



# TALGA NEWSLETTER

THE AUSTRALIAN LAVENDER GROWERS' ASSOCIATION



## TALGA WEBINAR SERIES

### Inaugural 'Meet the Member' webinar recording now available

TALGA has been very fortunate to have had Robert Ravens, of **Bridestowe Lavender Estate** (Tasmania), as our inaugural guest webinar speaker held last month (October). Robert, who together with his wife Jennifer in 2006, began the restoration of the historic farm located in Nabowla NE Tasmania. Bridestowe now sets the global benchmark for excellence in agritourism and lavender essential oil distillation. The fields are one of the most photographed landscapes in Tasmania, Australia.

We are very grateful to Robert for his generosity of time and sharing his experiences for our members' benefit. The session received fantastic feedback from TALGA members. The recording is now available as a YouTube video to view and enjoy! We kindly ask you not to share this link with external people as this content is exclusive to our membership only.

Click [here](#) to view (for viewing exclusively by TALGA members only).

### Upcoming webinar: Harvesting Lavender | TUES 21 November

The next webinar "**Harvesting Lavender**" is scheduled for **Tuesday 21 November at 8:30pm (NZDT) / 6:30pm (AEDT)**.

This webinar will be hosted by NZLGA (New Zealand Lavender Growers Association). Check out the presenter bio and a link to join, on the next page.

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## Upcoming Webinar Presenter Bio: Keith Brown | Harvester Solutions

Keith is formally trained as a Fitter & Turner, Machinist and later gained a New Zealand Certificate of Engineering Mechanical qualification. Keith and Charlotte started growing lavender and after a few years decided they needed a boiler. Keith qualified as a Boiler Engine Driver while he was working at Lincoln University, so the possibility of owning and operating a boiler wasn't foreign to him.

For over 40 years, they have been growing lavender and manufacturing purpose-built equipment for lavender production and distillation for their own use.

During 2021 when Keith was looking for parts for their broken harvester he found that the Harvester Concepts business was for sale. After deciding it would be a good semi-retirement project, they purchased the business now called Harvester Solutions, which manufactures harvesting equipment for small enterprises and lifestyle blocks.

Harvester Solutions support Ochiai Brand Tea Harvesters which are imported regularly from Japan and they also carry a large stock of genuine replacement parts. They supply a range of different types of harvesters, which are sold in New Zealand and around the world from their property in Amberley.

### Details to join our upcoming webinar via ZOOM (exclusive to TALGA and NLGA Members):

- Click: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83547295466?pwd=b5UGlChCOcaq27h5CPGvXWyzR3xOUW.1>
- Meeting ID: 835 4729 5466
- Passcode: 608845





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE BUSY (SILLY?) SEASON IS HERE!

In my part of Australia, the Blue Mountains NSW, summer has arrived with a vengeance and we are seeing all our lavender cultivars springing into flower at least 3 weeks earlier than we have ever experienced.

It has been very dry with no significant rain since early winter (we have had only 390ml this calendar year) and many of our plants are showing signs of stress. What a turnaround from last year when by this time we had received 1.3m of rainfall. As all farmers do, we are playing the cards that are dealt and becoming very skilled at pivoting!

Our **TALGA Webinars** kicked off last month with a terrific chat with Robert Ravens and over 22 members from Aust and NZ joined the session, contributing great questions for Robert. If you couldn't attend then you may be interested to view the recording. The next webinar will be conducted by NZLGA late in November, the details also are given in this issue. The Board are also considering options for a **Field day/farm visit** event next year, piggybacking with the AGM, we anticipate sometime in April and will send you details as soon as venue and date are confirmed.

November is the last of our monthly ENews for this year and also the last Board meeting until February 2024. I wish all our members and associates a most successful harvest this season, please send us photos and descriptions of your activities, we love to hear about your innovations, successes and slip ups too!

All the best for a peaceful and safe summer, cheerio until next year.

**Louise Bickerton**

President | TALGA | M: 0409 717 899

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## MEMBER FARM UPDATES

### GLENVALLEY LAVENDER (VIC) – Cate and Neil Harper

Despite all the rain we have had our lavenders are looking lovely apart from a few that strangely enough in the middle of thriving plants look a bit sick.

I have given these plants a trim and Neil has given them a dose of Powerfeed hopefully they will come back. We harvested our *Lavandula x allardii* this week and distilled them for oil.

Looking forward to doing other varieties over summer when they are ready.

Next weekend we have a stall at the International Rose Garden Festival in Morwell so we are really looking forward to that.







### LEVEN K LAVENDER (QLD) – Kellie Oxenford

The lavender is a little slow to start flowering this year but we are finally seeing this week some buds progressing. We have been having waves of extreme heat and lots of northerly winds, no rain of any consequence and of course high and extreme fire dangers all over Queensland. As of today there are over 80 active fires in the state.

