



# RIVERLINK

Linking Horticultural Centres  
in Sunraysia - Riverland

## Media release

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*For immediate release*

*12 December 2005*

### SALT BUSH EVALUATION FOR VINEYARDS

A native salt bush demonstration trial has recently been planted at Dareton NSW DPI Agricultural Research & Advisory Station to evaluate benefits for use with drip irrigated vines. It is planned that outcomes from the trial will provide growers with practical information on how to use salt bush as a vineyard cover crop.

The trial will consider the following:

- Establishment of salt bush cover crops in drip irrigated vineyards.
- Can cover crops of this type reduce or replace herbicide applications?
- Does salt bush provide an environment for beneficial insects?
- Can it reduce vineyard temperatures?
- Will it provide competition for weeds?
- Can it provide a permanent a ground cover?

### **Trial update**

Salt bush plants were planted at budburst (early September 2005) into four rows of mature chardonnay, using seedlings at two different spacings. Seedlings were selected to improve establishment rates and reduce establishment time.

After three months the salt bush has established well in all sites and plants are developing runners. All sites have seedlings planted at every second dripper outlet. Depending on location (under vine) they vary between being directly under the dripper or offset 30cm from dripper in an alternating zigzag pattern from side to side on the vine

bank. Plants growing on the afternoon, or sunny side of vine, have grown the best (one third more growth) as compared to seedlings under the dripper and on the morning sun side of the vine. The latter seedlings have grown at equal rates.

All seedlings have grown well with minimal losses. The growth of runners has tended to be away from the prevailing winds and towards the light. At this stage, most runners show very little tendency to grow into the shaded areas. Growth up until harvest and into autumn will be closely monitored, and it is anticipated that most of the vine bank area, and between drippers, will be covered.

All seedlings had a pre-plant application of Glyphosate on the vine bank, this has provided good weed control and ensured seedling establishment. However, additional spot spraying is now required to control fat hen, wire weed, milk thistle, prickly lettuce and lovegrass. It is hoped that only one or two spot spraying treatments of Glyphosate or spray seed will be required this season. The mid rows have been slashed after an initial budburst application of Glyphosate.

Further information on the salt bush cover crop trial is available from Gregory Moulds- Viticulturist Dareton NSW DPI on 0427 311445 or at the station on 03 50274409.