



# GPG Times

## Maverick

Rupert Hargreaves

Maverick the incredibly exciting new blueberry variety bred by the University of Georgia is rapidly becoming one of the most sort after varieties in the world.

Earlier in 2023 Global Plant Genetics bought the worldwide rights to Maverick along with a bunch of others having seen its potential in a number of different countries and growing regions.

Rarely do you get a variety in this game that ticks so many boxes but Maverick certainly does. The plant is upright in its architecture with fruit well displayed for ease of harvesting.

Interestingly Maverick works as an evergreen variety but if grown in an area with chill units works perfectly well as a mid/late season variety at around 350 hours chill units making it a super versatile variety.

We have consistently seen yields in the first harvest of 4.5 kg per plant which from a growers' perspective alone is highly attractive. Growers in many countries around the world say if they can achieve 3 kg per plant in the first harvest they get their investment costs back so potential yields of 4.5 + per plant are highly profitable from the start.

The berry size is 17 mm+ with a good bloom and a small dry scar. The brix is 13.5 and the acidity is 0.6% giving a great flavour profile.

As we move to the southern hemisphere season in the coming months and then through North Africa and Europe we will see much more fruit available and of course, plantings taking place. Demand for plants in many parts of the world is already in short supply for 2024 even though propagation has increased significantly.

In addition to the above information on Maverick, we asked some of our international clients what they thought of Maverick from their experiences:

Dr. Rolando Garcia, SynergiBio Chile & Mexico: "Maverick is one of the most complete blueberry variety that is arriving. It can produce large amounts of fruits with excellent quality. It is very rare to find that positive balance between yield, fruit size, flavor, and shelf life."

Pieter Zietsman, Top Fruit, South Africa: "Maverick proved to be a vigorous growing variety, very precocious with the ability to set fruit in climates that vary from the cold Western Cape in South Africa to the warm semi-tropical region Uganda. We recently visited a farm in Zambia where Maverick had an excellent crop of good-quality fruit from early March to the end of June. In Uganda Maverick was harvested from November to January and 2.5 kilograms per plant was harvested from 9-month-old plants. In the northern parts of South Africa in the warm summer rainfall region, Maverick was harvested from August to November and in the cool region of southern South Africa production was from September to the end of December. These ripening times in different regions of Africa prove that Maverick is not only able to produce big volumes of fruit per plant where 4.78 kg per plant was achieved on 16-month-old plants, but also sweet, crunchy fruit year long round. It also shows the amazing ability of the variety to produce fruit in all regions of the world where southern highbush can be planted. Hats off to this winner variety!"

It's difficult for us to find enough superlatives to sum up our excitement with Maverick but we thought it far better if you heard it from our friends around the world.

Should you be interested in more details on Maverick check out our website and social media platforms, or contact Rupert Hargreaves directly at [rupert@globalplantgenetics.com](mailto:rupert@globalplantgenetics.com)



# Highlights from the Field

Soufiane Lahtati Belkas

I have had the good fortune to learn a lot from my travels. My last two trips to Georgia and Egypt have left their mark on me.

On the visit to the University of Georgia for the new blueberry selection, I was pleasantly surprised with the kindness of the team and the time they took to show us the new selections, especially Brent and Dr. Scott Nesmith, everything was such a gift. We have spent several days in their fields visiting the new selections together with a group of very potential berry growers and marketers. During these days we have been able to see that we will have unique and outstanding blueberry genetics for approximately the next 10 years. Flavour, shelf life, and size have been the 3 criteria on which the breeder has based his incredible crosses here. Here are some pictures.

Several weeks later I packed my suitcase to visit our new varieties in Egypt. As I was driving I could only see deserts and tons of sand, and I thought to myself, how will the water get there to irrigate the crops? This question has been spinning around in my head for most of my stay in Egypt. Until I was told about the financial outlay the Egyptian government is making by sending the army to build tunnels of more than 300 km to bring water from the Nile to their farms. During my visit, we visited the trial fields of our partners to see our new strawberry varieties. It was very satisfying to see our varieties developing in Egypt. I was surprised by the yield of our genetics, almost more than two kilos of fruit per plant, making them a highly productive variety.



# Introducing Shaun Collin

Marieke Gortemaker

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We are delighted to announce we have had a new team member joining us here at Global Plant Genetics! Shaun Collin has taken on the role of Royalties Administrator.

After working for 40 years in advertising sales, Shaun is well known for his success in this sector. Most of his time was spent in the motorcycle industry. Shaun has joined the GPG team to take on the responsibilities for administration and communication around Royalties.

The things you need to know about Shaun are:

- **He's a keen motorcyclist enjoying road trips in both the UK and Europe, with his wife Sue as a willing pillion!**
- **Spare time is shared between gardening, walking (particularly in and around the Peak District National Park), and socialising with friends.**
- **Shaun's also a big rugby fan and enjoys watching games either live or at the pub, but always with a beer or two.**

Join us in welcoming Shaun to the GPG team. Would you like to know more about Shaun or anyone else on our team? Make sure to have a look at our **"About"** page!



