



GPG Times

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Rupert Hargreaves

Reflections on the First GPG UCD Strawberry Nursery Congress

Last week marked a very special milestone for Global Plant Genetics (GPG) as we hosted the first ever GPG University of California, Davis (UCD) Strawberry Nursery Congress in California.

83 **21** **1**
People **Countries** **Congress**

Bringing together 83 people from 21 countries, representing businesses that collectively produce over one billion strawberry plants per year, the event was a powerful reminder of the strength, ambition and global reach of the strawberry nursery industry. From the moment I opened the Congress, there was a real sense of energy in the room.

This was not just another technical meeting or industry gathering. It was an opportunity to bring together some of the most experienced, forward-thinking and committed people in the global strawberry sector, and to create a space for open discussion, shared learning and long-term collaboration.

Over four days, we heard from excellent speakers, explored the science and commercial potential behind new strawberry genetics, and spent valuable time discussing the future of variety development, plant production, intellectual property and international supply chains. The level of knowledge in the room was exceptional, but what stood out most was the willingness of everyone involved to contribute, challenge, listen and share.



A particular highlight was the field visit to Watsonville, where attendees had the chance to see innovation in action and experience varieties first-hand, including the global impact and performance of UCD Royal Royce . In Santa Maria we saw excellent commercial plantations of UC Eclipse, UC Golden Gate, UC Surfline and UC Keystone. Seeing people from across the world walking the fields together, tasting fruit, comparing observations and discussing market opportunities was exactly what this Congress was designed to achieve.



Gabriela Pagnan - Maxxi Mudas

It was also inspiring to spend time with the UCD students and gain a deeper understanding of the research, dedication and innovation behind the strawberry varieties that will help shape the future of the industry. The work being done at UCD continues to play an important role in advancing genetics, productivity and fruit quality for growers and nurseries worldwide.

For me personally, opening and closing the event was a proud moment. At GPG, we have always believed in building strong international partnerships around excellent plant genetics. This Congress showed what is possible when breeders, nurseries, growers, researchers and commercial partners come together with a shared purpose.



Laureano Delarmelina -Vivero Altus

The event also provided the perfect moment to announce the launch of the new Global Plant Genetics website.

This is an important step for us as a business, reflecting how GPG continues to grow, modernise and communicate more clearly with our customers, growers and industry contacts around the world. The new website will allow us to showcase our varieties, collaborations and technical expertise in a more accessible and professional way, while supporting the continued global development of our portfolio.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work of the entire GPG team. I am grateful to those who were with us in California throughout the week, and equally to the team back at home who worked incredibly hard behind the scenes to help make the event happen. It was a true team effort.

I would also like to thank the team at UCD, all of our speakers, partners, guests, hosts and everyone who travelled from around the world to attend. Your enthusiasm, insight and support made the first GPG UCD Strawberry Nursery Congress a great success from start to finish.

We got it done - and it was incredible.



Left to Right:
Ahmet Yaltir - Yaltir Tarim, Thomas Pfeil - Los Olmos,
Joe Barsi - Cal Giant, Heitor Pagnan - Maxxi Mudas

This first Congress has set a strong foundation for the future. It confirmed not only the global importance of strawberry genetics, but also the value of bringing the strawberry nursery industry together in person to share ideas, build trust and look ahead.

There will be many more updates to come soon, but for now I would simply like to say thank you to everyone involved. This was a proud moment for GPG, and an exciting step forward for the international strawberry community.



Advancing Blueberry Genetics: New UGA Selections on the Horizon

Jamie Petchell

We are excited to share encouraging progress from our continued collaboration with the University of Georgia blueberry breeding programme.



Following 2-3 years of rigorous evaluation across multiple growing regions, a number of new selections are now emerging as standout candidates for commercialisation.

These advanced selections represent a clear step forward in key commercial traits. Across trials, we are consistently seeing improvements in fruit quality, including enhanced size, firmness, and overall eating experience. Flavour profiles have also advanced, delivering the balance and intensity increasingly demanded by modern consumers. Just as importantly, these gains are being achieved alongside strong and reliable yield performance—ensuring that the varieties are as commercially viable as they are attractive.

