

# Permanent Beds In Horticulture

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## SUMMARY:

Euri-Gold Farms is a family owned horticulture farming business, situated about 20km's north west of Bowen.

We commenced farming here in March 1976, growing tomatoes, cucumbers and rockmelons.

Standard farming methods were used: furrow irrigation with inter-row cultivation for weed control.

Tomatoes and mangoes are the main crops grown now, around 50 – 60 hectares of tomatoes and 56 hectares of mangoes.

Tomatoes are grown on trellis, plastic mulch and trickle irrigation.

The large volumes of used plastic mulch generated by the almost total adoption of this product by the districts farmers created major problems for the Bowen Shire Council to dispose off.

Resulting in the refusal to accept plastic mulch waste at the Council's tip.

Council promoted trials using mulch made from chopped green garbage in an attempt to find an alternative to the use of plastic mulch. Other trials were done using paper, straw mulch and biodegradable plastic. While the crops grew successfully it was obvious it was not possible to obtain or transport the huge volume of material required.

A simple solution seemed to be to grow the mulch on site.

This led to the development of a system of permanent beds. A number of different cover crops were trailed, including; sorghum, oats, legumes and several varieties of grasses.

The main difficulties were with weed control the high use of herbicides and the lack of consistent summer rain. Work is continuing to develop a cost effective sustainable system that will improve soil health and control erosion caused by cultivation.