

**Irwin Hunter & Co.**

Western Australia's Leading Seed Distributor

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## Crimson Clover, complements Olives.

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"Cowaramup Creek Olive Farm have embarked on a project to become the premier supplier of high quality Olive oil and related products by converting their Armstrong road property to an organic based operation, thereby creating a large Olive Grove and Orchard area that is supported by natural fertilisers, on farm produced compost and with beneficial insects reducing the need for large quantities of chemicals says Adrian."

The property purchased in by Jack and Sue Witkin and managed by Adrian Spelt, is moderately contoured country with predominantly heavy clay soils and some lighter sandy loam areas. Since purchasing a concentrated planting program has been underway and the area now fully reticulated has been sown with 5,400



Olive trees, 2,500 Macadamia trees, 100 Avocado plus a range of fruit trees including Italian Stone Pine for seeds. Shelter is made up of 4,500 Bottle brush along with Blue gum in two plantations.

The first challenge was to improve the soil structure and nutrition status and reduce the significant Capeweed problem that was endemic on the property.

After installing the irrigation and planting it was decided they would look at options to sow between the rows of Olive trees and after considerable research selected Crimson Clover that was sown at 20 kgs/ha into the cultivated areas. Some areas were directly seeded into Crimson and Sub clover was sown into the orchard area.

Crimson clover was selected because it would build up the nitrogen status, had a high level of hard seed for natural reseeding into the following year, provide a bulk that could be mulched, would attract natural predators and complement the Olive grove with its bright red flower.

"The result has been a big success says, Adrian, especially where a full cultivation was done with the Crimson clover establishing well, reducing the Capeweed population considerably and where there is a good Crimson population it has significantly reduced the weevil numbers by attracting in the natural predators such as bees that would cause considerable damage, says Adrian."

Since adopting this practice there has been a noticeable lift in the soil pH, (now 6.4), along with increases in the organic matter and beneficial insect populations. To assist in the soil improvement program fish emulsion is used around the trees and all the areas sown to Crimson and Sub clover are mulched back into the soil after seed set. Pomace produced from the Olive pressing process is used for composting.

"The soil and micro climate are improving all the time and we will continue to see the benefits from this ongoing program not only to the soil but to tree yields as we continue says Adrian."

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