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# Asparagus Study Tour to Ontario and Michigan

Jamie Petchell

Together with our partners from Fox Seeds in Ontario, Canada, we recently arranged an asparagus study tour to two of the most important production regions of Canada and the USA, namely Ontario and Michigan. We were delighted to be joined by an excellent and highly knowledgeable group of growers, consultants, nurseries, breeders and crop specialists from seven countries around the world.

While in Ontario, we visited the province's largest asparagus producers and packers / marketers. All plantings within the territory are established with Guelph asparagus hybrids and we witnessed an increase in the use of the Guelph Equinox variety, much like we are also seeing in other parts of the world. In addition, we were shown around the new breeding facilities of Fox Seeds and received excellent presentations from the outgoing asparagus breeder from The University of Guelph, Dr David Wolyn and another from Cindy Rouet who has taken on the asparagus breeding role as the programme has transitioned to Fox Seeds. Following the presentations, we were also able to walk through the new hybrid trials in order to get a closer look at what is coming next from the breeding programme.

In Michigan, we were superbly hosted by Ben Werling and John Bakker, well-known to many in the asparagus world as the leading experts on the crop in their home state. Here, we saw asparagus production and harvesting using the "snapping" technique common to the region but almost unseen anywhere else in the world. This was accompanied by a range of excellent technical crop presentations where we heard some cutting-edge developments in crop protection, weed management and nutrition. No asparagus visit to Michigan can be considered complete without the sampling of John's superb, deep-fried asparagus and this time was no different as we were treated to some of his excellent culinary skills once more.

All in all, it was a great trip and we will endeavour to put on more events in the future to help our asparagus friends stay at the forefront of production of the crop.



# Interview with Abdallah Al Tayeh, Highland AG Investments

Marieke Gortemaker

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Global Plant Genetics is proud to be working with Highland AG Investments, our appointed licence holders in Jordan for the UCD Strawberry varieties; UCD Royal Royce, UCD Moxie, UCD Valiant, UCD Victor and UCD Warrior. Marieke Gortemaker, Marketing & Communications manager at GPG, had the opportunity to interview Abdallah Al Tayeh, Managing Director of Highland AG Investments.

## MG: Can you please give us a background of your business?

Highland is a newly formed company managed by a group of experienced agriculture engineers, agronomists and an entrepreneur, with a plan to disrupt the local strawberry industry. The mission is to invest in world class facilities, implement best-in-class SOP's and execute a comprehensive IPM system that delivers a premium strawberry that is consistent in both quality and flavor. With the city of Madaba (aka) Mosaic-capital-of-Jordan being the location of the farms, it provides a backdrop of magnificent culture and abundance of mosaic ruins. The area is chosen for its rich soil, open landscape and availability of replenishable high quality water. Our aim is to fully transform into sustainable hydroponic farming by 2024. Sustainability and water management is a very important element of our business operations, especially coming from a country designated as extremely water poor. We consider water management and supply as a critical component to our livelihood and the future of our children.

Being the Jordan Licensee of the new University of California Varieties, Highland aims to create a new partnership with all local strawberry growers. Our plan is to assist the growers with advanced farm management knowhow and train them on sustainability and post-harvest quality procedures. This is in addition to providing them with high quality strawberry plants of the new California varieties that far exceed in yield, firmness and flavor all other strawberry varieties grown in Jordan. The plan is supported by GPG the global master license holders for the UCD varieties; UCD Royal Royce, UCD Moxie, UCD Valiant, UCD Victor and UCD Warrior, who continuously provide us with exceptional expertise from plant to fruit.

Harvest season starts in November and lasts until June of every year. Our fresh berries are transported rapidly to the pack house for cooling using the latest post harvest pre-cooling technologies. The berries are then checked for quality, weighed, packaged and labelled. The palletized goods packed using multiple packages according to the client and are then shipped by Air or land all this while maintaining a closed cold supply chain.

By working with our Fresh Direct Approach you are guaranteed a quality, safe, produce, a reliable partner who supports the livelihoods of over 1,000 rural households.



**MG: Where do you see the UCD varieties fitting into the Jordanian market?**

Since 20 years we have been growing US and other strawberry varieties and they have all shown great success in Jordans climate. Since last year we started growing the new UCD varieties and they have been outstanding in all aspects. With the vigorous and high yielding character, the new UCD varieties will help Jordan growers fill the gap of cost to revenue formula where labour and other costs have been rising and putting much pressure on the farmers. The new varieties offer sweetness, a crispy bite and a range of berry sizes to cater to different tastes. The local clients are attracted to the size of the berry which UCD varieties all have. So we see big potential for these new varieties to fulfill the middle-astern appeal for attractive and big berries.

