



# **A Workers Guide to Picking & Packing Mangoes**



**...WITHOUT GOING TROPPO**

# WORK your way AROUND Australia.



For the most up-to-date information about working 'The Harvest Trail', freecall the National Harvest Labour Information Service or visit [www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail) right now.

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Right job. Right place. Right time



**Harvest Trail**  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

**NATIONAL HARVEST LABOUR  
Information Service**  
*"Making sure Growers and Jobseekers find each other!"*



## Welcome to Mango Madness

The Australian mango industry welcomes visitors to the harvest regions and offers work to those who are eligible to work in Australia.

### The peak seasons for mango harvest are:

Harvest seasons can be variable and some farms will provide pruning work following on from harvest.

Mango picking is hot and hard and certainly not for everyone.

But be assured you will be in for an experience you will never forget while making money for your next adventure.

Pickers and Packers are an important part of our industry and it is our aim to make sure you are prepared for the job at hand.

**Darwin:** September & October  
**Katherine:** October & November  
**Kununurra:** October & November  
**Burkedin:** November & December  
**Mareeba:** December & January  
**Bundaberg:** February & March



**We need you!**

We welcome feedback from harvest workers, if mango season works for you; tell all your friends; if not, tell us!

If you have a problem on farm we need to know, contact us:

Phone: 08 8983 3233

Email: [ntha@ntha.com.au](mailto:ntha@ntha.com.au)

## How Do I Find Work?

There are many ways to find work:

- Register with a labour hire company
- Register with a contract harvester
- Register with an employment agency
- Respond to advertisements in newspapers
- Respond to notice boards, etc
- Contact a farmer
- Contact the National Harvest Information Service

**Tip: Labour providers are a good way to find work because they assist in placing you on a farm that best meets your requirements.**

## What Will I Need To Get A Job?

You will need:

- a tax file number (TFN) if you are an employee
- Australian Business Number (ABN) if you are a contractor
- bank account details
- photo ID and proof of right to work

## Get What You Need Before You Start

Farms are often located in rural and remote areas and it may not be easy to access convenience stores or supermarkets. **Be prepared!**

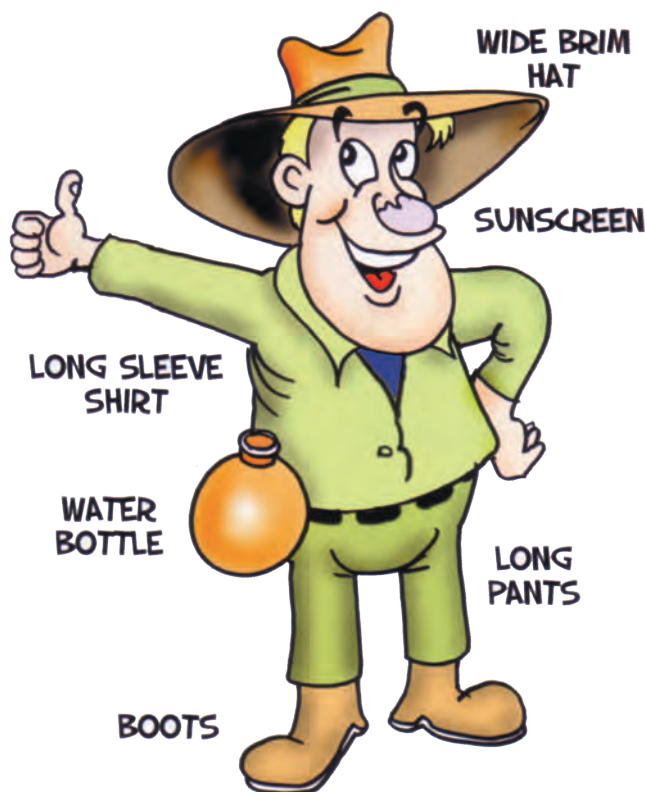
If you are staying on a farm, find out what amenities are available and get supplies that will be appropriate. Your harvest labour provider will advise you about the conditions on farm and supplies that you will require.

## What Do I Need?

Take personal hygiene amenities including:

- Barrier cream and suncream to help protect you from sun and sap burn
- Baby powder and disinfectants may provide relief if you are affected by heat rash (eucalyptus oil, tea tree oil, etc)

## Wear Appropriate Clothing!



### **Essential:**

A long sleeve shirt, hat and boots or covered footwear.

