

# Lentils



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## Take home messages

*Ascochyta blight and botrytis grey mould resistant red lentil variety Nipper and the green lentil Boomer are now available for farmers (AWB Seeds).*

*Good lentil management is beneficial in most years, irrespective of rainfall.*

In Victoria pulse yields were severely affected by a combination of drought, the growing season and frost in some areas. As a consequence, experimental and commercial grain yields were very low and harvestability was an issue. Disease had no impact on yield due to the drought.

## Lentil varieties

In 2008, the ascochyta blight and botrytis grey mould resistant red lentil variety Nipper and the green lentil Boomer are available for farmers (AWB Seeds). Nipper is best suited to the Wimmera where disease is more prevalent. Indications are that seed quality is favourable for a wide range of markets. Boomer is a broadly adapted, vigorous, large seeded green lentil that will offer the potential for Australia to develop a significant green lentil industry when prices for green lentils exceed that for red lentils. Its yield had been similar to current red lentil varieties. Harvest Boomer early to produce bright green seed and prevent shattering.

Ten years ago lentils were expanding in area and two years of close to average rainfall (1995 and 1996) had created great optimism for lentil production in the Wimmera (average yields over 2t/ha) and potential for the southern Mallee. Since this time, low rainfall and frosts have tempered these views for many. However, if predictions of a more favourable season eventuate, sound management strategies developed over the last 10 low rainfall years shouldn't compromise yield and quality in better years such as 1995 and 1996. For example,

- Avoid poor soils (poorly structured soils, subsoils high in salinity and boron) and use good seed.
- Know the best disease management strategy for your variety (lentil disease management guide, Pulse Australia website).
- Sowing early will maximise yield in most years but be aware of disease and lodging in years with average to above average rainfall. In general, sowing in Mid May in the Mallee through to mid June in the more southern parts of the Wimmera is early enough to achieve most of the benefits of early sowing.
- Increase stubble retention and reduce tillage where possible – good soil structure is important for lentils.
- Plan for good weed management and avoid crop injury by applying herbicides as recommended, taking into account soil and climatic conditions.
- Monitor and control insects during the season, particularly aphids (responsible for spreading virus' – also get seed tested for cucumber mosaic virus and alfalfa mosaic virus if virus was observed in the seed crop), Heliothis and Etiella.
- Harvest lentils as early as possible without affecting quality (less of a problem in green lentils). Always be prepared for harvest to avoid rain or severe winds damaging mature crops.

