

Statewide

COONAWARRA Wine auction a Cup feature

THE 27th annual Vignerons Cup will be held at Coonawarra on January 10.

The event attracts more than 3000 visitors each year to enjoy racing as well as wine and fashion.

A traditional vignerons wine auction of 15 imperials of Coonawarra wine specially packaged for the cup will be held at the cup day.

Races begin at 12pm at the Penola Racecourse.

More information is available by calling the Penola Racing Club secretary on 0412 995 789.

MCLAREN VALE Water tests

GREENING Australia volunteers will monitor and improve water quality at Gemtree Wetlands after receiving a water quality testing kit from Dilmah Tea.

The kit will be used by Green Corps participants working at the site on the Gemtree winery property.

It will help volunteers rehabilitate and conserve native flora and fauna indigenous to the Peddler Creek Catchment and the wetlands.

The Gemtree Wetlands is one of several degraded sites being rehabilitated by Greening Australia to return it to its natural environment.

VICTOR HARBOR Pageant

THE Community Christmas Pageant at Victor Harbor begins at 6.30 tonight.

It starts at Bridge Tee and ends at Warland Reserve, where Carols by the Sea will be held from 8pm.

More than 60 floats will feature in the pageant, which includes bands, giant robots and human bouncing balls. Father Christmas will visit the parade and will be in his cave from 7.30pm.

CHERRIES | One crop gains from weather

Harvest ripe for records



BOUNTIFUL: Braden Wotton with a beard of giant cherries at his family's orchard and vineyard at Uraidla. Picture: MARK BRAKE

NIGEL AUSTIN
RURAL EDITOR

THE South Australian cherry industry this year expects to harvest a record crop of more than 1500 tonnes, worth at least \$15 million retail.

Cherry Growers SA president Grant Wotton said the harvest is shaping up to be the best ever, provided the rain stays away.

"The weather is always a worry at this time of year," he said. "We wouldn't want to see bucket loads of it."

Mr Wotton, a Uraidla cherry grower, said the crop was superb following ideal conditions throughout the growing season and an increase in the number of young trees coming into production.

He said the industry had become far more productive generally, with yields on his farm rising by more than 50 per cent a hectare in the past 10 years.

"We grow 15 different varieties so we are producing cherries for the six weeks of the season," he said.

"We are aiming to grow the biggest cherries we can by pruning and good nutrition."

His varieties include Sunburst cherries, which grow to 30mm plus, while the average cherry is 26mm to 28mm.

The Wotton's Sunburst

cherries will be sold mainly in Western Australia in 1kg packs for \$15 to \$20.

"We are constantly searching for new improved strains and have a national evaluation committee meeting at the Lenswood Research Centre next week," he said.

"They will rate each variety on its merits and consider aspects such as crack resistance, taste, style and colour."

Mr Wotton said the aim is to keep improving the cherry varieties.

His family has been growing cherries for close to 80 years in the Adelaide Hills.

"The modern varieties are heaps better today and the shelf life is also far superior," he said. "The trees yield better, the cherries are larger than they used to be and they are easier to pick."

Cherry Growers of Australia secretary Trevor Ranford said the Australian cherry breeding program had existed for years, with six varieties released in the past decade. "We are evaluating 10,000 different crosses to see which have a commercial advantage," he said.

The national evaluation committee meets in South Australia on Wednesday.



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