30+ sunscreen and barrier cream

4 to 5 litres of fresh water daily

## Job demands may...

- be physically demanding (standing, lifting, bending)
- involve working under hot humid conditions
- involve working with hazardous substances
- require that you do not smoke in the work place

## Job requirements may include...

- flexibility in starting and finishing times
- notification of absence
- your own transport to get to work
- completion of time sheets, packing slips, etc

## Job expectations require that you...

- undertake training
- provide your own clothing, footwear, hat and other essential items
- report all illnesses, wounds, accidents, infections
- perform a range of tasks
- act safely and responsibly!





## When at work you should...

### ***Adopt a professional attitude:***

- turn up on time
- turn up in a fit state to work (drugs and alcohol free)
- notify your employer if you will be absent
- wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- bring enough food and water for the day
- bring the necessary tools and equipment
- conduct yourself sensibly and safely
- listen to instructions
- obey signs
- respect private property of others

**Adopt a professional attitude and work ethic;  
Demonstrate tolerance and understanding to your employer and fellow workers; and  
Be an effective team member!**

### ***Show tolerance, understanding and responsibility:***

- to your employer and other people in the workplace
- avoiding racial discrimination (it is illegal)
- avoiding sexual harassment (it is illegal)
- handling company property and equipment (wilful damage is an offence)

### ***Being an effective team member by:***

- acting in a responsible manner
- undertaking your tasks effectively
- communicating effectively
- doing your share
- being pro-active
- assisting others where appropriate

## Worksafe Health & Safety

Working in conditions that you are not used to increases the chance of accidents.

Factors which can increase the danger of accidents include:

- doing different jobs (jack of all trades)
- working in unfamiliar environments
- weather conditions
- remote locations
- long hours of work
- repetitious work (doing the same thing for a long time)
- inappropriate clothing

## Safety is Everybody's Business

Everybody has a role in making sure the work place is safe. If you see something hazardous, report it! Farms will have risk management procedures. Make sure you know what the procedures are and follow them.







## **Quality Assurance & Food Safety**

Farms have Quality Assurance Systems in place to ensure that food safety standards are met and products are of good quality and safe to eat. When working on a farm you must follow quality assurance and food safety policies.

These may include:

- sickness / illness policies
- dropped or damaged produce policy
- environmental / waste management policy
- bin / carton / packaging policy
- labelling / storage policy

## **Hygiene is Important for Food Safety**

- wash your hands properly (after the toilet, removing sap, grease, detergents)
- do not wear false fingernails or nail polish and keep nails short
- cover cuts and abrasions
- control hair and beards
- bath daily
- wash clothes regularly

## **Appropriate Work Practices**

- abide by speed signs and using designated parking areas
- abide by food safety standards
- abide by farm rules and signs
- use tools for designated purposes only
- report contagious diseases

## The Orchard - Harvesting Fruit



The way fruit looks and sells in the shops is largely dependant on how it is harvested and handled in the orchard.

Picking and handling techniques will vary from farm to farm, but the principals are the same.

Be careful not to pierce skin with your fingernails.

Mangoes bruise easily and mango skins are easily marked and must be treated with care. It is important not to drop or throw mangoes.

It is important to balance speed with care. It is a waste of time to pick large amounts of fruit if it is marked or damaged in the process.

**Always take care and practice good picking and de-sapping techniques.**

If sap is allowed to expel from the fruit and seep onto the fruit it will burn the skin and turn black by the time it reaches the buyer.

Your supervisor will show you correct de-sapping techniques.

Always follow the supervisors instructions carefully, they are there to protect YOU and the fruit.

If you are not sure what to pick or how to handle the mango, ask your supervisor or employer.

