

Strawberry Innovation in Egypt & Jordan: A Global Showcase

Rupert Hargreaves

In January, strawberry nurseries from 12 countries and a team from UC Davis joined GPG for a visit to Egypt and Jordan, exploring advancements in strawberry genetics.

Egypt: A Growing Hub for Premium Strawberries

The group first visited Domiatec Agri-Group in Egypt, where presentations and field visits showcased the professionalism of Domiatec's tissue culture laboratory and nursery facilities.

The NEW UC Davis varieties demonstrated impressive fruit quality and yield, reinforcing Egypt as a key player in the global strawberry market.

Jordan: Exceptional Strawberry Quality

The group then travelled to Jordan, where Highland Ag Investments, led by Abdallah Al Tayeh, showcased outstanding UC Davis cultivars: UC Victor, UC Valiant, UC Moxie, and UC Royal Royce.

A highlight was the new high-specification tunnels from Haygrove:

- 1 hectare for UC Davis fruit production
- 1 hectare for nursery propagation

With Abdallah's expertise, advanced infrastructure, and premium genetics, this setup will be a model for the region.



Standout Varieties & Remarkable Performance in Jordan

UC Victor (Short-Day Variety) – January 2025

- Exhibited a massive fruit load
- Expected to reach a significant peak in May and June, similar to trends seen in California's east coastal regions
- Produced large, high-quality fruit with exceptional shelf life
- Delivered excellent flavour with a well-balanced sugar-acid profile
- Harvesting every five days resulted in improved flavour and internal colour, compared to more frequent three-day harvesting

UC Royal Royce – January 2025

- Planted in October 2024 and harvested from early December 2024
- Demonstrated outstanding fruit size and vibrant colour, meeting the high expectations associated with this variety

This showcase reaffirmed Egypt and Jordan's growing roles in global strawberry production. With expert growers, premium genetics, and cutting-edge infrastructure, the future looks bright.

A huge thank you to all who worked on this trip and joined - it allowed for such a successful few days. Thank you for your contributions to advancing strawberry cultivation.



Haygrove's Advanced Climate Controlled Polytunnels

Haygrove



Haygrove designs polytunnels and substrate gutter systems, supplying growers of over 30 crops in more than 50 countries. As commercial producers and propagators, Haygrove also cultivates berries and cherries on farms in the UK, South Africa, Portugal, and China. This dual expertise enables Haygrove to understand the complex challenges presented by climate, geography, crop sensitivities, labour resourcing, market demands and the ongoing development of technology that shape our industry.

Over the past decade, Haygrove's polytunnel range has evolved from simple rain covers to advanced climate-controlled structures. The latest patented innovation, Total Vent, features a fully retractable roof, providing unparalleled polytunnel climate management.



Propagators in both the UK and Australia are achieving outstanding propagation results with Total Vent structures, while in Jordan, Haygrove has recently supplied EZvent tunnels with mechanised venting for a pioneering strawberry propagation venture.

Haygrove's mechanised technologies empower growers to manage the climate effectively by responding to real-time conditions and mitigating temperature spikes that stress young plants. Total Vent tunnels can fully open and close frequently, quickly, and precisely, ensuring an optimal growing environment. This results in healthier, more resilient plants through consistent temperature, humidity, light exposure, and airflow control.

Additionally, by automating climate adjustments, growers can significantly reduce manual labour costs. Automated venting maintains stable conditions without the need for constant human intervention. Furthermore, the ability to close tunnels during rainfall not only protects plants but also facilitates the capture of high-quality rainwater for sustainable irrigation.

While precise climate control is standard practice in glasshouse propagation, Haygrove's innovative structures deliver similar benefits at a fraction of the capital investment, making advanced growing technology accessible to growers looking for a quicker return on investment.

www.haygrove.com

Low-Chill Blueberries Continue to Impress

Jamie Petchell

As the blueberry season in southern Spain is getting into full swing, we remain excited at the current and impending performance of our low-chill variety portfolio. The three main varieties within this bracket are Tropical Blue, Maverick and Gladiator, all from the world-renowned breeding programme at The University of Georgia, USA. Each one has its own unique characteristics that make it a high-level performer in this region as well as many others in warmer climates globally.

Tropical Blue is at the vanguard of very-early season blueberry production in Spain. The variety was producing its excellent quality berries from early January this year and has continued producing high yields throughout February, into early March. Tropical Blue is making a real name in this very early production and supply window when market conditions are optimal. The variety responds superbly to August "tipping" meaning that fruit ripening is concentrated early in the harvest season, thus reducing harvesting costs. Its berries are large, 16-22mm throughout the harvest, very firm and with an excellent sweet / acid balance, delivering a superb eating experience.



Following hot on the tail of Tropical Blue are Maverick and Gladiator. Both of these varieties deliver exceptional, premium-quality berries in the next phase of the harvest season in Spain. It is also important to note that all three varieties can perform in zero-chill / evergreen production systems.

Maverick is well-known for its industry-leading yields of this excellent quality fruit. Not only does it produce massive volumes of fruit per plant, it has a level of precocity that is genuinely unique with yields of close to 5kgs / plant in the first full harvest season in some locations. It also has a very uniform berry size in the 18-22mm bracket. In addition, we are also now witnessing impressive rusticity as demonstrated in organic production in Spain this season.



Gladiator, also adapted to evergreen harvesting in hot climates, is best-known for its world-beating fruit quality. Its berries are very large, many 20-24mm and occasionally even larger. It has a very crisp texture and an optimal equilibrium of natural sugar and acidity levels. Its flavour, texture and mouthfeel never fail to impress, not to mention its very high production levels.



