

Mallee muncher a money maker



*CALM senior technical officer Tim Birmingham demonstrates his recent invention — the mallee muncher at the Woodanilling Field Day. See story on page 3.
Photo courtesy of The Farm Weekly*

Tim and his muncher move mountains of mallee



Deputy Premier and Minster for Commerce and Trade Hendy Cowan, second from right, hears Tim Birmingham describe his mallee oil extractor's attributes. Looking on are Mr Cowan's personal assistant Kate Kent and Agricultural Region MLC Murray Criddle. Photo by John Bartle

NEARLY 400 farmers have turned out in recent weeks to hear the latest on CALM's eucalyptus oil program, and to see demonstrations of harvesting and extraction of eucalyptus oil from early plantings of oil mallees.

The farmers attended oil mallee field days organised by CALM and the Department of Agriculture at Woodanilling, Kalannie and Canna, and were particularly interested in including oil mallees as a viable cash crop in their tree-planting program.

Among the demonstrations that attracted keen interest was a prototype mallee harvester, developed by

CALM senior technical officer Tim Birmingham.

Tim developed the harvester, known as 'the mallee muncher' by modifying an old wheat harvester in CALM's Dwellingup workshop.

This, in conjunction with a still, developed by Phil Scot from the Department of Agriculture, was used in the demonstrations to extract more than 200 litres of eucalyptus oil from about 10 tonnes of mallee leaf material.

Batches of this oil have been given to several large international companies for early market development.

In 1993, CALM's Vegetation and Tree

Planting Advisory Service, (VATPAS), in association with interested farmers and the Department of Agriculture, embarked on large-scale plantings as a beginning to the establishment of 5 000 hectares in each of six centres, or planting cells.

They are Canna, Kalannie, Wickepin, Narembeen, Woodanilling and Esperance.

Also in 1993, more than 200 000 oil mallee seedlings were planted, increasing to more than one million seedlings in 1994, with nearly three million seedlings expected to be planted by the end of the 1995 planting season.

The seedlings are offered to the farmers in the planting cells in a share-farming contract with CALM.

All plantings are integrated into the farming system, where they will provide the maximum landcare benefit, as well as a possible income from the sale of eucalyptus oil, should the industry develop.

As well as the large scale plantings, more than 30 oil mallee species' trials and 12 genetic improvement trials have been established throughout the Wheatbelt to further our knowledge on species selection and planting layouts.

The plantings will also provide a workbase for further tree-breeding to increase vigour and oil content.

Farmers from the planting cells recently formed the Oil Mallee Growers' Association of WA. The Association executive is made up of representatives from each of the planting areas, as well as representatives from CALM and the Department of Agriculture.

The aim of the Association is to co-ordinate the early development of a WA eucalyptus oil industry.



CALM senior technical officer Rick Giles demonstrates planting layouts of mallees to farmers at the Woodanilling Field Day. Photo by Wally Edgecombe



CALM senior technical officer Wally Edgecombe, right, and Woodanilling farmer Eric Crossley with a jar of eucalyptus oil. Behind them is the extraction still.



Local oil mallee planting coordinator for CALM Max Waters, standing in two-year-old 'mallee alley' at Kalannie. Photo by Tim Birmingham



Tim Birmingham explains how the mallee muncher was developed, at the Woodanilling oil mallee field day. Photo by Wally Edgecombe



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