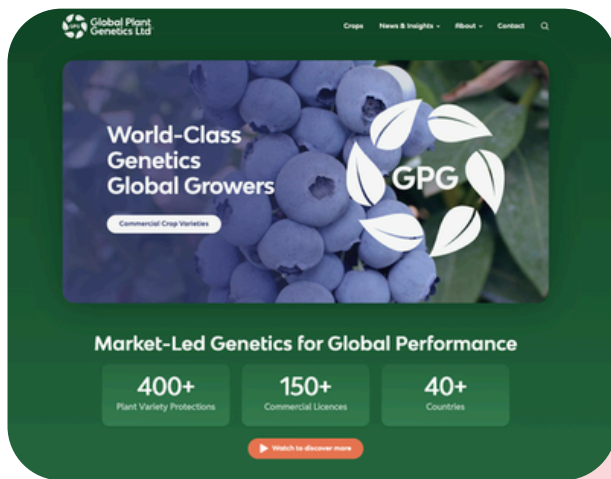
From an agronomic perspective, the selections are demonstrating encouraging adaptability, with stable performance across different climates and production systems. This provides confidence as we move closer to wider-scale introduction with our licensed partners. Further validation will continue alongside short-term commercial release, reinforcing the strength of the UGA programme and its alignment with the evolving needs of the global blueberry industry. We look forward to sharing more details as these exciting new varieties move towards full commercialisation.

New Website Launch

at First GPG UCD Strawberry Nursery Congress 2026, California USA

California, USA – May 2026 – Global Plant Genetics (GPG) is proud to announce the official launch of its new website during the first-ever GPG UCD Strawberry Nursery Congress 2026, taking place this week in California.

Meet our NEW website!



The launch marks a major milestone for GPG and reflects the company's continued commitment to growth, technical excellence, and the long-term development of the varieties it brings to market across global crop sectors.

The new website was introduced throughout several key presentations during the Congress, including the Welcome Presentation from Rupert Hargreaves, the GPG Technical Strategy Presentation delivered by Claire Donkin - GPG Technical Crop Support, and the GPG Strawberry Marketing Presentation presented by Dom Butkus - GPG Marketing & Social Media Executive.

Designed to provide a more dynamic, informative, and user-focused experience, the new platform showcases GPG's commitment to delivering standardised technical information across all crop sectors represented by the business.

A key feature of the new website is the introduction of dedicated branded crop sections, each with its own standalone URL and individual variety pages. These pages include interactive dropdown tools that allow users to easily compare technical data, characteristics, and variety information in a streamlined and accessible format.

The new platform represents a significant step forward for GPG, strengthening the visibility and market presence of each variety while supporting growers, breeders, nurseries and industry stakeholders with easier access to reliable technical resources.



The launch also further expands the ongoing development of the GPG TECHhub, originally launched back in 2024. The GPG TECHhub serves as a central and evolving knowledge platform designed to support growers, breeders, nurseries, and stakeholders through technical insights, best practices, and collaborative industry engagement. By bringing together data, expertise, and community interaction, the GPG TECHhub continues to drive progress and excellence across the global GPG community.



Speaking during the Congress, GPG representatives highlighted that the new website is more than a digital refresh - it is a long-term investment into communication, transparency, technical support, and brand development for the future of the business and the varieties it represents.

GPG Blueberry Field Visit, April 2026



The April field trip to growers in Spain proved a timely reminder that there's no substitute for getting out of the office and spending some time on the ground, with our blueberry varieties and the licensees who are growing and developing them. As always, it was great to see, feel and taste first-hand how exceptionally well our varieties compare in terms of appearance, flavour, size, firmness and yield.

"The time in Spain offered a valuable look at how the current blueberry selections are developing under field conditions. There's a clear step forward in overall fruit quality, particularly in the balance of size, firmness and eating experience. What stood out most was the consistency, with strong performance repeated across different sites. Seeing the fruit on the plant adds an important layer of understanding alongside the trial data. Overall, it was a useful opportunity to confirm which varieties are continuing to deliver and where the strongest potential lies moving forward."

Bonnie Neugebauer

"Alongside the development progress being made with new selections, our more established varieties including Gladiator, Maverick and Tropical Blue continue to perform extremely well and are proving themselves as great commercial crops."

