

A Scottish Perspective: Alix Stewart Visits Tasmania's Berry Sector

Simon Neil, Berry Industry Development Officer, Fruit Growers Tasmania

In late November 2025, Fruit Growers Tasmania hosted agronomist Alix Stewart of Angus Growers (producer organisation for Angus Soft Fruits, Scotland), creating an opportunity for direct knowledge exchange between Tasmanian berry growers and an experienced producer and breeder from a long-established international industry player. Alix was in Australia as part of broader work in drone-assisted pollination technology with Singapore-based company, Polybee, and the timing provided a valuable chance to showcase a representative cross-section of Tasmania's berry sector.



Leaving early, we followed the Derwent River to meet Richard Clark at Westerway's Raspberry Farm. This was an excellent chance to talk about value-added production, and Alix and Richard discovered a geographic common point of interest; Richard and his father Rob Clark had both spent much time in the same eastern corner of Scotland that Alix hails from, and they were soon chatting about common acquaintances like they'd known each other for years.

Climbing up into the Tasmanian Midlands, we dropped in to see Jack Beattie from JCLM Farming. This was a fantastic opportunity to discuss new varieties and genetics on either side of the antipodes, and we were honoured to enjoy a much-needed cup of tea in the farmhouse.

From there, we began the beautiful scenic drive through the Lake Lands, heading north towards the fertile valley of the Deloraine region, stopping in to show Alix quality *Rubus* cane propagation at Deloraine Canes. We were both deeply impressed by the professionalism and immaculate presentation of the Creswell family farm there. After the cold grey drizzle of the Midland range, the sundrenched farm was just beautiful, and we enjoyed a long, leisurely stroll amongst the rows chatting with Stacey.



At Westerway Raspberry Farm, Richard Clark shares insights on value-added berry production with visiting agronomist Alix Stewart



Alix discusses strawberry canopy management and plant structure with Jack Beattie at JCLM Farming



At Westerway Raspberry Farm, Richard Clark explains the use of an over-row mechanical harvester for processing-grade berries during Alix Stewart's visit



Alix Stewart (R) with Stacey Cresswell (L) at Deloraine Canes, where discussions focused on Rubus propagation and plant material quality

All photos credit: Simon Neil, Fruit Growers Tasmania

To round out the visit, our last stop was at Berried in Tas, where Barry Winspear (kind and enthusiastic despite the late hour!) showed us their rip-roaring strawberries and Rubus canes. Despite the trying season with too much wind and not enough sunshine, there was plenty of excellent fruit on the rows. Alix and Barry chatted about on-farm innovations in wastewater management, the importance of happy workers, and the challenges of modern precision horticulture.

After a long day touring the state, we said our goodbyes in Launceston. The following day, Alix travelled to Hillwood Berries to meet the team and compare notes on their drone-assisted pollination trials. She then met

with Ecomix at Burlington Berries, and on her final day in Tasmania caught up with Bitwise Agronomy, before taking a couple of days to explore some of Australia ahead of her return flight to Scotland. As I drove home to Hobart, I reflected that the tour had been a success; we had enabled practical grower-to-grower exchange and strengthened the relationships that make future collaboration (whether local, or across the world) worth doing.

