

Californian strawberry cultivars arrive in Australia

Rupert Hargreaves, Co-owner and director, Global Plant Genetics

Excitement is brewing as the Australian strawberry industry waits in anticipation for the five new strawberry varieties from the University of California strawberry breeding programme to become commercially available. Global Plant Genetics, a UK based Intellectual Property company, are the international master licence holders for the UC Davis strawberry programme.

Background

The University of California (UC Davis) started strawberry breeding in the 1930s with the primary objective of producing new strawberry varieties for the Californian strawberry industry.

Over the years, the breeding programme has produced more than 60 patented varieties. The programme is a world leader in both day-neutral and short-day varieties. The strawberry programme at UC Davis is fortunate to have an extensive gene pool, state-of-the-art facilities and a highly focused, effective and experienced breeding team.

In January 2021 five new strawberry varieties were made available for international markets including Australia by Global Plant Genetics.

Global Plant Genetics were proud and excited to be asked to represent the UC Davis programme across a large number of territories including Australia. Having many of the best international breeding programmes of blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, grapes and nuts in our world class portfolio the addition of this strawberry programme became a perfect fit.



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Of the 5 new strawberry varieties 3 are day-neutral & 2 are short-day types.

Short day

The short-day varieties - namely UCD Victor and UCD Warrior - were both selected in Southern California offering both yield and quality improvements over previous varieties.



UCD Victor

UCD Victor offers consistently high yields of Class 1 fruit with excellent shelf life and minimal post-harvest losses. The berries are large, visually appealing and firm. From a plant health perspective UCD Victor is highly resistant to *Fusarium Wilt* and *Phytophthora cactorum*.

This is an early to mid-season variety typically planted at 50 to 60,000 plants per hectare. The plants have a vigorous growth habit producing very large crowns.



UCD Warrior

The second of the short-day types - UCD Warrior - is a high yielding variety with great disease resistance. Extensive trial work demonstrated UCD Warrior to deliver high levels of resistance to *Macrophomina*, *Verticillium wilt* and *Phytophthora cactorum*.

The fruits are deep red in colour, sweet in flavour with a high percentage of Class 1 fruit harvest.

Day-neutrals

The UCD strawberry programme would be internationally renowned for its day-neutral strawberry programme. The adaptability of the day-neutral varieties from the programme has been widely appreciated in many parts of the world and Australian being no exception. Growers, marketers and consumers are all looking for improvements and this new generation is poised to deliver just that.





UCD Royal Royce

UCD Royal Royce is the first of three day-neutral varieties to be launched, all of which are demonstrating a quantum leap in terms of quality, yield and flavour. UCD Royal Royce was selected for exceptionally high yield per plant of Class 1 fruit.

The flavour is great with a good sugar-acid balance produced from a near perfect red berry. In fruit production the plants produce very few runners contributing to significant labour savings in terms of both cost and increased productivity.



UCD Valliant

Selected for its high yield and flavour, UCD Valliant is likely to be a key variety on many strawberry farms in the future.

It has great levels of disease resistance and will therefore work well on low input systems as well as organic production.



UCD Moxie

UCD Moxie peaks in its fruit production at the latter end of the season offering growers superb season extension opportunities. The variety has great levels of disease resistance to Fusarium and Verticillium wilt.

UCD Moxie, like UCD Royal Royce, produces very few runners in the fruiting field.

This new generation of day-neutrals deliver significant yield improvements, fruit size, flavour and shelf life.

Global Plant Genetics has appointed three leading strawberry nurseries in Australia to propagate and market the five new strawberry varieties. The emphasis has been on plant quality and plant type availability when choosing these nurseries. We are in the relatively early days of the anticipated launch, with the nurseries already expressing high interest and demand.

It is clear the future of the industry is very dependent on new and improved varieties and these five are sure to offer all stakeholders great hope and opportunity. They all have high yield and better fruit quality which are all key components for the future.

All fruit images provided with thanks to University of California, (Hector Amezcua/UC Davis)

For more information, please visit www.globalplantgenetics.com