Shaun Collin



"Our April visit to some of our Licensee's blueberry farms in southern Spain provided a comprehensive overview of berry production in the area today, deepening our understanding of blueberry agronomy. The trip emphasised the importance of careful varietal selection for climate resilience, harvestability and market demands. On site exposure clarified environmental considerations, different pruning techniques, pollination strategies, and quality control processes linking operational practices to commercial outcomes. Key takeaways: cultivar choice and then plant handling is critical for yield and fruit taste/ quality and that close coordination between field operations and packing facilities ensures marketable produce."

Anna Spencer

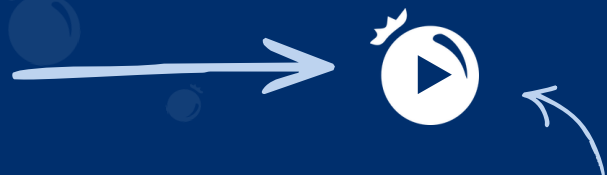


"From a marketing perspective, this visit was invaluable. Capturing outstanding plants at different stages of the season allowed us to truly showcase the berries at their best – from early development through to peak harvest quality. The consistency in berry size, firmness, and flavour across sites was striking, providing strong visual and storytelling content. Key takeaways include the impressive scale at which these plantations are operating, the high level of quality control being maintained, and, most importantly, the strength and reliability of the genetics. Together, these elements reinforce the powerful position of GPG varieties both regionally and on a global stage."

Eloise McDowell



Click here to see a video of Gladiator



Egypt Strawberry Programme Continues to Build Momentum

Rupert Hargreaves

Taking strawberry varieties selected at 38.5° latitude in California and successfully adapting them to 30° latitude in Egypt is never straightforward. Environmental conditions shift significantly - temperature profiles, light intensity, humidity and growing systems all influence how a variety performs. Success depends on careful adaptation, strong technical understanding and long-term collaboration.

At Global Plant Genetics, we take confidence from experience. Over many years, we have worked alongside carefully selected licence holders and industry stakeholders to develop nursery and propagation programmes in key production regions around the world. These relationships are not built overnight; they are developed and strengthened over more than a decade of shared goals, investment and trust.

One of the strongest examples of this approach is our ongoing partnership in Egypt with Domiatec Agri Group. Around five years ago, Sameh El Diamaty and I began planning what would be required to establish a successful strawberry nursery operation in Egypt. Domiatec is a highly respected agricultural business with extensive expertise across multiple crops and agrochemical sectors, making them an ideal long-term partner for the programme.



Last month, I spent three days with Sameh and the wider Domiatec team reviewing progress, assessing key successes and planning the next phase of development over the coming 24 months. It was an energising and rewarding visit, highlighting just how far the programme has progressed while reinforcing the opportunities still ahead.

Particularly impressive are the exceptionally high standards Domiatec has achieved in strawberry plant propagation, plant health management and intellectual property protection. These foundations are critical to building a sustainable, high-performing nursery operation capable of supporting long-term commercial success in the region.



The performance of both UCD Victor and UCD Valiant continues to strengthen, with both varieties clearly establishing themselves as leading performers within the Egyptian market, and beyond. At the same time, trials of the NEW upcoming releases are generating equally strong excitement and confidence for the future pipeline.

During the visit, I also delivered a technical presentation to the Domiatec team, highlighting the increasingly standardised information we are now gathering across each strawberry variety within the programme. This work is becoming an important part of how GPG supports licence holders globally, enabling more accurate benchmarking of varietal performance across different climates, production systems and market conditions. By collecting consistent technical and agronomic data, we are strengthening decision-making, improving adaptation strategies and helping partners maximise the commercial potential of each variety.

Ultimately, successful variety commercialisation relies on achieving three equal wins:

The grower

The licence holder

GPG and the breeder

We are very pleased with the progress being made in Egypt and remain firmly on track to achieve these shared goals together.

GPG's Growth Continues...

GPG

New Momentum...

As we continue to grow, we're welcoming new team members who bring fresh expertise, energy and perspective to GPG. Together with these exciting role developments, this marks a new chapter of momentum as we strengthen our support for growers, licensees and retail partners across global markets.



