Australian Cherry Industry Information

Products and Services

Australian Cherries are produced in six states, with New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania being the three largest producers and South Australia the fourth largest producer.
There has been a rapid expansion in plantings and there is a strong export focus from these four states.
Both Western Australia and Queensland are relatively small producers primarily focusing on their domestic markets.

Australian Cherries are available from mid/late October to late February, depending on the state and seasonal calendar due to climatic variation, varieties and growing season.
Currently up to 15,000 tonnes of Australian Cherries are produced every year with 30% exported, with this expected to rise to 20,000 tonnes and 50% exported by 2020.

The following information provides a brief synopsis of the industry situation in each Cherry producing State.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The main cherry producing areas of NSW have traditionally been around the centres of Young and Orange. Newer areas include Hillston, Mudgee, Wellington, Tumut and Batlow. These new areas have started growing cherries to try to extend the NSW cherry season.

Hillston and Narromine regions aims to produce the earliest cherries in Australia. Wellington and Mudgee are also considered early maturing areas. Early maturing cherries may have greater fluctuating yields (seasonal influences) or may not yield as much as later maturing varieties but do obtain market premium prices.

Other regions around central west NSW are being developed to ensure continuity of supply. This region of NSW offers a diverse range of suitable micro climates and elevations that assist the continuos production of good quality fresh cherries.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
108	800	4,407

Production Characteristics

The cherry season in NSW starts around late October (Hillston and Narromine) and continues through Christmas finishing around mid January. A number of varieties and growing areas are used to achieve this extensive spread in fruit maturity. Most farms will select early, mid and late varieties so that if a rain event hits one of the varieties there are others that may cover these crop losses.

The main varieties grown vary by district. The Orange variety mix predominately comes from Summerland (Canada). Young also grows similar varieties but Ron's Seedling is the dominant variety.

Key varieties in Orange are: Merchant, Van, Kordia, Lapin, Simone, Sweetheart, Ranier and Bing.

Key varieties in Young are: Empress, Burlat, Supreme, Rons Seedling, Stella, Lapin, Sweetheart.

Less widely grown varieties include Simone, Sylvia, Black Star, Stella, Earlise, Early Sweet, Tulare, Brooks, Chelan and Sweet Georgia.

VICTORIA

The main cherry growing regions of Victoria are located in north eastern Victoria, Goulburn Valley, Upper Goulburn/Strathbogie and the southern Victorian area. These areas produce approximately 85% of Victoria's cherry production. Other smaller areas are located throughout Victoria in areas such as Bendigo and Kerang.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
95	800	4,500

Production Characteristics

The main production season is mid November to late January, with some early varieties starting in early November and can last until late February with later varieties.

Because of the wide range of climate growing areas local growers can produce fruit for about three months of the year from November to February. Northern Victorian area fruit matures much earlier than the higher regions, especially Tolmie, which can still be harvesting up to late February.

Current production is estimated at approximately 4,500 tonnes, although this figure is highly dependent on climatic conditions such as frost during flowering and rain during harvest which can severely reduce the harvested crop.

Production Systems

Modern production systems are used in orchards with most of the newer plantings being trained to open bush systems. Orchards are irrigated using low flow systems and growers are extremely conscious of the need to improve their management practices related to orchard soil management.

More than 50 varieties are currently being grown. However as buyers are starting to demand improved quality and longer shelf life many of the older and poorer performing varieties are being replaced.

Merchant, Bing, Supreme, Empress, Stella, Lapin, Sweetheart and Van are the main varieties grown.

A large number of other varieties have been introduced recently. The best performing of these are Ferprime, Simone, Early Sweet, Royal Rainier, Sweet Georgia, Kordia, Chelan, Earlise and Australise.

TASMANIA

The Tasmanian cherry season commences mid to late December and continues through to late February. The peak of production is through mid to late January. Tasmania has a strong export focus, enhanced by its relative pest and disease freedom.

Tasmania has national and international recognition for Area Freedom status for Fruit Fly. This recognition provides access to a number of international markets where stringent import regulations are in place including Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

As an island, and with the strict quarantine controls, Tasmania is also recognised free from a number of important pests and diseases including fire blight. Reduced pest and disease pressure means low level use of chemicals.

Cherries are grown in most regions of the state including Huon/Channel, the south east districts (including the Coal River Valley and Sorell), Derwent Valley, Tamar region and north west coast at Spreyton and Ulverstone.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
76	560	4,000

Production Characteristics

Due to the fact that Tasmania is an island, it is largely influenced by a temperate maritime climate. This ensures that the fruit has a long gentle growing period which allows the fruit to develop slowly and become full flavoured.

