

Profile: Lakeview Produce & Berries

Jane Richter, Communications Manager

Situated an hour south of the NSW border in Bajarg, Northern Victoria, Lakeview Produce & Berries is a little farm with big aspirations. The current owners – Tim and Krystle Walker - took over the property in May 2023 with strawberries, raspberries and blueberries already in place all grown to full organic certification supported by permaculture principles.

This young couple in their thirties have steadily traded their way up from an apartment balcony with a few pots to an 18m² veggie patch and then from 2.5 acres with a big vegetable garden complete with chooks and ducks to this fully fledged organic farm in the countryside. Tim is a builder by trade running a Melbourne-based building company and had just finished a bespoke kitchen garden glasshouse build for Krystle at their home east of Melbourne city when this property in Bajarg came onto the market.

With no real intention to become full-time farmers, they have taken the plunge and left the city for a gentler life, living in a caravan on-site whilst Tim builds some more permanent facilities to support their expansion plans.

Tim comes from the Benalla area originally and with two generations of farmers behind him he spent many days learning the general farming ropes as a child. Krystle is a professional personal trainer with a very strong interest in health and nutrition, and growing fresh chemical-free food is a natural extension for her.



Tim and Krystle Walker in the first of soon-to-be-many patches of fully organic strawberries. Photo credit: Jane Richter



The farm has plenty of room for expansion and a stable water supply. Photo credit: Jane Richter

The previous owners – Nina and Andrew Meiers – have been providing mentorship since May 2023 to help the pair to transition successfully. Another local ex-strawberry grower has been very supportive and the staff the couple have taken on have also brought a wealth of knowledge from other local horticulture operations, enabling the pair to get up and running very quickly. Another source of good information has been their local Ag supply businesses whose agronomists have provided excellent guidance on areas like plant nutrition and the products available for use in certified organic growing systems.

When they took over, there were 15,000 ‘Albion’ strawberry plants in-ground and already producing, plus a number of blueberry bushes in need of a little attention and nine rows of raspberries across three different varieties. The water is provided from a deep bore that has never run dry even through the driest times in recent years, so all the parts of the puzzle are in place to give the business a good start.

The immediate plan is to extend the strawberry growing areas to add a further two patches in the next few weeks to help keep up with the demand for their organic berries and provide a harvest into early autumn. This will also provide more sustained harvest volumes to keep their three staff members fully occupied. The premium grade fruit is all sold through the Melbourne and Sydney wholesale markets using the existing relationships forged by the previous owners and it is clear that this couple could sell all of their fruit multiple times over based on the demand for quality organic berries.

The first task Krystle and Tim had to complete was to pass their own organic certification audit, having taken over the existing farm site but with a transfer to a new legal operating entity. They passed with flying colours and are now keen to expand their permaculture practices to enable the farm to make even better use of what they already have available onsite, including a worm farm to make their own compost ‘juice’ to feed their berries and other produce.



Krystle showing off some of the organic berries ready for packing. Photo credit: Jane Richter

The pair are hoping to bring in crop rotation and plant some unusual orchard trees like 'Yuzu' which will enable them to tap into locally based niche but growing markets. Tim has contacts in the Melbourne fine food scene, and he understands that there is high demand for locally produced organic produce which can be supplied direct to the end customer. Krystle has already tapped into other local contacts including those who are actively seeking high quality organic second grade berries for use in preserves. Local consumers are also encouraged to order in bulk via their social media channels for pre-arranged collection, which provides another avenue for the couple to gain some sales momentum.

Future expansion is likely to include more raspberries – Krystle's favourite berry – plus some other vegetable crops, and Tim is keen to build a series of on-farm facilities to help boost their production capability and the farmgate experience for direct customers, including a café and farm shop.

In the meantime, the biggest challenge seems to be living in a pop-top caravan on-site with two small children through a particular tempestuously stormy summer! Plus, Tim is still managing his successful building company down in Melbourne, so life is not going to be dull for this pair for quite some time.

Ramm BOTANICALS

We are specialists in both Tissue Culture and Young Plant Production and Services.

INITIATION SERVICE

PRODUCT EXPERIENCE

CONTRACT PRODUCTION

EXPORT CAPABILITY



Ramm Botanicals provides high scale onsite tissue culture and young plant production and services for domestic and international markets. With over 15 years of experience, we can confidently offer all current and new customers quality, reliability, service and knowledge.

OUR BERRIES

BLUEBERRY

BLACKBERRY

RASPBERRY

STRAWBERRY



CONTACT US

Phone: 02 4351 2099 | Email - ramm@ramm.com.au

www.rammtissueculture.com.au