Harriadnie Gale **Intellectual Property Administrator**

We're pleased to introduce Harriadnie Gale, who joins GPG as our IP Administrator, bringing with her a strong background in governance, legal compliance and operational management. Having begun her career at one of the country's leading law firms before moving into healthcare quality and compliance, Harriadnie now applies her skills and attention to detail within our Intellectual Property team.

Beyond her professional expertise, Harriadnie brings a unique and impressive breadth of experience, including an 11-year career as a successful freelance fashion model, working with international brands and publications around the world. Outside of work, she is a proud mother of two, a keen traveller with a love of Italy, and has a strong interest in property development and renovation.



Jorge Nanjarí **Strawberry Business Development Manager – South America**

We're pleased to introduce Jorge Nanjarí, who joins GPG as Strawberry Business Development Manager for South America. A Chemical Engineer with an MSc in Operational Research from Cranfield University in the UK, Jorge brings a strong background in operations, process optimisation and data-driven decision-making.

With more than 10 years' experience in the berry sector across Chile, Peru and Brazil, Jorge has led commercial plant and fruit production operations and brings a deep understanding of the realities faced by growers and nurseries across South America. As a former President of the Chilean Nursery Association, he also brings valuable industry insight and strong regional knowledge.

At GPG, Jorge works closely with nurseries, growers and retail partners to support the development and successful implementation of UC Davis strawberry varieties across South America. Combining strategic thinking with a practical, hands-on approach, he helps translate technical information into solutions that add value across the supply chain. Outside of work, Jorge enjoys spending time with family and friends, especially around a traditional barbecue, and is a proud father of four and grandfather to his first grandson, who shares his name.

“The future of blueberries will not be decided by chill requirement, but by how well genetics align with market expectations.”

Jamie Petchell

Low Chill vs High Chill: A Portfolio for the Future

Jamie Petchell

The debate around low chill versus high chill blueberries continues to surface in industry discussions. In reality, this is not a competition – it is a portfolio.

Low and zero chill genetics have transformed global production over the past decade. They have opened new regions, extended supply windows and, importantly, raised the bar in fruit quality. In many cases, modern low chill cultivars now compete directly – and sometimes favourably – against traditional high chill fruit in terms of firmness, consistency and eating experience.

This shift has changed expectations.

High chill production remains fundamental to global supply, particularly in key regions such as Poland, Chile and China. During recent visits to these markets, it has been clear that growers recognise the need for continued genetic improvement. Yield alone is no longer sufficient; fruit quality and commercial performance must match modern retailer and consumer standards.



At GPG, our work reflects this balanced perspective.

Our collaboration with Oregon Blueberry spans both high chill advancement and low chill development, with the forthcoming release of Astoria (OBG-18064) signalling progress in high chill quality improvement. Alongside this, our relationship with the University of Georgia continues to strengthen zero and low chill innovation.



The future of blueberries will not be defined by one chill category over another. It will be shaped by strategic diversification, improved genetics and a clear understanding that resilience comes from balance.

Marathon, In Memory, For Macmillan Cancer Support

Jamie Petchell



In May, I completed an off-road marathon to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support in memory of my good friend, Andrew Cole (better known as "Coley"), who we sadly lost last year.

I took part alongside a group of close friends and, while it was certainly a tough challenge in places, it was also an incredibly worthwhile and memorable experience for all of us.

Coley was a fantastic friend and someone who is deeply missed. Completing the marathon together in some way helped us to continue to remember him, celebrate his life, and raise money for the incredible work that Macmillan does in supporting people and families affected by cancer.

There was a great atmosphere throughout the event and a real sense of togetherness among everyone taking part. I know Coley would have appreciated the spirit behind it all – and with his love of triathlons would have particularly enjoyed the tougher moments of the challenge.

World Record Hyrox - By GPG Team Member, Dom Butkus

Dom Butkus

I completed a HYROX race in a full suit and set a new world record with a final time of 1:21. The previous record was beaten by an incredible 10 minutes, making the achievement even more memorable.

Taking on one of the world's toughest fitness races while wearing a full suit added an extra challenge to every run, sled push, wall ball and station. It was a brilliant way to push the limits, have some fun, and prove that even formal wear can be race-ready.



AND FINALLY...



GPG works with a community covering
40+ countries
worldwide

—
representing over
20% of the world's
countries,
globally.

Connect with us!

