



# Lavande

## aromatiques

An amazing time saver. That is just one description of the machine that has to be one of the industries best kept secrets. The Ochiai Harvesting Machine is a revolution in many facets of Hedging plant materials. Looking like a futuristic Hedge Trimmer, the unique features of this machine, is the collection bag that trails behind during cutting to collect the harvested material. From humble beginnings in Japan's Tea fields, the harvester is proving to have many diverse applications – most recently in the Lavender Industry. Steve Rolfe of Narrandera's award winning Lavender Farm – Lavande aromatiques explains.

The Lavender industry is viewed by many in Australia as a cottage industry. Australia only having very few large scale Lavender Farmers, this is probably a fair description. However, large or small – harvesting of the Lavender Flowers in the Australian summer is always going to be a hot and uncomfortable job – this is because the majority of farmers still cut their crops using the traditional sickle. Although effective, the sickle is more like a draconian device – capable of removing ones finger or presenting the addition of a large slice out of the leg – with only the slightest lapse in concentration. There had to be a better way – enter the Ochiai Harvester. We have now reduced the time it takes to harvest one row of Lavender from one and half hours to six minutes!



The Ochiai Harvesting Machine

The Harvester is very light (around 10 kilograms) and very easy to use. Two people simply walk down the row on either side of the crop and the air jets on the machine combine with the hedge cutting blades to quickly and effectively 'blow' the cut materials into the trailing bag (which resembles a wind sock). Once at the other end, all that is needed is to untie the end of the bag (you do not even have to remove it from the machine) and empty the contents directly into the distillation unit, or wheel barrow ready to go. The machine is driven by a two stroke engine that drives the centrifugal rotors that power the jets and the hedge trimming blades.



Steve and Joanne using the Harvester whilst News Teams film the event.

In the Lavender Industry, the Harvesting unit is currently being utilised in countries all around the world – including New Zealand, America and Canada. In Australia, there are also a small number of Lavender Farmers using the Harvester – including one farmer that is adapting the unit to his Tractor.

Recently, there have been many enquiries regarding the Ochiai Harvesting machine for other purposes and for use on other plants said Steve. We were recently fortunate enough to complete a large export of our Lavender products to Taiwan and our local Television News station covered the story. In the story there were pictures of the Harvester in operation and this generated a lot of enquiries. People wanted to know if the Harvester could be used for other things – such as Herbs or Hedge Trimming. Indeed, this unit is capable of those jobs and more. The flexibility of the unit is such that it can be supplied with the curved blade or a more traditional straight blade. Indeed, the Sydney Botanical Gardens decided to purchase the straight bladed model for their Hedge Trimming.

We see there being a big boom in the sales of these machines now that people are starting to realise the time saving potential that they represent.

For more information on the Ochiai Harvester and its uses, please contact Steve & Joanne Rolfe (02) 69593920 or [www.lavender.com.au](http://www.lavender.com.au)

You may download a copy of this article at [www.lavande.com.au/mainpages/lavenderharvester.htm](http://www.lavande.com.au/mainpages/lavenderharvester.htm)

'Clydebank' Bells Road  
Narrandera NSW 2700 Australia  
Phone: +61(0) 269 593920 Fax: +61 (0) 269 594862  
orders@lavande.com.au www.lavande.com.au