

# NEUTROG® feedback

Commercial update  
from Neutrog Australia #3

Filipo Scarpantoni  
Scarpantoni Estates  
**The tradition  
continues**

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Cropping Enterprise	Use	Hectares (approx)
Viticulture	<input type="checkbox"/> (eg. new or established vines or cover crops)	
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Broadacre	<input type="checkbox"/> (eg. cropping, pasture)	

# Filipo Scarpantoni

The Scarpantoni family has a strong tradition of growing vines and producing fine wines in the McLaren Vale region. Domenico Scarpantoni immigrated to Australia from Italy in 1952 and eventually started working in McLaren Vale for Thomas Hardy and Sons at Tintara Winery.



In 1968 he purchased a 20 hectare property on the outskirts of McLaren Flat. Since then Scarpantoni Estates has grown to include three properties - 65 acres of land at

McLaren Flat (which includes the original property and is the location of the winery), 10 acres of land at McLaren Vale, and 10 acres of land at Maslins Beach. Scarpantoni Estates grows Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Gamay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz vines, with all the fruit grown on the Estate vineyards released under the Scarpantoni label.

Domenico's sons Michael and Filippo are the winemakers, and they work together to create the extensive range of Scarpantoni Estates wines. The winery is very much a family business with every step of production, from viticulture to the packaged product done entirely on the premises. This gives total control over every stage of the winemaking process and ensures the highest standards are maintained. As a result, Scarpantoni Estates have won over 300 medals and more than a dozen trophies and awards in national wine shows.

Scarpantoni Estates received the trophy and gold medal at the 2003 McLaren Vale Wine Show for their 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon. Other award winning wines include a sparkling burgundy called Black Tempest, which took out a gold medal at the 2003 Sunday Times Wine Club in the UK, Ceres Rose 2003 which took

out a gold medal at both the 2003 Royal Brisbane and Royal Hobart Wine Shows, Estate Reserve 1999 which took a gold medal at the 2001 Australian Small Winemakers Show, and a VP Shiraz 1999 which took the gold medal at the 2002 McLaren Vale Wine Show. Scarpantoni Estate Shiraz has appeared in the Australian Top 50 for the past eight years.

The family's commitment to producing a quality wine starts from the ground up. Filippo Scarpantoni says he has a very long term view. 'We want the vineyard to survive for 100 years. As a result of this we started thinking green about ten years ago, with regards to the use of fertilisers, chemicals and mulching. I was worried about the long term build up that occurs with chemical fertilisers and started to look for organic alternatives. When you use natural fertilisers you know what is going into the soil won't hurt anything else.'

Neutrog Fertiliser has been used by Scarpantoni Estates for the past five years.

'We wouldn't be using Neutrog if it wasn't any good. It is part of our whole program for getting a balanced vine and the end result is great,' Filippo commented. 'The vines look the best they have done for years and quality is still high. We have deep ripped it in when establishing new vines and also applied it to our established vines. Ease of handling also appealed, especially when compared with the raw manure which we had previously used.'

'You have got to have a long term outlook. If you used chemical fertilisers you get only a short term result,' Filippo said. 'Our program must be working - just look at the awards that we've won!'



Rosemary and Graham Pulford

Graham Pulford has been in the wine industry for 25 years. His 40 hectare vineyard at Clare supplies 12 varieties of grape to quality winemakers such as Southcorp, Mitchell Winery, Pikes Winery, Knapstein Winery and Tim Adams Wines.

Eight years ago Graham trialed Neutrog fertiliser on small areas of both his established vines and on his new vine plantings.

'I was wanting a fertiliser that was both user friendly and friendly to the environment', Graham said. 'The results convinced us that it was a worthwhile product and we started to use it on the whole vineyard. I used it when I ripped the ground prior to planting with new vines, and to maintain vine health on established vines, or to rejuvenate old vines. I noticed that there was an improvement in the vine health, better vegetative growth and a slight increase in yield. However I was most impressed by the fact that Neutrog's fertilisers produced a better consistency in the production and quality of fruit.' Graham also noticed an improvement in soil structure and an increase in worm activity.

For established vines, Bounce Back is incorporated at the rate of one tonne to the hectare in mid winter. Graham has recently sold his 40 hectare vineyard to retire on a five acre vineyard planted with Reising grapes for his own retirement. These new vines are now two years old and are also fed with Neutrog's fertiliser.

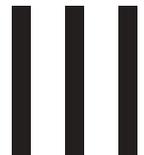
'I am pleased to use Neutrog's organic fertiliser on my vines as it is sustainable in the long term, and it is also better for the environment', Graham concluded.

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Kevin, Graham and Wayne Rohrlach were born with vines in their blood. They are a third generation of Barossa Grape growers and joined their father on his property once they left school. Over the last 30 years their vine holdings have grown from 20 hectares to 160 hectares.

