

NEWSLETTER
Issue 111 – November 2025

Report from the Chair

Dear Oliveti Northland members

Your committee has appointed Roberto Zecca, our chief judge for the olive awards over several years, as an Honorary Member of Oliveti Northland, in recognition of his commitment to our awards management, and especially in maintaining high internationally recognised standards in the judging. You may remember there was a brief bio about Roberto in the last newsletter.

Your committee is still looking at how Oliveti can assist members with Food Act registration (especially NP1), and also at designing a process whereby we certify oil that has been through necessary chemical analysis and sensory evaluation of our olive oil awards process.

For an oil to be given an Oliveti award, we use the same high standards that Olives NZ does. This means the oil has a free fatty acid and peroxide chemical analysis result at a higher standard than the IOC requires. For the sensory analysis, our judges firstly ensure the oil is free of defects, and then score it by the IOC approved Mario Salinas Sensory Assessment method. Based on the score out of 100, bronze, silver or gold are awarded. It should be noted that both criteria above (as a minimum) are required for an oil to be certified as extra virgin olive oil.

We will be conducting a survey shortly of members' Food Act status for our member database (ie NP1, NP3 or Food Control plan).

Auckland and Northland Oliveti growers report a much better flowering this year with fewer storms as in the spring of 2024 - let us hope the 2026 olive harvest is much improved over this year's harvest! Please note the 2025 harvest report in this newsletter - I would encourage members to contribute to the 2026 harvest return in due course.

Our next Field Day will be held in February, when our Annual Meeting will also be held. Please consider whether you could assist on the Committee. It doesn't have to take up a lot of your time and it's valuable to have a number of members sharing their views, expertise and ideas to help continue to move Oliveti forward.

I would love to hear from you!
Ewen Hutchinson, Chairman

OLIVETI FIELD DAY HELD ON SUNDAY 9th November

Judy and Kim Brabant - Brabant Olives, Mangonui

Many thanks to Kim and Judy for hosting this event and welcoming both members and neighbouring olive growers – a total of around 25 people. Everyone enjoyed a shared lunch followed by another opportunity to taste the award winning oils; a bonus being able to take home a bottle or two for those that wanted to have other fabulous northland evoo to use alongside their own.



Following lunch and an olive grove sharing session with both members and neighbours - where we all learned how other groves are being pruned fertilised and developed, Ewold van Mechelen who owns and operates Agricare Drones gave us a most informative talk on the use of drones in agriculture.

Brabant Olives was developed as part of the Ocean View Olive Estate in 2000. At the time this was one of the largest olive plantations in NZ, with 25,000 trees over 125 hectares - in approximately 40 separate titles. About one third of the groves are still managed productively.

Originally from Auckland, Judy and Kim bought their grove in 2003, primarily to fulfill their desire to have a piece of land in Doubtless Bay. They built 3 years later. At the time they were living and running a business in Tonga and so managed the land remotely.

After 17 years in Tonga they returned to NZ to live full time on the property. Their grove consists of mostly J5 with the balance of Frantoio and Lecchino at around 150 each.

They harvest their 500 odd trees with hand held mechanical harvesters (and help from loyal friends and family). The grove is fertilised annually and trees are pruned hard and kept low with an annual pruning program to make this more manageable. Timing of harvest depends on the season and how the fruit is ripening and with 3 different varieties that usually means 3 separate harvests over a 3 month period each season. Once the fruit is picked it is taken straight down the hill to the press owned and operated by neighbour Ewold van Mechelen.



After an opportunity to wander around Kim and Judy's grove, Ewold gave a demonstration with his 80kg load drone of both dry fertiliser application and liquid foliar application.



Next Field Day February 2026. Date and location to be advised

2025 Oliveti Grove Harvest Report

Introduction

Oliveti Northland undertook its first Harvest Data survey this year, and we really appreciate those members who contributed to this. We started off by simply asking members to provide a grove summary of kg of fruit harvested and litres of oil produced. This at least would give us an indication of what our Auckland-Northland members might produce. Even if many experienced a poor season! It was recognised that this would be but a fraction of the 343 tonne harvest recorded by Olives NZ members in 2024.

Next year it is hoped to improve our data collection so we can more accurately assess harvest yield on a kg/tree basis, and so provide our members with a basis to compare their grove with others and to see how their operational changes might stack up eg pruning techniques, fertiliser regime, harvest timing etc.