**MG: Are there any specific comments and/or feedback that you have on any of the varieties?**

I believe each variety has a unique profile and will benefit the farmer in both expanding the harvest window as well producing bigger returns to them. Our objective is to create an advantage to the farmer in supporting his work by reducing the effort needed to maintain strawberry plants. These varieties help us doing exactly that. Both the Royal Royce and Victor produce much less runners during fruiting and focus on producing berries. This make the farmers life much easier and reduces cost of managing runners during harvest. In the winter months Valiant as a Neutral Day, is a heavy producer with fantastic sugar to acid ratio which we believe will be an attractive buying point for well established customers and supermarkets. Victor, on the other starts slow but makes up in record yield and size after end January. Royal Royce produces consistent yield of firm and homogeneous berries.

**MG: What are the highlights of the UCD program for you?**

Since this is still a new program for us and we are continuously profiling the varieties, many of the variety characteristics are challenging our traditional knowledge of the plants response to weather and climate. We have come to realize the vitality and robustness of the varieties. When other varieties fail due to high temperature the new UCD varieties have kicked in and have shown resilience to fight back and restart. This varies between the varieties but all in all we are confident the varieties have much to offer due to their strong genetics.

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### MG: Are there any points of difference you will be offering growers from a service perspective

We will continue to offer the farm as a showcase for all interested and potential growers. As part of the expansion plan this year we will be investing in a raised nursery propagation scheme to lower the cost of the nursery which will lower the cost of plant sale to the farmer. This season we intend to propagate part of the nursery under tunnel which would lower the use of water by 35% and create stronger plants. By removing the direct sunlight exposure, the plants are less stressed and divert their energy to the root system which creates strong plants. Strong plants makes happy farmers as they become big berry producers!

### MG: Would you like to comment on the future of the varieties and the opportunities they might bring?

The new UCD varieties that have shown higher yield, more tolerance to diseases, better firmness and flavor qualities will disrupt the world of strawberries which will have a positive impact on farmers and the end user. I think the team at UCD have really outdone themselves in creating these spectacular new varieties. We are also extremely happy with our relationship with Team GPG - the International Master licensee who have supported us from the start by providing sources of material and fulfilled every request we've had. They have a professional and highly experienced team, whom we look forward to working closely with on all the future strawberry varieties they represent, as well as the other outstanding berries genetics under their management.

### MG: Are there any other comments you would like to bring the varieties, your business and/or about the Egyptian market?

I believe the new UCD Varieties will be a success in every country that previously grew strawberries. One thing to note that while the initial costs of acquiring the strawberries variety licenses is costly, the return is worth the investment. Still to make this investment sustainable and not loose value, licensee in every country should maintain their jurisdiction and protect the IP of any illegal trade. Illegal cross border flow of strawberry plants will create a chaotic market eventually hurt the brand and its value.

### MG: Would you like to share any client feedback?

All the responses from our clients have been overwhelming positive. Most of the farmers who have trialled the varieties will be ordering new plants next year. We expect tremendous demand for the years to come.

Thank you Abdallah Al Tayeh for this interview opportunity. For more information regarding the UCD Royal Royce, UCD Moxie, UCD Valiant, UCD Victor and UCD Warrior or any other varieties in our crop portfolio, please email us at [solutions@globalplantgenetics.com](mailto:solutions@globalplantgenetics.com)

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The new UCD varieties that have shown higher yield, more tolerance to diseases, better firmness and flavour qualities.



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HIGHLAND

# China & India

Rupert Hargreaves

China and India are both focal points for the business development team. Our world-class portfolio of berry genetics is in great demand in both countries and we are currently in various stages of development in each country.

Notwithstanding the complications in IP protection for us it's all about choosing our partners. "We are a people business with world-class products" is a phrase that can often be heard around the office from Rupert Hargreaves and this approach has been at the heart of the development plans so far for both countries. There will be more updates in the coming months



Rupert Hargreaves with the Founder and president of China's largest fruit supermarket visiting together in California USA

# IP Insights

Iulia Negoita and Marion Durose



We've been some busy bees here at GPG over the last couple of weeks, here's our latest updates for the IP department:

Plant Breeders' Rights have been filed in the UK for University of Georgia's blueberries Tropical Blue & Ambrosia and in Australia for the following varieties: James Hutton Institute's raspberries Skye, Lewis, Glen Mor; University of Georgia's blueberries: Ava, Maverick and Gladiator and University of California Davis's strawberries: UCD Finn & UCD Mojo.

Whilst the applications have been filed in the United Kingdom following Brexit regulations for the following blackberries and grape rootstock: Von, Columbia Star, PrimeArk45, Natchez, Ouachita, GRN1 & GRN3; we are happy to inform that these varieties will now be advertised in the UK Gazette for a period of 3 months as proposed awards, with Plant Breeders' Rights to be granted in territory shortly after that.

We are also making good progress with preparing the applications for University of Georgia's Sweet Duchess blueberry in Colombia and our main focus for the next couple of months will be on the James Hutton Institute's raspberries Skye, Lewis, Glen Mor, University of Georgia's Duchess series and University of California Davis's strawberries UCD Finn & UCD Mojo in a vast range of territories across the globe.

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# And Finally

Rupert Hargreaves

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Did you know that over 53% of seven to nine year olds picked strawberries as their favourite fruit.



**Global Plant  
Genetics Ltd**<sup>®</sup>  
Where Quality Breeds Success