As well as growing premium grapes, they also contract harvest for other vineyards, and are involved in the transport of grain, grapes and wine. They grow a range of vine varieties with 90% of their crop going to Peter Lehmann and 10% to Cellarmasters. Peter Lehmann is well known for its many award winning labels such as '8 Songs Shiraz' and 'Restaurant Reserve'. 'Barossa Shiraz', made by Cellarmasters, is known as Dorrien's 'Mum's Block', in recognition of the patch of vines that were purchased by their father back in the 1940s and where their mum still lives. This Shiraz was awarded the Rod Schubert Trophy for the most outstanding Barossa Red Wine from Premium Classes and the Lynas Valley Ford trophy for best mature Dry Red Shiraz. Recently, they have started producing their own wine. A Shiraz and a Cabernet Merlot are due for release under the Rohrlach Family Wine label in 2004.

In 2003 they were awarded the prestigious title 'Vignerons of Barossa' for their contribution to the wine industry, the first time it has ever been awarded to a group, rather than an individual. This award recognizes their lifelong background in viticulture, which has led to a deep understanding of what it takes to establish,

nurture and maintain a quality vineyard. They have grown up accepting that the heat, lack of overabundance of water, control of pests, weeds and fungi are all part of the cycle of viticulture in the Barossa Valley, regardless of the season. The Rohrlach brothers have learnt to work with the twists and turns of all seasons and adapt their processes and practices to suit the needs of any vintage.

The Rohrlachs used to use chemically based fertilisers, but they were worried about what they were doing to the soil. They then tried using raw chicken manure on the vines but found that the weed contamination and problems of availability made this impractical.

'Three years ago we started to use Neutrog fertiliser, as it was a lot easier to apply, and have continued to do so each season', Kevin said. 'We spread about 1 tonne to the hectare in May, prior to sowing our cover crop.

We do this for both new and established vines, and this way the cover crop gets the benefit too. Previously we struggled to get good growth, but since changing to using organic based fertilisers we now get the vigour we require. Our vines look healthier and they have very good foliage colour. We are now growing decent cover crops too, which along with Neutrog's organic fertiliser, helps to bulk up the organic matter in the soil.'

Last year with the drought, many people were complaining about their vines, yet ours didn't seem to suffer. Many people around us complained that their harvest was 50 to 60% down whereas ours only reduced by around 20%.'

Wayne concluded 'We must be doing something right! Some people might say that we are lucky, but then eventually hard work turns to luck!'



Wayne and Kevin Rohrlach



Adami Family  
Mt Compass Olive Nursery

The olive growing industry is one of the fastest growing new industries in Australia. Its development is often likened to that of the wine industry and it is estimated that 5 million olive trees have been planted in Australia over the past decade.

Olives are currently primarily grown for oil or used as table olives, with at least 94% of our olive oil imported at a cost of nearly \$95 million for the 1999-2000 year. The cost of importing table olives amounted to around \$27 million for the same period. At this time South Australia provides approximately 55% of Australia's raw olive production.

Olive oil consumption in Australia grew by 21.6% between 1999/2000 and 2000/2001, as it became more widely recognized that olive oil provided health benefits simply by being incorporated into our diet. We are now being encouraged to develop our palate for olive oil in much the same way that we have developed our palate for wines over the past 20 years.

As part of this rapid expansion, The Adami brothers, Anthony, Mick and Paul, started Mt Compass Olive Nursery only three years ago and now they have one of the largest olive nurseries in Australia, growing over 120,000 olive trees for commercial growers across Australia.

'With the booming olive industry, we saw an opportunity to develop and grow a business,'

Anthony said, 'and we have learnt from experts wherever we can.' They specialize in propagating cutting grown olives for a wide range of climatic conditions. Their most popular varieties include Frantio, Manzanilla, Leccino, Corioliola, Picual, Koriacci, Pendolino and Mediterranean, since most growers are interested in olives for oil rather than pickling.

'We grow our stock hard to produce a tougher stronger tree', Anthony said. 'People putting in new plantations of olives want 100% success and we feel confident that our trees will give them a head start.' Their olive cuttings are grown on in large tubes and are given Rapid Raiser every month from when they are first planted up until they are sold at 12 to 18 months of age. 'We started using Rapid Raiser three years ago as we felt that people like things that are organically grown – it is the natural way of doing things', Anthony said. 'A number of the plantations we supply also use Neutrog's organic based fertiliser on their established olives and they are very happy with the results. The results on our potted plants have been great. The plants look so healthy and they never get burned by either the heat or frost. We have had no pest or disease problems in our plants, and although olives are hardy trees, when you are growing a large monoculture as we are, disease can always be a problem. We are happy with the results that we are getting from using Neutrog, so why change?'

Rural Funds Management Ltd. is an Australian agricultural investment company, that has developed and manages over 650 hectares of prime vineyard in the Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills and Victoria.



Their interest in setting up this viticulture portfolio was in establishing and developing best management practices for vineyards for the production of Ultra Premium Fruit.

