

Member Profile:

Growing Passionfruit in the Top End – Northern Territory Tropical Passionfruit

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Several years ago, an idea formed in the minds of ex-army Fitter & Turner Jason Moon who switched to a career in horticulture, and Brett Tharle, a nurseryman and arborist with additional experience in turf and citrus. Let's grow passionfruit!

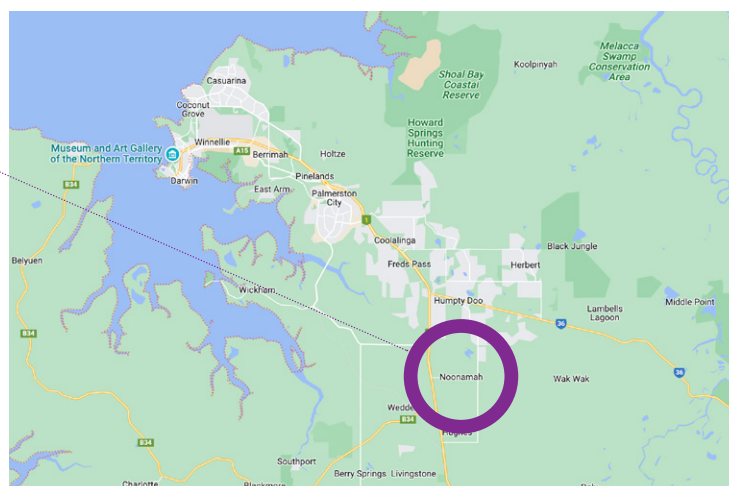
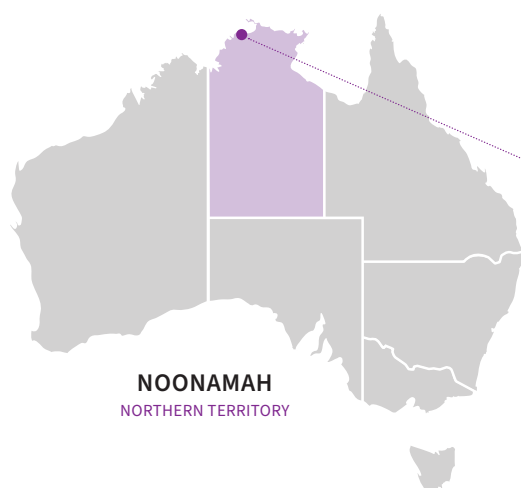
With limited growers in the Northern Territory, the industry presented an opportunity for growth, and at Jason's Noonamah property on the outskirts of Darwin, the farm was established and the search for the perfect variety commenced. And so, Northern Territory Tropical Passionfruit was born.

With many current popular varieties developed in Queensland and New South Wales, it soon became clear that a mini breeding program would be required. After a number of trials, one hybrid stood head and shoulders above the rest. The plant grew well, was resistant to pests and disease, and yielded high quantities of large, Panama-type fruit.

Being a hybrid, a suitable rootstock was required. This wasn't a problem for Jason and Brett, who had been conducting rootstock trials as part of their breeding program.

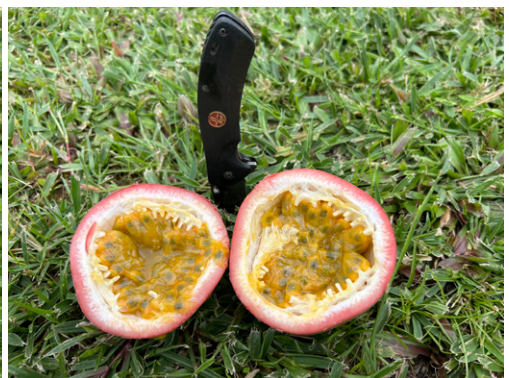
Cuttings were taken, and 600 vines were planted. The crop was a success. Jason and Brett currently sell 400-500 passionfruit a week to the local market, and have their sights set firmly on expanding operations. The next round of plantings will increase the orchard size with an additional 1800 vines put in the ground. The fruit are huge – around 240 g each – with excellent pulp content.

Pests and disease haven't been a problem for the growers so far, who credit careful variety development and good farm maintenance for keeping issues at bay. Assisting in the running of the farm is Jason's father, who lives on site. This has allowed Jason and Brett to retain their 'day jobs' while the farm gets up and running. When asked what the end goal is, the men are frank – to expand operations until they are full time growers, and to continue trialling their new variety with the aim of commercialising it if it continues to bear the right fruit.





Growers Jason Moon (L) and Brett Tharle (R) at Northern Territory Tropical Passionfruit.
Photo credit: Jason Moon



The newly developed hybrid vine growing at Northern Territory Tropical Passionfruit.
Photo credit: Jason Moon