15 members provided harvest returns, with 20% of these recording no harvest - there may well have been even more having no harvest from feedback. Reasons for the variable 2025 crop have been variously attributed to weather events (eg during flowering in October, very high rainfall and strong winds in April), difficulty in bringing back to operation groves that haven't been well managed for a time, and lack of tree response to the fertiliser regime applied. And of course many of our trees (eg Frantoio and J5) crop on a biannual basis.

2025 Crop by Area

Area	Grove Returns	Total Tonnes	Kg/tree Avg	Total Litres	Oil % Avg
Auckland	2 (NH 1)	6.12	6.6	863	14.1
Matakana - Mangawhai	5 (NH 1)	1.18	3.5	227	19.3
Kaipara	0	-	-	-	-
Waipu - Whangarei	1 (NH 1)	-	-	-	-
Russell - Kerikeri	2	3.37	22.9	484	14.4
Doubtless Bay	4	16.84	13.0	2734	16.2
Hokianga	1	0.81	under devel	137	17.0
OLIVETI TOTAL (NH = no 2025 harvest)	15	28.32	10.2	4445	15.7

Overall tonnes of fruit was lower than what many members usually expected. The Matakana-Mangawhai area had a particularly low harvest, whereas Kerikeri and further north fared better.

In terms of kg/tree, members provided an estimate of trees harvested, so we can roughly compare areas. Overall the reported harvest averaged 10 kg/tree, with areas ranging from 3.5 to 22.9 kg/tree. Russell-Kerikeri area was highest (skewed by one high-yielding grove at 31.8 kg/tree), followed by Doubtless Bay area at 13.0 kg/tree (individual results here ranged from 4.8 to 29.0 kg/tree).

Note that Olives NZ report kg/tree based on the operational trees in each grove, rather than just those harvested. They reported an average of 2 - 8kg/tree from Auckland and Northland member returns over the 2022-24 period.

Oil yield was variable (ranging by area from 14.1% to 19.3%) due to a number of factors (eg tree variety, timing of harvest, fruit load on tree etc). The overall average yield was 15.7%. Individual groves ranged from 12% to 26%, with higher yields tending to be April harvests, while those around 14% were early May harvests of more heavily laden trees.

Olives NZ data for 2022-24 was 11-13% for Auckland and 16-18% for Northland. It is hoped to have a more accurate report next year - and more groves might provide Harvest Returns so we can improve the reliability of our data!

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Observations on the 2025 olive harvest Kerikeri-Mangonui

Olive harvests in 2025 across Northland were very variable, with many groves experiencing low yet early harvests in March/April, with good oil yield of around 18 to 22%, while others found their fruit was late to ripen after the record rainfall - and low sun hours - in April. At two heavily laden groves that were mechanically shaken in early May, the fruit wasn't as ripe as usual at harvest, and consequently some 25 to 30 percent of the fruit remained on the tree after shaking. In addition, the oil yield appeared to be quite low at under 14%.

One grove was re-harvested (200 - 250kg per harvest) on average every 4 days over the following month, and the oil pressed in a 50kg/hr centrifuge press. This to understand whether the fruit would continue to ripen and to note whether the oil yield would increase as the fruit ripened. The resultant increase in oil yield of at least 25% after one month, on this occasion, shows further investigation of a later harvest of heavily laden trees is worth exploring.

Mechanically shaken harvest data

15 trees were harvested approx. 190 days after the main petal drop in October, and were heavily laden with 35 - 50 kg fruit.

Grove Harvest	kg/tree	Harvest yield %	Oil yield %
Kerikeri	30.0	-	13.6
Mangonui	30.6	70	13.6

Mangonui re-harvest data

15 trees were re-harvested (around 15 trees each harvest) for a further month after the main shaken harvest. Most of this crop was on smaller unshaken horizontal/drooping branches, that ideally should have been previously pruned off. Overall 96% of the original shaken trees were re-harvested, with an average additional fruit yield of 13.5kg/tree (30% of the total harvest).

Reharvest days	Oil yield %	Comment
0	13.6	Main shaken harvest
5	14.1	Good match to original
12	15.6	
14	15.0	
22	17.4	
25	17.0	
27	17.1	
29	17.9	Trees riper, less fruit

Further work

From this 2025 result there are two issues that need further investigation to optimise the mechanical harvesting.

Firstly, what is the optimum time for the harvest? Heavily laden trees take much longer to ripen compared with trees having a light load - and the fruit appearance is different. Ripe fruit in April tends to be greenish through to purple/black in colour, whereas in late May/June it can be yellowish green to mottled red/purple to darker purple.

