

Summary of Crest Lane Orchard

6.6 hectares of Orchard and pasture on alluvial clay soils. The orchard is for over 15 years under organic management. We took over the property in November 2006 and are happy to maintain its fully certified organic status.

The main issue with the orchard is the low productivity. There are many reasons for the low productivity which we hope to resolve over the coming years. The low productivity is in our opinion caused by a combination of; too much shade from the shelter belts, low levels of specific nutrients, too high tree density, bad pruning and water logging in some areas. There is also room to improve weed control and change in vegetation of the sward to more nitrogen fixating species.

The drainage issue has resulted in some trees dying from Phytophthora damage. Other diseases which we encounter are Verrucosis and Altenaria in some citrus varieties. Main pests are lemon tree borers, which are controlled by pruning.

Shelter belts will be reduced in size during the winter of 2007. This will take the height from over 20 meter to below 10 meter in most belts. We will then bring the maintenance of the shelter belt into a two year cycle.

The soil is mainly low in phosphorus and potassium. Phosphorus will be brought to the appropriate levels by applying RPR on an annual basis. For the improvement of potassium we are looking at wood waste products.

Tree density is in the process of reduction, by pruning and finally removing surplus trees. This will improve productivity and fruit quality. As a side effect we anticipate a reduction in disease pressure. We also started a programme to replace low producing trees with improved selections.

Pruning of the persimmon is brought in an annual cycle to improve the tree structure.

For easier weed control we have invested in a mulch mower with a swing-arm attachment to be able to mow in the tree line.