'We put in a lot of work when we are establishing new vineyards to ensure that we get everything right', said Matt Bawden, the Operations Manager. 'We look at choosing the right site, with the right soils and making sure that the balance of the vine is established.'

In the last few years, their vineyard development practices have included the use of Neutrog's fertiliser.

'Neutrog's Rapid Raiser has produced both cost and time savings,' Matt commented. 'The bulk delivery of their fertiliser, its balanced nutrient content, hygiene issues combined with the ease of application of the Rapid Raiser pellets, has reduced the number of passes around the vineyards when we are fertilising from two to one. When you operate on the scale that we do, we look at making our processes as practical, effective and streamlined as possible.'

Raw manure can be difficult to apply, with the uneven size of the manure components making the calibration of machines for even spreading difficult. The change to Rapid Raiser has meant that only one application needed to be applied, with the fertiliser pellets already having the essential trace elements in them. The uniformity of the pellets allowed easy calibration of machinery and the spreading of the fertiliser is now more accurate and economical.'

One application of Rapid Raiser is made just prior to planting, and the fertiliser is then incorporated into the ripline. This allows the vines to take up the nutrients as they establish themselves and gives them the best head start. Rapid Raiser is currently being trialed on vines that were established by Rural Funds Management three years ago, with positive results.

'The best analysis at this early stage is petiole tests and they look very good. At Rural Funds, we strive towards best practice viticulture, and as a result, plan to produce ultra premium fruit. I believe we have got all the steps in place for this to happen,' Matt concluded.

Mick Koch has 83 hectares under vines at Angaston in the Barossa Valley, growing over ten varieties of grapes for Yalumba.

He was brought up on a vineyard property at Rowland Flat, so growing grapes was in his blood, and he has developed this early knowledge during 32 years in the industry working his current property.

'We try to produce a premium product. Our aim is to produce the highest quality possible at a reasonable tonnage to get a reasonable return,' Mick said. 'To help achieve this, I am always open to new ideas, whether these are related to soil and nutrition or trellis and training', Mick added. 'We used to use pig effluent on our grapes as we had our own piggery, but after ten or twelve years we were concerned about the development of high salt levels, especially since we also had a salty bore.'

For the past four years, we have used Neutrog's organic fertiliser on both our new plantings and established vines, and I have been really impressed by the results. I wanted the peace of mind that comes from using an organic based fertiliser. I don't want to kill the earthworms. As well as providing the nutrients required for the vines to grow, Neutrog gives the added benefits to the soil, improving earthworm and microbial activity.'



'Since the fertiliser comes in bulk, it is far easier to handle than raw manure. There is the added advantage with Neutrog that I can add supplements to it and this means that I only need to do one pass rather than several. Overall, I have found it to be a cost effective way of getting the fertiliser down to the roots.' Used at the rate of a tonne to the hectare, Mick incorporates it into the rip marks prior to planting young vines, as well as banding it under established vines in May. This produces excellent results



This family owned winery, established in 1975 by Andrew and Jane Mitchell, has been described by James Halliday, doyen of the Australian wine writers, as 'one of the finest wineries in Australia', with their Peppertree Shiraz listed in his Top 100 wines of 2003.

The Mitchell Watervale Riesling 2002 has been awarded 'Best Riesling', 'Best White' and 'Penguin Wine of the Year' in the Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide 2003/2004. The Mitchell Semillon 2002 was listed amongst Phillip White's Top 100 Wines in November 2003.

The grapes for Mitchell Wines come from the company's 180 acres of vineyard, which are spread over several sites on the western hills of the Clare Valley in South Australia. The rocky barren soils and long ripening period which their selected vineyards offer, produces the rich and complex flavours of their wines. As well as its Shiraz, Riesling and Semillon, the Mitchell Winery is known for its Grenache, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon varieties.

Nine years ago, the Vineyard Manager, Leon Schramm, who had worked for Mitchell Winery since 1989, started to use Neutrog fertiliser on the vines with great results. This fertiliser is used when deep ripping is carried out for the establishment of new plantings, and is also banded under established vines.

'Previously we used composted cow manure on the vines', Leon said. 'One of the main problems with this was the high weed contamination. Since using Neutrog fertilisers we have noticed a general improvement in the health of our vines. Also, as our vineyards are dry grown, it is important that we do all we can to improve the soil's structure and water retention. We have noticed an improvement in the soil structure due to the build up of organic matter. Neutrog's organic fertiliser also produces an increase in the soil's beneficial natural microbial activity. In addition, when it comes to application, the pellets of Neutrog fertiliser are much easier to handle and apply than raw manures.'

As Mitchell Wines continue to grow in popularity, both here in Australia and around the world, their vines flourish with the continued use of Neutrog's organic fertilisers.

 **feedback**  
**NEUTROG**  
FERTILISERS  
The Experts' Choice

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