

Growing organically for 25 years



"...enabling us to go where we haven't gone before and the orchard should really start cranking."

Being organic farm certified for 25 years makes Graeme Reid a pioneer in organics and he says if done right, the results will reward well.

"I believe if you get it right, there's no excuse not to have a crop that produces, maybe not quite as well as a conventional, but the food value is so much better, the keeping is so much better and the nutrition is so much better."

Graeme has made a career of getting the soil right; making and selling his own plant tonics, teas and fertilisers.

"Number 233 was our certification number. Now we're certified on the property under theASURE-Quality, but our input fertilisers are certified by BioGro so that the kiwifruit growers can use them."

Graeme has been mainly growing tamarillos, of which he currently has about 2000 trees, and his secondary crop is feijoas. He has 700 of these growing on 'A' frames.

"I have found I get more fruit since I started doing this and it certainly opens the tress up and makes harvesting a lot easier."

Table grapes

Graeme has now added a few avocado trees and he is growing green table grapes in a hot house.

"I market all this fruit organically and in addition I consult to about 300 hectares of avocado and

kiwifruit on biological fertiliser regimes. "So we design their base fertiliser programmes and their dressings. And as well as that we have a programme where we make and inoculate their properties with the correct biology - compost tea, for example.

And then we have a foliar programme for feeding the plants through the foliage."

The worm farm is another key part of Graeme's operation. It runs the entire length of one of his tunnel houses and has about a million worms in it.

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Looking after soil is the key



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Graeme's worms go through about a tonne of feed each week, but he doesn't just recycle waste through them.

"I'm specifically getting in good quality feed for them like organic cow manure to get a good quality of vermicast and from that I make a product called humic confulvic acid using hot water extraction, which is one of my certified input products."

Graeme also makes a seaweed extract from Norwegian kelp (ascophyllum nodosum), and compost tea.

"I breed biology up in tanks under controlled conditions with oxygen and temperature and the growers do four rounds of that per year on the orchard floor with products like seaweed and fish and humic acid and folic products to feed the biology. So it's like inoculating the soil with biology as well as putting out food for it."

Toxins in the soil

Recently Graeme had an issue with some of his tamarillos not going so well. "They were doing alright, but they just weren't humming along like they should have been."

Graeme called in Ewan Campbell of Probitas, who ran some soil tests which were in turn analysed by John Godwin of Healing World, who found a lot of

toxins that had apparently been in the soil for decades.

John then suggested a course of radionics for the block, which involves the use of radio waves tuned to the right frequencies to 'clean up' toxins in the soil. The results Graeme saw were quite bizarre.

"When you do the detox it comes up through the soil and through the plant. And tamarillos are really sensitive. At first, after John had done the clean up, you would think that someone had flown over the property in a plane with a load of hormone spray. I got all this distorted growth and plants dying."

And then we have a foliar programme for feeding the plants through the foliage."

Detox

Graeme says the first 'detox' was a general one that was done for a number of orchards at the same time. He contacted John and another clean up was done; this time specifically tuned to his orchard.

"Within three weeks of that clean up being finished my tams were away. Further up the plants they still had the distorted growth but the new growth coming through was beautiful. So they are on the mend, but it will really take 12 months to get them up how they should be."

Graeme is excited about how his block will perform in the future now the toxins have been removed.

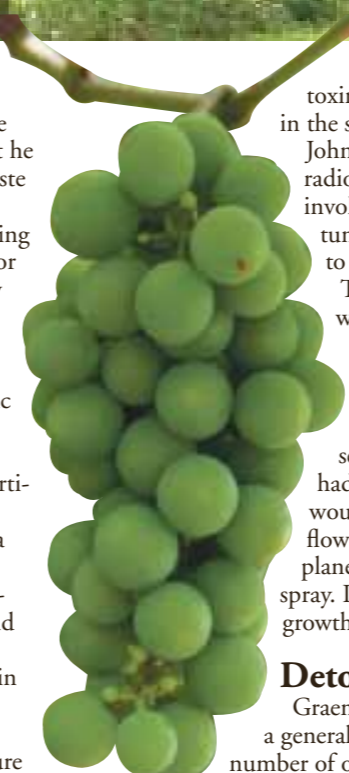
"It should enable us to go where we haven't gone before and the orchard should really start cranking."

After 25 years as an organic farmer Graeme is still intensely enthusiastic about what he is doing.

He trained as an engineer, but says when an opportunity arose to get onto his grandfather's land he seized it with both hands.

"I didn't fancy spending my life stuck in a workshop all day."

By Ken Usmar



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