We have been going through a rebrand process - years overdue but well underway now. Now that the rebrand is pretty much completed we are in the process of building a new website and all that goes with that. Coming into our busiest time (for all of us growing this beautiful plant) sees a plethora of visitors, picking, distilling, maintenance, weeding, watering, markets and making stock. No wonder we get to the silly season and all need a good lie down! We have had lots of feathery visitors to the farm in the last couple of months with a resident owl (and family) and some repeat emu kids who like to play





in the lucerne. Our new Alembic still has been a great hit at local Market Days with a lot of interest in demonstrations promoting conversations and interaction.

We wish you all the best for a great harvest as it progresses and stay safe if you are in a high fire danger area.



## **WINE COUNTRY LAVENDER (HUNTER VALLEY, NSW) – Karen McRae**

We have been extremely busy over the past few weeks setting up our irrigation system. Our heavy clay soil hardens up very quickly as soon as we have a period of dry weather. There have been a number of storms just missing us, and watering each of our plants individually is of course too time consuming. We're using this opportunity to re-mulch some of our plots, which we need to continue

doing at the moment for weed suppression, irrigation tape coverage, and ongoing soil improvement as it breaks down. This has had to be a huge focus for us, and we continue to work on drainage and soil regeneration on our farm. We will also soon continue with our steam weeding process.



In the meantime, all our varieties have started to flower – the angustifolias kick started the season, followed by the intermedias. We are noticing a significant difference in plant size between the angustifolias and the intermedias, with the latter being twice if not three times the size of the other! It will be interesting to see which varieties flower best this year – hopefully all of them! We are looking forward to harvesting as well as oil distillation in the new year! We have developed several products over the past months, and are excited to share our latest ones in the coming months.

## HAHNDORF LAVENDER ESTATE (SA) – Peter and Thomas Mahar

It has been now 7 years since we started planning and building our Lavender farm located in South Australia's scenic Adelaide Hills close to the German Village of Hahndorf.

Just a 30-minute drive from the bustling Adelaide CBD, our farm captures the beautiful scenery of South Australia's rural surroundings in the background of our Lavender fields bring a sense of Provence to the Adelaide Hills.

Introducing Lavé Essentials, where the beauty and tranquillity of Lavender come to life through a meticulously crafted collection of Lavender-infused products.

Each item we offer embodies the essence of Lavender, and reflects our unwavering commitment to quality, sustainability, and the well-being of our customers. Every product developed within our range is created to solely promote the benefits of Lavender.

Used as a multi-purpose oil and understanding its incredible healing properties, it was our mission to create a range of products with Lavender that is 100% grown and harvested on our rich soil, low impact, sustainable, grown organically and South Australian made.

Website: [www.hahndorflavender.com.au](http://www.hahndorflavender.com.au)



What have you been up to on your farm? Have you done any recent upgrades? Any varieties that have been doing particularly well... or not so well? Are you opening your farm to the public? Send us your most recent farm updates, along with some photos, to [news@talga.com.au](mailto:news@talga.com.au) (by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month) for our next newsletter!

## CHATGPT HAS WON MY HEART

- **Louise Bickerton**

At this very moment I am trying to create a PowerPoint presentation about the basic principles of producing lavender essential oil by steam distillation to present at a science and technology event. I admit to getting a bit of help from ChatGPT, I haven't used it much and thought I would give it a go.

I wasn't so impressed with the AI's assistance finding the suggestions dry and uninteresting.

So, on a whim, I asked the AI to creatively describe the process of producing lavender essential oil from lavender flowers.

This is what it composed, it made me laugh A LOT and I wanted to share it with you...

CHATGPT wrote:

"Imagine a dance of nature and science, a delicate waltz between fragrant blooms and the art of extraction, all to capture the very essence of tranquillity bottled within lavender flowers.

It begins with a floral symphony, where vibrant lavender blossoms take center stage. These petals, adorned with nature's secrets, hold an aromatic treasure coveted for centuries. As the curtains rise, steam, like a silken whisper, envelops these blooms in a gentle embrace, coaxing out their precious oils.

In this alchemical ballet, the stage is set with a copper alembic column still, a vessel of gleaming curves and poised functionality. The steam, like an eager performer, pirouettes through the still, dancing through the labyrinthine paths, weaving its way through the lavender's essence.

As the steam traverses, it acts as a maestro, orchestrating the release of the oils held within the floral tapestry. It delicately lifts the oils, carrying them aloft through the air. They journey upward, ascending to a crescendo where they meet the cool caress of the condenser.

