

# Warm springs brings an early demo

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THE regular crop demonstrations at UWS Hawkesbury campus at Richmond are gathering momentum as local farmers and vegetable industry people cotton-on to the huge benefits they can get from seeing how different varieties of vegetables fare in Hawkesbury conditions.

The latest 'demo' at the university's field vegetable demonstration farm on Friday, October 24 had actually been slated for later in the season but warm spring conditions brought the vegetables on early.

About 20 vegetable industry people inspected an acre of 180 varieties of cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli and crisphead and fancy lettuce to help them decide what they will grow in the future. They also learnt about the latest crop protection technologies.

President of NSW Free Growers, Mario Muscat, said the demos were a great resource.

"The variety-comparison demonstrations are very useful to growers as they show the performance of trial varieties against the standard existing commercial varieties, side-by-side," he said.

"Any new variety that shows promise of replacing a standard variety at a certain time slot of year can be identified early on. Growers can then assess a few of the better ones on their farm without having to devote an area of their farm to a lot of new, unproven varieties that may or may not perform to commercial standards, resulting in wasted time and money."

NSW Department of Primary Industries' district horticulturist for field vegetable crops, Leigh James, said the day was called to show industry people, particularly growers, how the different varieties performed after a cold winter planting then maturing in warm to hot spring conditions.

"Growing crops over different seasons is difficult when growing for show on a set date, especially when fluctuations or extremes in temperature are experienced," he said.

"Spikes in spring temperatures can hasten predicted crop maturity by a few weeks."

Graham Nicol from chemical company Bayer CropScience said the Richmond site also provided growers with the opportunity to gauge the performance of new crop-protection chemicals on vegetable pests and diseases.

"The demo farm is a valuable resource that is wanted by the whole industry and has attracted a lot of interest and support in its early phases," he said.

And what's up next? The demo farm has newly-planted pumpkin, sweetcorn and broccoli in for demonstrations over summer.



Green pastures: Ace Ohlsson seed manager Darryl Cizlowski, DPI district horticulturist Leigh James, NSW DPI irrigation specialist Bill Yiasoumi, Bayer CropScience's Graham Nicol, NSW Free Growers Chairman Mario Muscat, and Hawkesbury Valley Irrigation's Peter Conasch.