety & Quality Training

Most fresh produce suppliers and customers now require growers to be certified against a recognised food safety program. Achieving certification not only meets market demands but also demonstrates your commitment to delivering safe, high-quality produce.

Since 2017, Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers (BFVG) has supported local producers by delivering Freshcare training – Australia's leading on-farm assurance program for fresh produce.

Friday 14th August 9am-4pm
Horticulture House
255 Bourbong Street Bundaberg.

Book Now!

HACCP Foundations for Fresh Produce

This practical, course provides an introduction to the application of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) in the fresh produce sector.

The program meets producer training requirements under the HARPS Standard, helping businesses stay compliant while building food safety knowledge and confidence.

This session is delivered by Kylie Jackson, approved training partner of Quality Associates (RTO No. 41341).

Friday 21st August 9am-4pm
Horticulture House
255 Bourbong Street, Bundaberg

Book Now!

If you are in a different region and require Freshcare or HACCP training please contact Kylie Jackson at qa@bfvg.com.au to discuss.

BIOSECURITY UPDATES

Guava root-knot nematode

Root-knot nematodes are plant parasites that live inside roots and take nutrients from the plant, causing them to look lumpy or knotted. Similar to QLD and NSW there are three species of root-knot nematodes in the Northern Territory that can cause problems for horticultural production.

Although *Meloidogyne enterolobii* has not been detected in commercial sweetpotato production areas to date, on-farm biosecurity measures are your front line of defence to keep GRKN (and many other pests) out of your property. Like other root-knot nematodes, *M. enterolobii* can be easily spread through infested soil and infected plant material. It is critical that growers are mindful of risk pathways and strive to avoid introduction to their property.

Signage, restricted access (particularly to cropping areas), machinery wash-down and use of clean planting material are all measures which can help to reduce the risk. Simple, low-cost measures can make a big difference in keeping your farm safe.

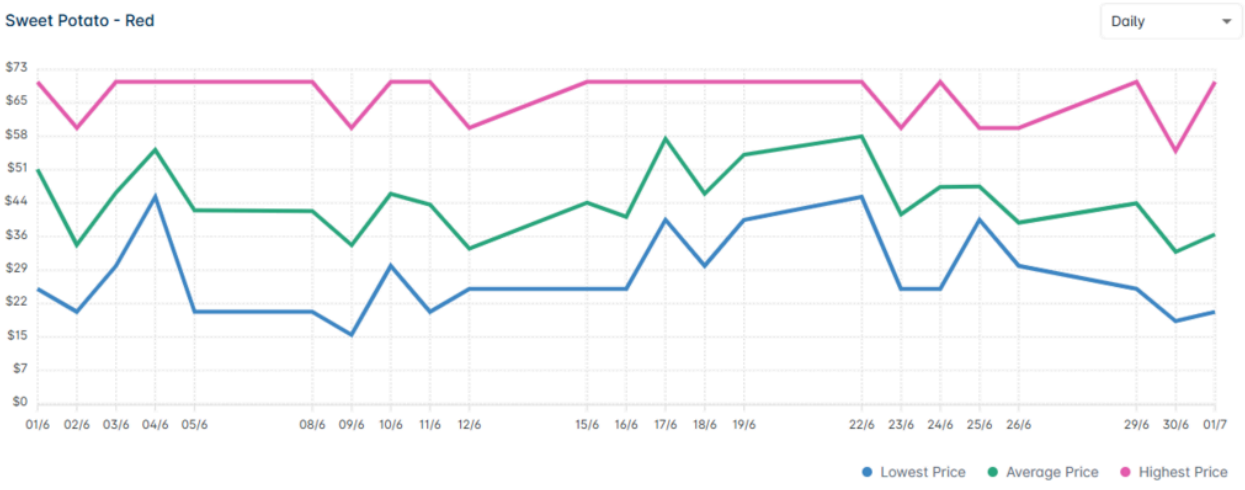
For any queries regarding GRKN or soil sampling requests please contact Rach on 0436 928 512.