Immediately after harvest cherries are hydro-cooled and packed on state-of-the-art specialist cherry grading equipment. Cherries are typically packed into 2kg and 5kg cartons designed to meet export market protocols.

Tasmania cherries are currently exported to over 20 countries across the world including into Asia, Middle East and Europe.

Cherry growers and packers are typically accredited to a recognised food safety and quality assurance system.

Production Systems

All new orchards are medium to high intensity plantings. Varieties planted are chosen according to good bearing ability, good-sized fruit, time of harvest and particularly resistance to cracking. The main varieties (bulk of production) grown in Tasmania are Lapin, Simone, Sweetheart, Sylvia, Regina and Kordia, new varieties including Sweet Georgia.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

There are 3 cherry production areas in South Australia. The major one is the Mount Lofty Ranges (commonly referred to as the "Adelaide Hills"). The other 2 are located in the Riverland region and the South East of South Australia.

The "Adelaide Hills" is the most significant region producing approximately 90-95% of the state's cherry production. This area is subdivided into several smaller areas which have all developed to take advantage of specific microclimate and maturity niches. Although geographically small in area the maturity times within the Adelaide Hills can vary by up to 2-3 weeks for the same variety. Sub-regions include Montacute (earliest area), Cherryville, Norton Summit, Basket Range, Summertown, Uraidla, Forest Range, Lenswood, Kenton Valley and Gumeracha.

A small area south of the Adelaide hills known as the Fleurieu Peninsula also has a small amount of cherry production. The growers in this area are small and focus on local market sales. The South East region is a relatively new area that focuses on local region sales. The "Riverland" region, to the north east of Adelaide is an early production area focusing on producing early fruit for the eastern states and Western Australian markets.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
118	590	2,500

Production Characteristics

The main production season is mid November to mid January, with some early varieties starting in mid October (Riverland). It can last until late January with the newer later maturing varieties.

Production Systems

More than 50 varieties are currently being grown. However as buyers are starting to demand improved quality and longer shelf life many of the older and poorer performing varieties are being replaced.

Stella and Lapin are the dominant varieties grown. There is a wide range of other varieties grown based primarily on the market niche a region/grower has.

Overall Merchant, Stella, Lapin, Sweetheart and Simone are the main varieties grown. Bing, Supreme, Empress, Van, Summit, Sunburst, Kordia, Vista and Lambert have had varying levels of production but are declining in popularity. Rainier is only grown by a few specialist growers. Rons Seedling is still grown by a number of growers. A large number of other varieties have been introduced recently. The best performing of these include Black Star, Earlisweet, Sweet Georgia, Chelan, Earlise, Australise, Santina, Samba, Sylvia and Regina.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The main cherry growing regions in WA are located in a narrow growing belt stretching from Donnybrook to Pemberton in the south west of the state. This region involves some larger growers in the Donnybrook/Kirup and Manjimup/Pemberton areas and smaller ones through the Balingup and Bridgetown shires. This belt produces approximately 85% of WA cherries. Other smaller areas are located between the Mt Barker and Albany region with a few growers in the Dwellingup area and Perth Hills.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
70	70	500

Production Characteristics

The main production season is mid December to late January, with some early varieties starting in early November and can last until February with later varieties.

Production Systems

Free standing open vase is the main production system used, with some newer plantings using the open Tatura.

Bing, Stella, Lapin, Sweetheart and Van are the main varieties grown. Other 'older' varieties grown include Merchant, Supreme and Empress.

A large number of other varieties have been introduced recently. The best performing of these are Ferprime, Simone, early Sweet, Royal Rainier, Sweet Georgia, Kordia, Stella, Chelan, Earlise and Australise. There have been a lot of new and untried varieties planted across the growing regions. These include Sandra Rose, Sweet Early, Red Crystal, Celeste, Samba, Index and Symphony.

QUEENSLAND

The main cherry growing area of Queensland is the Granite Belt region of south east Queensland, centred around Stanthorpe. This region mainly involves smaller growers who use cherry production to supplement other farm income. Only a small number of enterprises use cherries as their main income source. Main production is in the Glen Aplin and "The Summit" districts of the Granite Belt, with smaller producers in the Amiens, Pozieres and Severnlea areas. This area produces 100% of Queensland cherries.

