1-1-1983

Passionfruit

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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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.

Today's commercial passionfruit appears to have originated in the tropical areas of South America.

Passionfruit vines have been grown in Western Australia for many years, particularly in household gardens. In the 1950s and 1960s about 100 hectares of passionfruit were being grown commercially, mostly for processing. But a decade ago, commercial plantings were virtually non-existent.

Consumer demand has created new interest in this crop.

Commercial potential
It is doubtful if large-scale passionfruit growing would be commercially attractive in Western Australia. The harvest time in this State is relatively short compared with that in parts of New South Wales and Queensland, and this State no longer has processing facilities.

Another drawback to commercial production is the labour intensive nature of this crop. Experience to date indicates that one hectare of bearing passionfruit appears to be the most one grower can handle.

About seven hectares have been planted in recent years, and the area appears to be rising in response to consumer demand for the fresh fruit.

Growth details
The purple-fruited passionfruit (*Passiflora edulis*), the main type grown in Western Australia, is an evergreen vine with attractive flowers.

Unpruned, it forms a tangled mass of stems. Pruning is important to commercial production, but it must be carried out carefully because the passion vine bears its fruit on new season's growth.

Trellising is essential to make the vines manageable.

The main fruiting period is in January and February in areas near Perth, but much later in southern districts.

The fruit must be picked daily if the grower is to achieve good returns on the fresh fruit market because it ripens and "wrinkles" quickly and can be sunburnt easily.

The vines need plenty of water through the summer months, and protection from strong, cold prevailing winds in winter.