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Kiwifruit

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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The kiwifruit, originally named Chinese gooseberry, originated in China in areas such as the Yangtze Valley. It represents the success story of New Zealand horticulture.

Plants grown from seed sent to New Zealand from China in the early 1900s were the forerunners of most of the commercial varieties developed there since. The name kiwifruit was introduced as part of a highly successful international marketing campaign.

More recently kiwifruit has been planted in parts of Europe and South America, the United States of America, Japan, South Africa and Australia.

The fruit has a fresh, appealing flavour and has a wide range of uses. It has the advantage of a long storage life, and it can be processed.

Commercial potential
Kiwifruit will grow and crop well in most of the horticulturally suitable areas of South-West Western Australia.

Western Australian producers are already supplying fruit to the Perth metropolitan area and some country centres and there are prospects for exports to markets in South-East Asia and the northern hemisphere. The exploitation of this potential will depend substantially on the cropping performance of the main New Zealand commercial variety, Hayward, which is still being evaluated here.

The ultimate success of a Western Australian industry will depend on our using the best available technology and matching the high quality standards set by the New Zealanders. Intending producers must take account of the crop's exacting cultural requirements, and the high capital outlays required to provide shelter, trellis support and irrigation. The vines may take six to eight years to reach full production.

Growth details
Kiwifruit (Actinidia chinensis) is a strong growing deciduous vine. It is dioecious, that is, it produces either male or female plants. At least one male pollinator is needed for every five female vines.

Production from seedling vines is highly variable, so kiwifruit must be propagated vegetatively or grafted.
The vines require deep free draining soil and plenty of good quality water through summer. They require trellising, and plenty of protection from wind. The fruit is susceptible to sunburn.

The fruit is produced from the first four to six buds on shoots arising from one-year-old canes, so pruning is an essential part of management. It ripens very slowly, but can be harvested before it is fully ripe. This ensures a good storage life.