## Managing Sap Burn

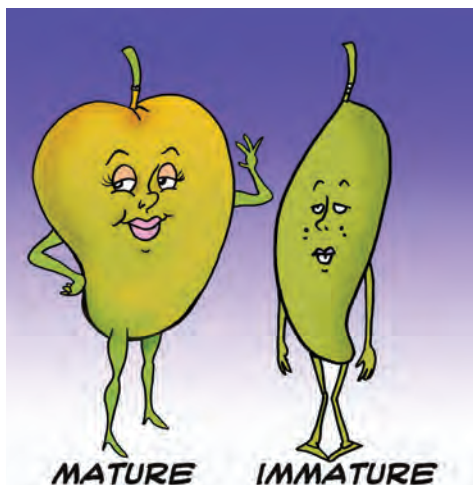


## Fruit Maturity

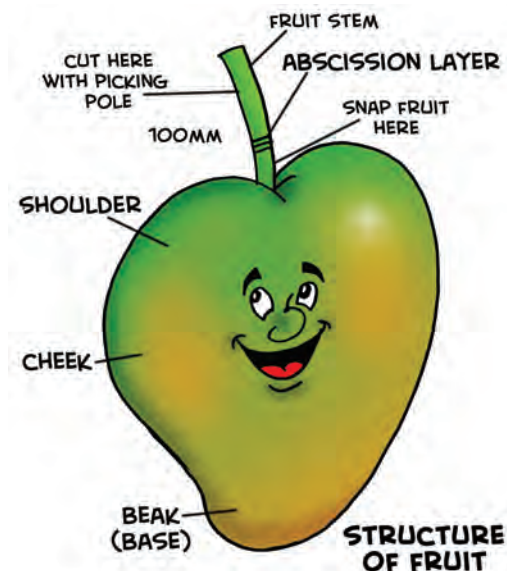
If fruit is picked before it is mature, it will not ripen. Mature fruit is recognised by its shape, its texture and colour of the flesh.

It is not fair to consumers if they pay for fruit that does not ripen. Immature fruit is bad for the reputation of the fruit, the grower and the mango industry.

Your employer or supervisor will show you which fruit to pick. If you are unsure, ask! If there is no-one around to ask, leave it until you can make sure.



## Structure of the Fruit



Mango maturity is characterised by its shape, colour and texture.

Mature fruit is rounded and full.

It is important that the stem and fruit remain intact until the fruit reaches the de-sapping point.

Fruit is often de-sapped on a harvest aid.

## The Shed

Some farms will monitor quality control in the orchard; however most quality control is done in the packing shed. While all care is taken to make sure out of grade fruit does not pass through the grading process, always look at the fruit you are packing.

If you are not sure about the quality of a mango or whether it should be placed, ask your supervisor or employer.

One bad mango can affect the whole tray.



**One bad mango can affect the whole tray.**

## Packing

Mangoes are packed into trays according to size and quality. The packing machine grades the fruit into sizes ranging from 10 to 25 fruits per tray. The packer places the fruit in a SINGLE LAYER tray so that it fits tightly but not too tight, and in the correct pattern.

Most farms will have First Grade and Second Grade fruit. The packer may reject fruit down to a lower grade and packs to the specifications of the pack shed.

The packer makes the final decision on what fruit is placed in the tray.

It will take some time to learn the difference between grades and your supervisor will understand this.

**Remember to follow all work place safety and food safety rules!**

## Stacking Pallets

It is important that all boxes are clearly marked according to variety, size and grade. Take care when stacking boxes on pallets.

If a pallet is stacked incorrectly, the truck driver will refuse to take it on the truck. It will have to be completely restacked.



**It is much better to take time and care and stack it right the first time, than to have to stack it twice.**



## Harvest Roles

There are many roles in mango harvest. Whether your job is making boxes, packing fruit, harvesting, quality control, putting stickers on fruit, stacking pallets or cleaning the packing areas, every job is important in the harvest chain.

**Every job in the harvest chain is important!**



## Operating Machinery

- Do not move cherry picker while boom arm is extended.

**Always ensure you are adequately trained to operate machinery.**

- When harvesting from cherry pickers, do not lean or climb out of enclosure.

- If you are a pedestrian, you should always give way and look out for tractors, forklifts, cherry pickers, harvest aids and other farm machinery.

- People operating machinery cannot hear you and may not see you.

- Always obey warning signs.

- Watch out for moving parts on machinery.

- Do not lean or sit on packing/grading machines.

- Do not allow loose clothing or long hair to hang down near machinery.

- If you don't know, ask!

- If operating grading machines or harvest aids make sure you know how to stop the machine in an emergency.



- Normal road rules apply on farm, vehicles should drive at walking pace.

## Quarantine Matters

- Weeds, pests and diseases can be carried from farm to farm by soil, plants and fruit.

- Always check with the farm you are working on if they have any quarantine restrictions.

