



Focus Grove Project – Interim Update Fact Sheet

Olive Crop Load Management by Secondary Pruning

In 2017, our field days in October foreshadowed a very heavy flowering and fruit set. They noted at that time that they needed to prepare to undertake some crop thinning to enable the trees to carry abundant crops but also to maintain growth and development to ensure the potential for adequate return flowering next year. A second factor to consider is the capacity for the trees to satisfactorily mature such heavy crops anticipated for the 2018 harvest.

Our Project Consultant, Stuart Tustin from Plant and Food Research, and Andrew Taylor visited the Ngatarawa Olive Grove, which is the Hawke's Bay Focus Grove, last week. As anticipated, they found that the excellent flowering has led to a very heavy fruit set. In fact it is a HUGE crop! Being an extremely healthy grove, they could see that quite reasonable annual growth has been made and the trees looked in excellent condition. The grove needs to maintain the capacity for continued new vegetative growth to support the developing fruit and to ensure flower potential for next year. Whilst a fantastic fruit set and crop potential, Stuart and Andrew considered the trees needed to have some crop reduction for ensuring fruit development and hoping to lock in next year's flowering.

They undertook secondary pruning around the periphery of the trees trying to reduce fruit load by 10-15% (at a guess!). They focused on specifically removing lumps of pendant growth which incidentally has the least new vegetative growth because of its pendant nature. This is a simple task using a pole saw making about 3 – 5 cuts per tree depending on the trees of course. This approach also adds to the likely increase in harvested yield because they are specifically removing canopy that does not shake well. In some cases they removed clumps of growth low in the centre of the tree to improve light.

The following photographs show 'before' and 'after' images of three of the trees they thinned/pruned. The job takes about 4 – 5 minutes a tree. They have included the prunings removed in the images so you can see pruning intensity. Typically branches removed were about 2-4 cm in diameter. Limbs were pruned off at their base where they emerged from the supporting branch. No stubs were left if possible. This allowed us to improve the structure of trees towards single axis major limbs which are the best format for ease of shaking.

Stuart and Andrew ask that you critically review the fruit set on your groves and if it looks like one of your heavier potential crops this year, then the secondary thinning/pruning is strongly recommended.

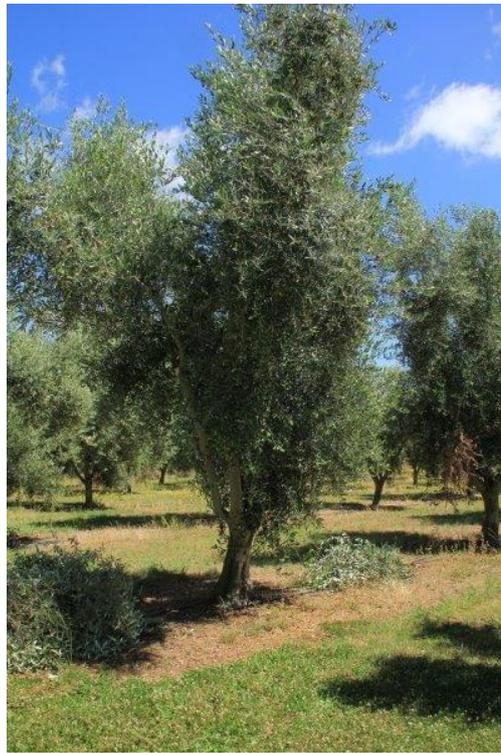
Remember our underlying mantra about tree management. They must be looking at the 'next three years' at any one time, not just the next crop. This is a crucial point in the renovation of your groves because they are beginning to see the benefits of healthier groves with lower disease incidence and responses in flowering and fruit set. They must ensure that they set up the groves for year-on-year high crops. That means they must farm for next year's flowers as well as the next crop.

Have a great Christmas and compliments for the New Year.

Before



After



Before



After