We look forward to updating you further as the fruiting season transitions from Tropical Blue into both Maverick and Gladiator.

Global Blueberry Production - The GPG Perspective



Jamie Petchell

Interest, demand, production and supply of blueberries continue to increase at impressive levels on a global scale. There is so much positivity around the sector, whether talking to consumers about health benefits and flavour, or to growers about improved cultivation practices and season extension, or to fruit marketers about increased volumes of better quality fruit, it is hard not to get caught up in the blueberry tidal wave of alacrity.

One crucial aspect that contributes to all of these factors is within plant breeding and its ability to deliver a better blueberry experience for all involved in the supply chain. The development of improved blueberry varieties has played a pivotal role in the huge development of the crop over the recent past.

On a global scale, it is recognised that there are more than 260,000 hectares of blueberry plantations in production. This area of blueberry cultivation has increased by around 30% since 2019. In calculated estimations, today's plantations are split close to equally between production in warmer and cooler climates. Generally, low-chill / Southern Highbush types are used in hot and warm climates with high-chill / Northern Highbush cultivars used in cooler and temperate regions. In addition, some locations are using appreciable volumes of Rabbiteye as well as mid-chill cultivars.

Over the past ten years, there has been a large breeding focus on the development of Southern Highbush blueberries for establishment and production in warmer growing regions.

As a result, blueberry fruit quality and yields have improved substantially from major producing regions in these climate types. Correspondingly, the advancement in Northern Highbush genetics has been much less discernible. In addition, yields per hectare are appreciably higher in low-chill genetics and the gap to high-chill has increased even further in the recent past.

In short, there is now a massive opportunity and challenge in the Northern Highbush / high-chill blueberry sector. Firstly, consumers, retailers and fruit marketers now expect fruit quality standards across the whole 12-month window to be at a level supplied by the leading low-chill varieties. Secondly, from a grower's perspective, as well as improved fruit quality, new Northern Highbush varieties also need to deliver in terms of higher production yields to be able to compete on a more level playing field with their low-chill counterparts.

At GPG, we are delighted to be working closely with the team at Oregon Blueberry in the USA. The breeding efforts at this programme include the development of new varieties for all major growing climates. This very much includes fundamentally augmented blueberry genetics for high-chill regions.



We will soon be sharing some exciting news about new releases from the programme. These are set to be game-changing in the Northern Highbush blueberry arena. Stay tuned!

Stay Updated with Our Global Crop Developments

Eloise McDowell

Staying informed about the latest technical developments and crop updates, is essential. Here at GPG we are dedicated to sharing real-time insights from all of our growing regions, helping growers, and industry professionals, stay ahead of the technological advancements. With our YouTube channel, we are making these updates more accessible than ever, allowing you to gain expert knowledge from anywhere in the world.

Our channel is your go-to source for up-to-date information on crop performance, technical advancements, and industry trends.

Global Coverage: Direct updates from our growing regions worldwide.

Expert Insights: Hear from our agronomists, researchers, and industry professionals.

Timely Updates: Stay informed about new crop developments, harvesting schedules, and best practices.



Our Crop-Specific Playlists

To make it easier for viewers to find relevant content, our channel is organised into specialised playlists, each dedicated to a different crop within our portfolio -

Blueberry Updates – Innovations in variety development, techniques, and yield improvements.

Strawberry Innovations – Growth trends, management, and seasonal forecasts.

Raspberry Insights – Best practices for maximizing potential and production.

Blackberry Developments – Advanced cultivation techniques, higher yields and better fruit quality.

Asparagus Trends – farming, harvesting cycles, and market demand.

Recent Highlights from Our YouTube Channel



Maverick Blueberry Update – Spain (January 2025)

- The first pick of Maverick blueberries is expected late January.
- This crop looks extremely promising, following the successful early performance of Tropical Blue.

UCD Victor – Jordan (January 2025)

- Massive fruit load with strong yield potential.
- Short-Day variety with a major peak expected in May & June, particularly in California's east coastal regions.
- Excellent fruit size, shelf life, and sugar-acid balance, ensuring great flavour.
- Harvesting every 5 days has resulted in improved flavour and internal colour compared to harvesting every 3 days.

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCx0wkTHJ2KvBAOSshb-Yp3RA>

Von - Outstanding Performance Continues in Chile



We started testing Von in Chile three years ago, with limited trials in different areas of the country. This year the variety is now in its second commercial year, and new production will be incorporated. We have also had the opportunity to see it in full production and at its full performance in other territories, including in Europe.

From the beginning, the variety behaved very well in the trials in different areas. Seeing an outstanding general performance in cold and temperate regions was fascinating, with vigorous plant development, high yielding, and good fruit quality. Growers immediately wanted to go to a commercial scale and are now planting. The growers have found a variety that combines three main characteristics: high yielding, excellent fruit size and flavour, and good adaptation to different production areas. They are using Von for both fresh and processed fruit markets.

In 2025, our plant orders are significantly greater than last year. We see the same pattern for the following years as the new potential growers see the advantages of the variety. Chile needs to replant the blackberry areas with more productive varieties, and Von is an excellent choice.

Rolando Garcia - synergia bio
SynergiaBio 

AND FINALLY...

Rhubarb is seen as a health food... but its leaves are poisonous to humans due to high concentration of oxalic acid...

Eloise McDowell

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