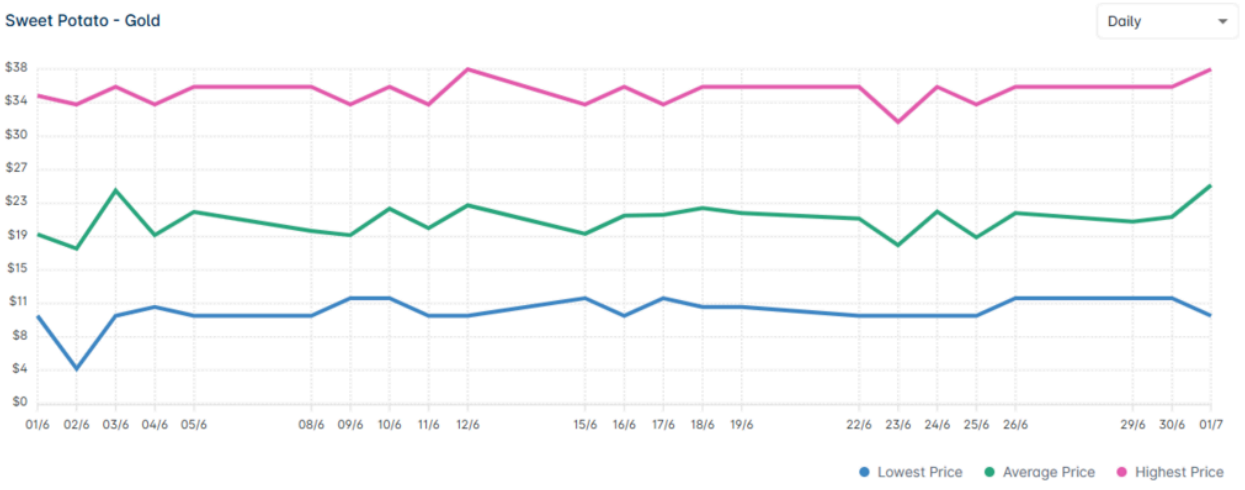
Guava root-knot nematode management factsheet

MARKET PRICES

The Brisbane Markets Price Report provides a snapshot of current wholesale market conditions, highlighting price movements, supply trends and demand signals relevant to growers.

This update is provided with thanks to the strategic partnership between Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc. (ASPG) and Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers (BFVG), supporting growers to make informed marketing and production decisions.





LEVY PROJECT UPDATES

Sweetpotato Industry Communications and Extension Project

PW24001 2025-2030
Funding: Hort Innovation from sweetpotato levies matched by federal government funding

ASPG delivers the sweetpotato industry communications and extension program on behalf of the sweetpotato industry. Outputs include this newsletter in addition to the support of workshops,

extension activities, farm visits, website updates and social media pages among other activities.

The project is currently working in delivering two short instructional videos to support safe work practices, worker induction, and compliance with WHS and food safety requirements.

The two videos underway include:

- Safe knife handling and sweetpotato trimming
- Forklift pre-start WHS inspection

If you have a specific topic you would like us to consider please let Bree know.

Filming underway for the safe knife handling video

Access to new sweetpotato varieties

PW23000 2024-2025 Update
Funding: Hort Innovation from sweetpotato levies matched by federal government funding

Aus Sweetpotato Seed has produced 'low disease' first generation sweetpotato planting material for over 20 years for the Australian industry. To maintain access to the latest and best sweetpotato genetics in the western world Aus Sweetpotato routinely imports new varieties into Australia from the US. Aus Sweetpotato Seed has a license with the Louisiana State University Ag Centre (LSU) for importation of varieties into Australia. Examples of previously imported US varieties which have been commercially successful are Bellevue, Orleans and Murasaki.

The *Access to new sweetpotato varieties* project provides support to accelerate the importation of advanced sweetpotato breeding lines to be evaluated for commercial production in Australia. An important focus is selecting new varieties that have increased disease and nematode resistance, combined with consistent shape and enhanced flavour.

Project Observations 2024/25

- In 2024-2025 four gold flesh sweetpotato varieties from the LSU breeding programme were grown on sweetpotato farms in Queensland and New South Wales.
- The plantings were across 18 locations. On eight sites 60 plant plots were planted with smaller demonstrations at a further 10 sites. Plantings were timed to coincide with commercial planting times.
- Yields of all four varieties were within 25% of the industry standard varieties planted as checks. Most sites had Orleans as the check variety with a few using Bellevue.
- One variety 18-100 excelled against the check varieties in early bulking however it did not maintain quality in the ground past 110 Days after planting (DAP).

- Another variety 14-31 with red to purple skin and gold flesh held well in the ground especially in the longer 200 day winter crops and maintained acceptable shape and skin quality.
- The four varieties were selected based on two varieties (14-31,16-148) having *Meloidogyne Enterolobi* resistance (Guava root knot nematode), One (18-100) showing early bulking/maturity and one (19-13) having potentially a firmer skin at harvest.

Download full report here

Pest management for the Australian sweetpotato industry

PW22000 October 2023 - October 2026
Funding: Hort Innovation from sweetpotato levies matched by federal government funding

With the project concluding later this year, the team is currently focused on preparing reports and fact sheets on activities undertaken throughout the project; Reniform susceptibility and nematicide demonstration field trials, resistance screening of cover crops, Root-knot species pot experiments including Guava Root-knot, on-farm soil surveys and molecular identification, sampling for accurate detection of Sweetpotato leaf curl virus, mechanical virus transfer experiments to replicate seed bed cutting, ad hoc virus monitoring of commercial crops and ipomoea plants including those in nurseries and gardens.

