

Beautiful natives at local farm

By R.I. Nagy

Nestled within a picturesque basin of the Pyrenees Ranges just outside Moonambel is a small farm that is generating a big buzz.

Kangaroo Hill Farm was established as an environmental and conservation project in 1996.

Through persistence and experimentation, the farm has evolved into a thriving, chemical-free native flower and small batch honey business.

Owner and operator Daniel Thomas decided early on to develop an enterprise that used sustainable farming techniques.

He also planned rehabilitating land that had been cleared for a variety of 19th century activities, with the most famous (and destructive) of these being gold mining.

In 2007, four hectares of land was set aside on the farm to produce native cut flowers.

Several beehives were acquired in 2008 to produce small amounts of honey.

Since then, there have been more than 5000 flowering and foliage plants planted, with remnant woodland enhanced with additional native tree-planting.

This has helped create a biodiversity of micro-climates, which in turn has attracted several species, including frogs and birds, back to the once-degraded land.

Kangaroo Hill Farm grows a wide variety of native flow-

ers – both Australian and South African – including King Protea, Banksia, Leucadendron, Leucospermum, Blushing Bride, Kangaroo Paw and Geraldton Wax.

The unique and eye-catching forms, colours and textures of the flowers and foliage available has made them highly prized for bespoke wedding bouquets, show-stopping floral installations, and long-lasting splashes of colour within the home.

Mr Thomas says that offering mixed buckets of flowers for \$50-\$60 – rather than the more common single-flower batches priced by stem – has fuelled heightened interest in his products, and encouraged customers to get more creative with their arrangements.

After years of positive feedback on the quality and taste of the farm's honey – likely a result of the bees foraging rejuvenated forests on surrounding hills – Mr Thomas plans to increase production in the next few years by bringing in more hives.

The next batch of Kangaroo Hill Farm's signature honey will be ready in December 2020, and will sell for \$8 a kilogram.

Release dates and available quantities will be posted on the farm's Instagram account.

While the farm is not currently open to visitors, Mr Thomas does offer workshops every few months to give people the chance to gain better appreciation of



native flowers, while also learning how to build their own arrangements with the help of a professional flower arranger.

These workshops include a farm tour, light lunch, and workshop.

The next workshop will be held on Saturday, October 24, at 11am.

Mr Thomas is looking forward to growing the business and continuing to provide quality flowers and honey to ever-expanding wholesale and retail markets.

This is despite the challenges associated with establishing a farm of this kind, including the length of time it takes for some plants to mature and flower, dry years, frosts, the long distance to markets, being chemical-free, and being "off grid".

Anyone interested in participating in a floral design workshop, or purchasing flowers or honey from the

farm, can visit Kangaroo Hill Farm's Instagram account for further information: @kangaroohillfarm.



White protea flower head days away from opening.

Owner and operator of Kangaroo Hill Farm, Daniel Thomas, with some of his flowers.



Splashy red flower head of a blooming Waratah.



Deep pink proteas and woodland surrounding the farm.



Deep pink and white protea in bloom.



Soft pink Blushing Bride flower.



Pink protea flower heads almost ready to blossom.



Bright magenta Geraldton Wax flowers in bloom.



Soft-hued protea in bloom.



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