Green fruit harvested 10 May



Riper fruit from 3 June harvest



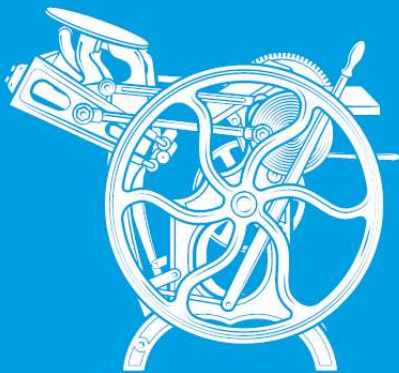
Secondly, how should the trees be pruned to increase the % shaken fruit yield and so reduce the need to re-harvest at a later date? From our observations of how the tree structure performs under shaking, major branches should have no more than three sub-branches, or the shaking intensity becomes too diminished. Also, horizontal through to drooping branches - where the bulk of the unshaken fruit is - should be removed when pruning. This will give a more upright tree with a canopy up to 3.5 m maximum diameter.



Hopefully, this should lead to an increase in shaken yield - but would not really be suited to hand harvesting! Some pruning was undertaken in July in preparation for the 2026 harvest. This is how they now look.

Let's see how the trees (and weather) behave in 2026!

Ewen Hutchinson
Mangonui



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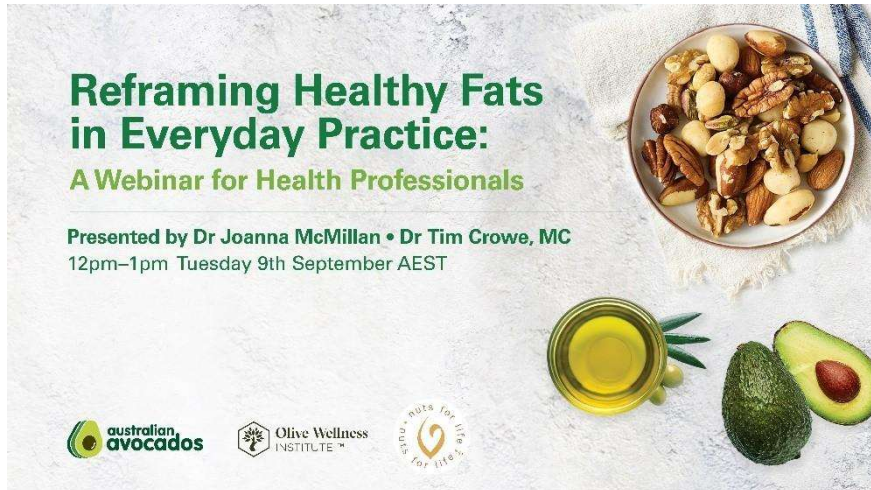
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REFRAMING HEALTHY FATS IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE

The Olive Wellness Institute has done it again, providing another great resource to help spread the word about the health benefits of EVOO and dispel one of the most frustrating myths.



To summarise - EVOO Key Messages

- Fat quality matters for health & weight outcomes
- Assessing foods on calories is not in line with evidence
- It's not just about the fat – bioactives are playing major roles – key difference between EVOO & refined oils
- EVOO has effects both as individual food & as part of Med Diet
- Research supports 2-3 tbsp a day
- You can and should cook with it!

Source : olivewellnessinstitute.org 9th September 2025

Run in September for health professionals, the webinar **Reframing Healthy Fats in Every Practice** was presented by well-known dietician Dr Joanna McMillan and MC Dr Tim Crowe. It unpacks the science behind extra virgin olive oil, nuts, and avocados, recognising that these nutrient-rich foods are often misunderstood due to outdated fat and kilojoule concerns.

Click here to read [more](#) and to listen to the webinar or to see a pdf of the slides presented.

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An interesting article on a New Glyphosate Alternative

It's being framed—as these things often are—as a potential glyphosate alternative. That phrasing alone should make us pause for a moment. Alternative in what sense? Safer? Better? Or simply new?

Icafolin-methyl (the active ingredient) is part of Bayer's long-term strategy to introduce the first new herbicide mode of action in decades, with a targeted rollout around 2028. And yes, the marketing engines are already warming up.

But before the hype carries us away, it's worth asking: What is Icafolin really? And what does it mean for New Zealand's growers, consumers, and environments already exhausted by chemical creep?

Read the full article here <https://share.google/k0qVz7CTkPgx54UkK>

[Icafolin: Bayer's New Herbicide & Glyphosate Alternative?](https://share.google/k0qVz7CTkPgx54UkK)

Source: No More Glyphosate NZ



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