Here, the dance transforms, a choreography of change. The once weightless oils find solace in the coil's embrace. With a soft murmur, they surrender to the chill, transmuting from ephemeral vapor to liquid ambrosia. They gather, droplet by droplet, a manifestation of nature's elegance and the distiller's dedication.

At last, in the final act, the collected liquid pools in the receiver, where the oils, floating like rare jewels atop the water, are carefully drawn off. Each drop is a distillation of serenity, capturing the very soul of lavender, ready to bestow its grace upon those seeking calm and bliss.

This process, this delicate ballet of botanical artistry and scientific finesse, transforms the humble lavender flower into a vial of liquid tranquillity, a distillation of peace and well-being awaiting its moment to enchant and soothe."



## THE UNITED STATES LAVENDER GROWERS' ASSOCIATION (USLGA)

"The United States Lavender Growers Association turned 10 years old in 2022. We are proud of the work we have done and the things we have accomplished over the years. We pledge to continue working to provide exceptional resources for our members to grow, strengthen, and advance the lavender industry.

Many of our lavender growers belong to another horticultural organization; conversely, many members of other organizations might wish to learn more about lavender from our Association. With the intention of benefiting the lavender industry, we will offer a \$25.00 discount to members who belong to another organization – a Dual Member Discount.

Our educational materials range from frequent Front Porch Events, which are peer-to-peer webinars on a specific lavender topic, our biennial U S Lavender Conference, which is a 2-day multi-track conference with experts in the industry, and our curated resource of articles from sources throughout the world."

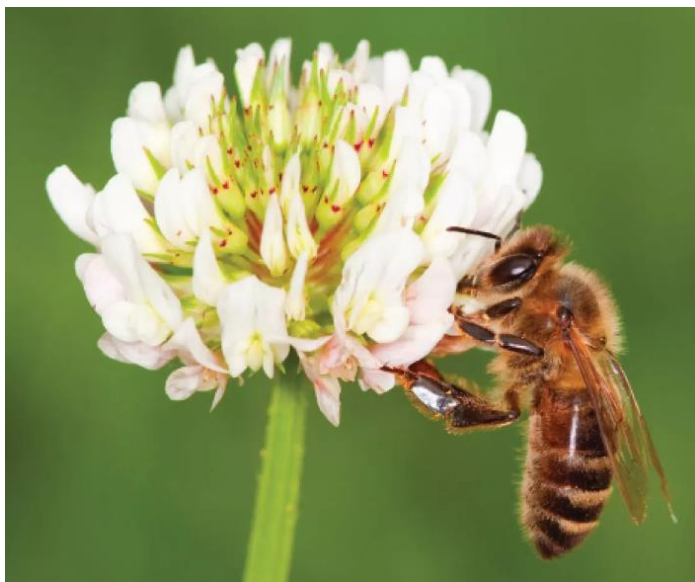
To take advantage of the Dual Member Discount, members will need to list what organisation they belong to along with their member number and expiration date. Space will be provided on the Registration Form for this information. Also, place the discount code DUAL25 in the discount code space on the payment form. Read more about USLGA [here](#) and email: [president@talga.com.au](mailto:president@talga.com.au) for more information if needed.

Sincerely,  
Michele

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## AGRIFUTURES

### LEARNING HOW TO LIVE WITH VARROA



"Blink and you'd miss it- the Varroa mite's minute presence is all but invisible to the naked eye. Yet the tiny mite is the greatest known threat to Australia's honey bee and pollination industry. For nearly a year and a half the industry has been battling the tiny parasite, cumulating in the largest biosecurity outbreak in the country's history and initiating a Federal \$132 million varroa response plan.

This tiny menace is a parasitic mite that lives on honey bees and also feeds off the brood of a honey bee colony.

*[Image from AgriFutures]*



It's a difficult pest to eradicate or even manage as it causes a variety of damage, including reducing the health of the honey bees, impacting drone fertility and honey production. Without treatment, Varroa is responsible for entire colony losses.

Until June 2022, Australia was the last continent globally without Varroa mite, but to the shock of the industry Varroa was discovered in sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle. After 15 months of attempting to eradicate the pest, the National Management Group, as the peak decision body for the National Varroa mite Emergency Response announced that it was no longer feasible to achieve eradication and that Australia will transition to a 'management response.'" Read more [here](#).

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## TALGA BOARD MEMBERS

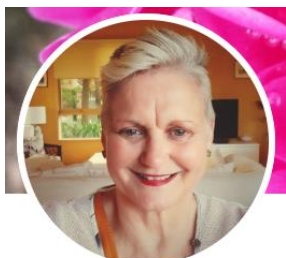
Here are the TALGA Board Members' contact details. Please feel free to reach out any time if you have any questions, feedback, and/or suggestions. We love to hear from our members!



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