

# Strawberry Café: Online series for controlled environment enthusiasts & other protected cropping resources

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Do you like to discuss issues with researchers and other growers in a live online environment? Strawberry Café is an online information exchange and discussion group that meets monthly to discuss controlled environment strawberry production issues.

The group is open to everyone, and participants are encouraged to suggest topics for discussion, ask questions, and share knowledge. The group also has out-of-session discussions via email when someone has an issue they need help with. Sessions are hosted by Chieri Kubota and Mark Kroggel who are part of the Controlled Environment Plant Physiology and Technology Lab team at The Ohio State University.

They launched Strawberry Café in October 2021 to create an open communication platform for producers, propagators, and technology providers to help move the whole industry forward in a sustainable direction.



**Chieri Kubota and Mark Kroggel**

Photo credit: Ohio State University

**To participate or listen-into these interactive sessions you can sign up here completely free of charge:**

[bit.ly/STR-Cafe](https://bit.ly/STR-Cafe)

**When:**

Last Thursday of the month, starting at 11 am US Eastern (UTC-5)

**Where:**

Via Zoom - you will be sent a link by email once you have signed up

**Cost:** FREE

The sessions are recorded, which is handy if you're not a night owl or early morning person given the time difference between Australia and Ohio, so if you miss one you generally have 120 days to watch it before it expires.

To get the most out of these sessions, be sure to have a working microphone on your computer so that you can ask questions and participate in the discussion.

If you don't like speaking there is the option of typing your questions and comments in the chat.

## Here are some snapshots of past Strawberry Café sessions

**September 2023:** UV-C for powdery mildew control with Thomas Hoeterickx from Octiva

**October 2023:** Unstructured discussion on pest and disease management lead by Mark Kroggel

**November 2023:** LED Lighting in Strawberry Production: Dr. Laura Bautista and Stijn Jochems from Delphi Netherlands shared their learnings and struggles with growing strawberries in both standard indoor and high-tech growing environments

**January 2024:** Philips Horticulture LED Solutions and trials underway in the Netherlands and Japan with Peer Hermans (Europe) and Gauri Maharjan (Japan) from Philips

## Other resources

If you visit the Ohio State University Controlled Environment Berry Production Information web page at <https://u.osu.edu/indoorberry>, you will see that there are other useful resources on offer.

The team has updated their website to present information applicable to a range of climatic conditions. Some of the information presented is specific to US production, but other information can be applied anywhere.

Topics covered include planting materials, flowering basics, production systems, production cycles and fruit quality, lighting, fertigation, pruning, pollination, disorders, IPM, and cost considerations.

There are also a series of videos that step through the basics of soilless strawberry production and the team sometimes offer training sessions covering the basics.

## Other sources of protected cropping information

For collaboration closer to home, there are two Australian organisations (other than Berries Australia of course!) offering support in the protected cropping and hydroponic space: the Hydroponic Farmers Federation and Protected Cropping Australia.

Both organisations offer some freely available resources online, but most of their information is for members only.

## Hydroponic Farmers Federation Inc (HFF)

The HFF grew from a small self-help group to the large association it is today through a commitment to furthering the hydroponic industry by growers supporting each other.

HFF is open to all hydroponic farmers and businesses offering support to growers Australia-wide.

Membership for growers costs \$112 per year.

HFF aims to:

- provide representation and advocacy for and on behalf of its members to all levels of government and other relevant organisations on issues relevant to the hydroponic industry
- promote hydroponic produce and continue to develop its market share
- enhance grower performance through education, training and networking
- provide members with the opportunity to share the benefits of group purchasing and marketing
- encourage and facilitate research relevant to the hydroponic industry.

Website: [www.hff.org.au](http://www.hff.org.au)

## Protected Cropping Australia Ltd (PCA)

PCA is the peak industry body representing commercial hydroponic and greenhouse growers Australia-wide. PCA members also include equipment and installation suppliers, specialist consultants and advisors, researchers, and educators.

PCA's core purpose is to advocate on behalf of their industry members. They also deliver training and resources, facilitate regional tours and events, develop and promote research and development projects, and offer online resources.

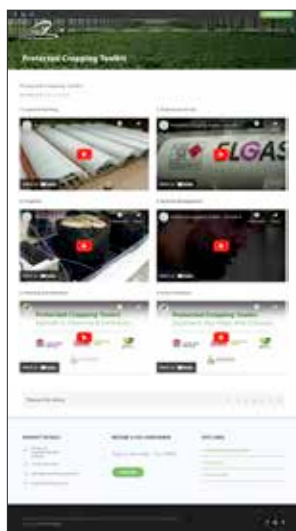
Membership for individuals costs \$250 or you can Subscribe for free to receive PCA e-news and updates as well as free access to 2 PCA webinars each year.

Website: [www.protectedcropping.net.au](http://www.protectedcropping.net.au)

## Local resources to get you started

If you are new to protected cropping or thinking about jumping in, there are some good local resources to get you started with your planning. Some of these are highlighted below.

There are also berry-specific articles and resources available on our website in our new Resource Library - just search 'substrate' or select the 'Growing Systems' Category and browse the resources.



### Protected cropping toolkit

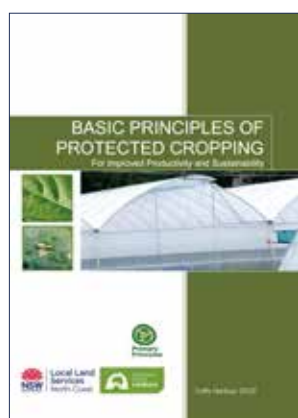
This toolkit is a series of six 'how to' videos developed to support the protected cropping industry.

They were developed as part of a VegNET NSW project in partnership with Hort Innovation and are available at the PCA website.

The videos can be watched as a series or individually:

1. Layout and planning
2. Setting up a greenhouse
3. Irrigation management
4. Nutrient management
5. Sanitation and cleaning the greenhouse
6. Pest and disease management

Visit: [www.protectedcropping.net.au/protected-cropping-toolkit](http://www.protectedcropping.net.au/protected-cropping-toolkit)



### Basic Principles of Protected Cropping

This written guide was produced for the Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare and North Coast Local Land Services.

It covers basic principles of protected cropping including site selection, buffers, design and management considerations, water supply considerations, hydroponic system design, irrigation system design, and containing and managing waste products.

Download this from the Resource Library on our website.



### Toolbox for Greenhouse Construction and Safe Operation

This Toolbox provides more in-depth practical design, planning and prevention measures to implement during and after a development.

It includes 13 factsheets on:

- Safe management practices, including fire prevention and working at heights
- Local government approval processes
- Design requirements and considerations
- Access and egress requirements
- Other issues and common grower concerns.

Download these 13 Fact Sheets from the Resource Library on our website.