Cherry Production

No of Enterprises	Number of hectares (estimate)	Production (tonnes)
18	20-25	36

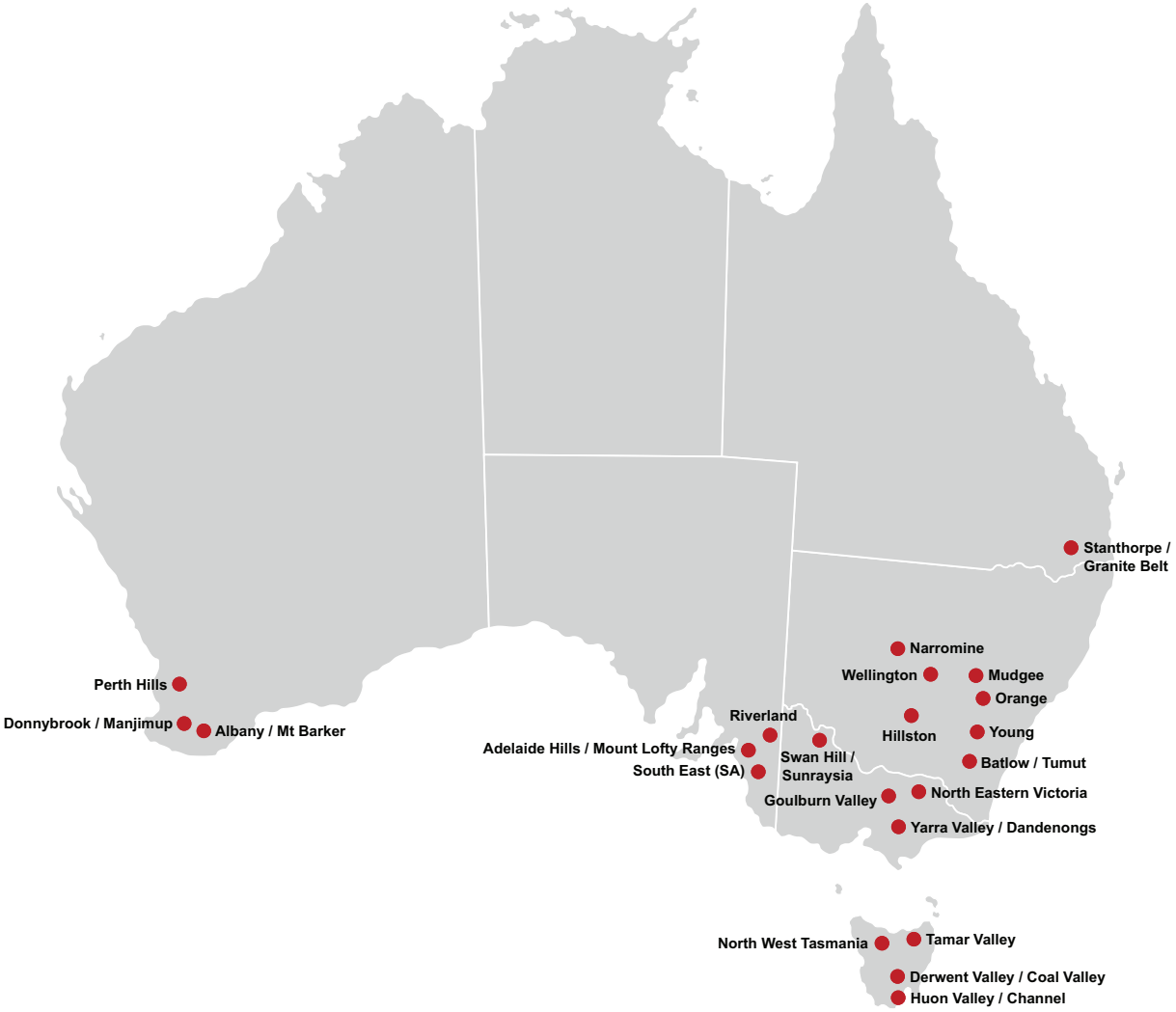
Production Characteristics

The main production season is late October to late December, with some early varieties starting in mid October with later varieties lasting until late January.

Production Systems

Free standing open vase is the main production system used, with some newer plantings using the open Tatura trellis system. Some growers are experimenting with other trellising systems. Bing, Stella, Lapin, Brooks and Early Sweet are the main varieties grown.

Other varieties grown include Early Burlat, Burgsdorf, Supreme and Empress. Varieties under test include Australise, Earlise, Kordia and some of the varieties from the Australian Breeding Program including Sir Tom, Sir Don, Dame Nancy and Dame Roma.



Harvest windows by Australian State: darker shades represent main crop volume

	October				November				December				January				February			
Victoria																				
NSW																				
South Australia																				
Tasmania																				
Western Australia																				
Queensland																				

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