Project team meetings were held on the December February April and June. A pilot study to evaluate the effects of generational yield decline due to virus infection was planted in early March at Gatton Research Facility. Sub sampling at 8 weeks showed potential yield differences between generations and data analysis is underway.

If you would like a block sampled for nematodes, please contact Rach on 0436 928 512. If you are using cover crops that you would like tested for nematode resistance, contact Sandra on 0427 604 144 or Rach. All we need is a cup of seed.

Causes and management strategies for skin loss in Sweetpotato

PW21002 September 2022 - August 2026
Funding: Hort Innovation from sweetpotato levies matched by federal government funding

A ten-page report was compiled in March for Horticulture Innovation summarising all project work to date. Professor Villordon has completed a literature review. *'More Than Skin Deep: Native Periderm Development and Lignin-Mediated Durability in Sweetpotato Storage Roots'* which is currently under review for publication. Two student theses have also been completed; Dao, H. T., (2025) Mechanical Damage of Sweetpotato, MSc report for the University of Queensland. Preliminary testing identified that shear forces above approximately 2 Newtons were associated with skinning injury, demonstrating the potential for simple mechanical testing tools to support development of standardised skin durability assessment methods. Shorten, D.,

(2025) Mechanical Impact Simulation and SmartSpud® Assessment MSc report for the University of Queensland. Controlled testing across different surface materials, evaluated the relative contribution of impact forces to skinning damage during harvest and handling.

As this project concludes in August, the project team are busy preparing reports about on-farm testing of the SmartSpud® devices and fact sheets to minimise skin loss., Production of a best practice manual and a location specific advisory are underway

We are grateful to Russell from McCrystal Ag for his assistance in finding the 'lost' smart spud device accidentally buried after being deployed through a harvester. If you would like testing of the SmartSpud® on your farm or have changed your system or pack line, contact Rach on 0436 928 512 or David on 0472 840 106 to bring the smart spud out to your farm.

Two field trials were harvested in May, to assess the effects of water deprivation and top chopping on skin set at varying intervals prior to harvest. Plots were mechanically harvested with a hand harvested subsample also taken. Root assessment is underway with data collected over an 11-week period. A big thank you to McCrystal Ag and Aus Sweetpotato seed for providing trial sites and assistance with harvesting.

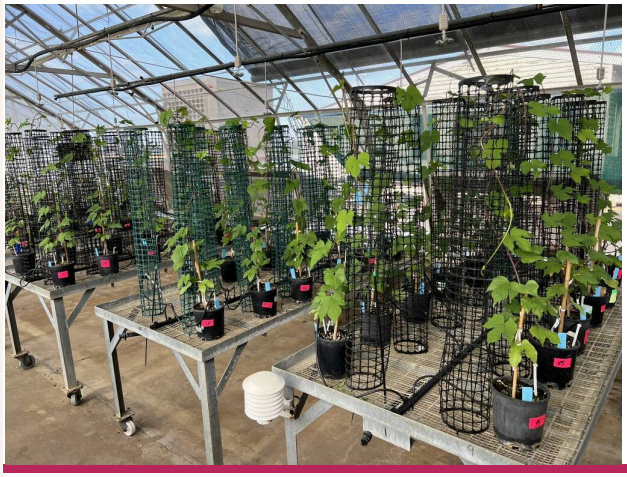
Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific Island Countries and Australia

Hort2018/195 August 2022 - June 2026
Funding: The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) from federal government funds.

The Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (SPC CePaCT) in Fiji is working with DPI sweetpotato researchers in Gatton to strengthen regional biosecurity across the pacific and Australia. The Australian component includes continuous monitoring of production areas for biosecurity threats, enhanced diagnostics and virus vector studies. Thus, this ACIAR funding partially supports the PT lab in Gatton and provides some salaries for the sweetpotato research team.

David Shorten and Michael Hughes are currently visiting Samoa, Fiji and Tonga to finalise in-country project work and assist in harvesting PT versus non-PT comparison field trials and deliver hands-on training with growers and extension staff.

The Australian component concludes this financial year, so Mary and Sandra are currently compiling reports on plant sampling methods for virus detection and virus vector experiments looking at multiple sweetpotato viruses and various insect vectors (thrips, whiteflies, mites and mealy bugs).



Follow us on socials

As the 2026 Marketing campaign rolls out we're calling on everyone to like and share our socials to extend our reach and maximise your levy investment. Click the below icons to follow our journey.

Hort Innovation Strategic levy investment | SWEETPOTATO FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the sweetpotato research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

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