

Happy avocados

AVOCADOS originated from the rain forests of Mexico so, as Ashbourne Hills Avocados principal Ted Johnson explains, they are somewhat out of their 'comfort zone' when grown in a southern Adelaide Hills climate.

However, that has not stopped the business from flourishing.

Ted and his partners, Tony and David Schirripa and Grant and Jessie Plush, established their 30 hectare avocado orchard eight years ago.

"We have about 10,000 trees," Ted said. "And the trees are growing very successfully now that we have established an organic regime.

"We use drip irrigation from underground water, and the fruit growth has really boomed since we introduced organic growing with the use of a fish-based fertiliser.

"The credit for this huge improvement in the property goes to our farm manager, Frank Belperio, whose work has been tireless and invaluable."

There is always a demand for the fruit, with its well-known excellent food value, being high in the beneficial fats and containing no cholesterol.

Varieties grown at Ashbourne Hills Avocados

are Hess, Reed and Ettinger, and harvesting takes place from July through to March.

"The other main avocado-growing districts are in Queensland and New South Wales," Ted said. "They don't produce crops at the same time as us, so there is always a strong demand for our product.

Now that the avocados have 'acclimatised', there are few problems that affect them.

The main difficulties are caused by climatic extremes - frosts or severe heat - but pests do not cause damage because they don't handle the SA climate as well as the avocados.

Ted says the company enjoys selling through the Victor Harbor Farmers' Market and the market at the Adelaide showground.

"We like to be able to explain the use of our product to our customers and help educate them in the benefits and use of the fruit, and we always provide a top-class product with a money-back guarantee.

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Ted Johnson
0416 207 617



Ted and Vanessa Johnson with a selection of fruit from Ashbourne Hills Avocados.