

Summer planting of potted kiwifruit vines heats up

Tessa Hunter - Zespri

Geoff Thorpe and the team at Riversun are into potted plant production in a big way. Starting as a backyard kiwifruit and avocado nursery operation way back in 1981, today Riversun produces over two million field-grown grafted grapevines each year, as well as more than 100,000 each of container-grown grafted kiwifruit vines and avocado trees.

Why potted kiwifruit plants?

While field-grown dormant Bruno rootstocks have been the mainstay of the industry since the very beginning, in the post-Psa era grafted potted vines - especially on Bounty 71 rootstock - are becoming increasingly popular.

Because they are grown under cover, they are able to be certified as Psa-free and they are planted out at a time of year when orchard Psa pressure is at its lowest (December/January).

Furthermore, the risk of graft failure (much higher for field-grown Bounty rootstock) is eliminated thanks to this work having already been done in the glasshouse and the vines arrive with 1.5 metres of top growth taped to a bamboo stake.

Why plant in summer?

Given the warm soil temperatures in December/January, the container full of active roots and the presence of several solar panels above the graft (nice big leaves!) - potted vines really "hit the ground running", says Geoff.

Demand for summer planting of potted vines is so strong that Riversun is already fully committed for delivery December 2018 and December 2019. ■



Gold3 on Bruno - a small selection of the hundreds of thousands of vines produced each season at Riversun Nursery's Gisborne complex.



Bounty71 rootstocks almost ready for grafting. These will be supplied as potted grafted plants between 1.5-1.8m tall.