

Tree croppers' fruitful conference

An apple a day may truly keep the doctor away, or at least help manage diabetes, according to new research to be discussed at the NZ Tree Croppers Association's conference in Pukekohe on April 22-24.

Andrew Dare of Plant & Food Research will describe recent studies which have identified a compound called phloridzin, found in significant amounts in apples, which has the ability to remove sugar from the bloodstream and the potential to manage diseases like Type 2 diabetes.

He will be among the speakers at the conference hosted by the Franklin Branch of the NZ Tree Crops Association at Wesley College, where tree croppers from around New Zealand will congregate to hear speakers on a range of topics connected to tree cropping.

"It is open to the public and is suitable for anyone who has a desire to increase their knowledge on tree crops which produce an income, or just give pleasure and product," says conference convener Heather Douglas.

Topics covered include stone fruits, pip fruits, nuts, timber and bee foraging trees. Among the other speakers and exhibitors are Southland food forester Robert Guyton, Andrew Bolan of Incredible Edibles and

Taupo Natives Nursery. Speakers from Australia include Jack Milbank, a former Nuffield Scholar, of Hortus Technical Services,

Bundaberg, who will be presenting on soil and leaf monitoring, integrated pest management for greater fertility.

The keynote speaker is Graham Sait of Nutri-Tech Solutions, Australia, who will present on the link between soil nutrition and human health. Locals are also featuring at the conference with

Gavin Hedley talking on bio fuels (syngas and bio diesel) and John McDonald-Wharry on biochar.

The focus will be on which trees are suitable for these bio fuels, and will touch on the manufacturing process and characteristics of the end products.

Lynda Hallinan Hinton, editor-at-large of 'NZ Gardener' magazine, a weekly columnist for the 'Sunday Star-Times', a gardening broadcaster, TV presenter of 'Get Growing'

on Choice TV, speaker and workshop host, is the guest speaker after dinner on Saturday. The conference also includes a number of field trips taking in some of the many products Franklin has to offer.

Buses will be going to Punchbowl Fruit Packhouse, Organic Feijoas and Lime orchard, chestnut and persimmon orchards, a boutique olive grove, The Clevedon Markets for morning tea, and the Hunua Falls for lunch.

"There will be a demonstration at the Franklin Food Forest site on manufacturing biochar and the beekeeping will demonstrate how vital bees are to most crops.

"All in all some fantastic visits not to be missed," says Heather.

Anyone wishing to find out more about attending this conference please contact conference convener Heather Douglas on 021 320 828, or email: franklin@treecrops.org.nz or visit www.treecropsconference.nz to register for the conference.



The NZTCA committee members Val Pearce, Keith Dixon, Joan Leitch and Heather Douglas. Missing are John Allen and Virginia Warren.

Teaching skills for living with the land

Living off your own organic, sustainable, food sounds idyllic

— but the reality requires work, planning and a wide variety of skills. Sharing and teaching those skills is what Sheryn Clothier does.

"I grew up on an East Coast farm, living off the land out of necessity and with parents who farmed organically before it was trendy. To me, it was just a way of life. "Now I have my own lifestyle block in central Waikato that produces much more yummy food than we can eat, and friends keep on telling me how lucky I am. "It's not luck. It's knowing how to do it and doing it. And I am in the position to be able to share my know-how and experience so others can



Sheryn Clothier with cows on her Waikato lifestyle block.

learn how to do it for themselves." For the last 10 years Sheryn and husband Steve have been hosting Woolfers, overseas travellers who work alongside them, helping out while learning about organic farming — and it was one of these visitors who suggested she held courses and shared her skills with locals.

Sheryn now teaches a range of courses throughout the year, targeting a wide range of knowledge levels, intensities and subjects.

The entry level course is for those just starting and looking for ideas. Then there are specialised courses on pruning or planning a home orchard, milking a house cow and making butter and cheese while 'Paddock to Plate' is about time-effective ways of turning a wide range of raw produce into food.

"I am time poor so everything has to be

efficient. It is great to have old-fashioned healthy organic food — but I couldn't do it without my dishwasher and kitchen mixer," said Sheryn.

The five-day retreat 'Living with the Land' has been considered a holiday by those who have come — though Sheryn says the course is full on and those taking part want to know everything. Subjects include everything from making bread and butter through to maintaining your chainsaw, grafting trees and saving seed.

"To produce your own food from the land you need to be a jack of all trades and have that Kiwi confidence to give things a go," says Sheryn.

"That's what the Living with the Land course is all about — setting you up with the skills so you can do it on your block, effectively, efficiently and sustainably."

See www.LaLs.nz for details on upcoming courses.

Learn about Living Sustainably

Courses and Consultancy

Upcoming courses:

LIVING WITH THE LAND. 4-8 APRIL

Five days learning how to milk a cow, plant trees, make sausages, service your chainsaw, prune your orchard, make cheese and 101 other tasks, ideas and inspirations about how to produce your own food organically and sustainably.

PADDOCK TO PLATE. 30 APRIL - 1 MAY

A weekend retreat learning tips and tricks to turn raw produce into nutritious food — quickly and easily. From the basics of bread and butter, through to storing and smoking. Good food guaranteed!

PLANNING THE HOME ORCHARD. 14-15 MAY

Critique an established orchard, learn the theory then, as a group, plan your own. A heap of practical advice to maximise production and minimise mistakes.

Other courses will be held later in the year — see the website for details

www.LaLs.nz

Practical courses about producing your own food

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