- Always wash your vehicle before entering a farm, particularly if you have been driving through mud or weeds.

- Do not take mango fruit or plants from one farm to another farm.

- Be diligent and obey all quarantine rules on farm. These may include parking rules and hygiene rules. You may be required to follow certain procedures and complete records.



## Mango Sap - What I Need to Know

Some people have allergies to mangoes. Locals and people who have had exposure to mangoes are more resistant to the effects of sap. If you are sensitive or allergic to mangoes, **DO NOT WORK WITH THEM!**

When the stem is removed from the fruit, the mango releases a highly caustic sap, this can burn the fruit and your skin. You can avoid sap burn by using good picking and de-sapping practices. Always hold stem end of fruit away from your body.

Picking and de-sapping techniques will vary from farm to farm, however the principals are the same.

The grower or supervisor will give you instructions on how to pick and how to remove the stem from the fruit (de-sapping).

**Always follow instructions - they are there to protect you and the fruit!**

## Preventing Mango Rash

### Prevention...

- Wear appropriate clothing
  - If possible, change clothes during breaks, particularly if working extended hours.
  - Apply sunscreen to exposed skin.
  - Practice good picking and de-sapping techniques.
  - Do not eat too much mango, apart from having a laxative effect, it can promote allergies.
  - Shower immediately after work and wash clothing thoroughly.
- Rinse well!**



## First Aid

If your skin does come into contact with sap, wash with fresh water immediately.

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching eyes, face and genital areas.

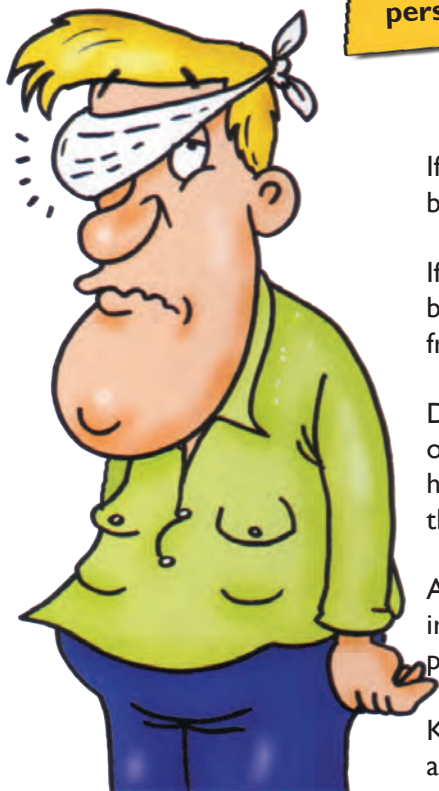
Sap may simply cause blemishes to skin, however some people have severe reactions to sap.

**If you suffer a severe reaction, seek medical advice!**

Wash affected are with soap and water; rinse immediately with ample fresh water.

If sap comes into contact with eyes, flush with water for several minutes.

**Do not self treat too long. If burn does not improve or if swelling persists, see a doctor**



## Persistent Irritation

If you suffer an allergic reaction to mango sap burn, avoid further contact.

If itching persists, consult a chemist. Cover burn with a clean dressing and protect skin from further contact.

Do not expose affected area to sun, sunburn over sap burn is very painful. Warm weather, hot showers, vigorous activities will aggravate the condition.

Avoid contact with substances that may irritate affected areas (soaps, detergents, perfume).

Keep skin clean and cool. Cold ice packs applied for 5-10 minutes may offer some short term relief.

## Staying Healthy and Hydrated

Mango picking is hot work, to avoid heat stress you must...

Drink plenty of water, at least 4 litres a day. Just because you are not thirsty does not mean you do not need to drink water. Your thirsty mechanism does not kick in until you are mildly dehydrated.

Room temperature is better for you than icy cold water.

Avoid drugs and alcohol. Alcohol consumption leads to dehydration.

When taking breaks, remove long sleeves and excess clothing.

After work make sure you get plenty of rest and eat nutritious meals and drink water to top up and rehydrate your body.

**Stay healthy for your next adventure!**



Working in the heat may lead to heat stress if you are not prepared!

Always wear light clothing, light colours, long sleeves and a hat while working in the sun.

Drink copious amounts of water and watch out for symptoms of heat stress.

If you are suffering from heat stress, rest in a cool place with your legs slightly elevated.

## Crocodiles

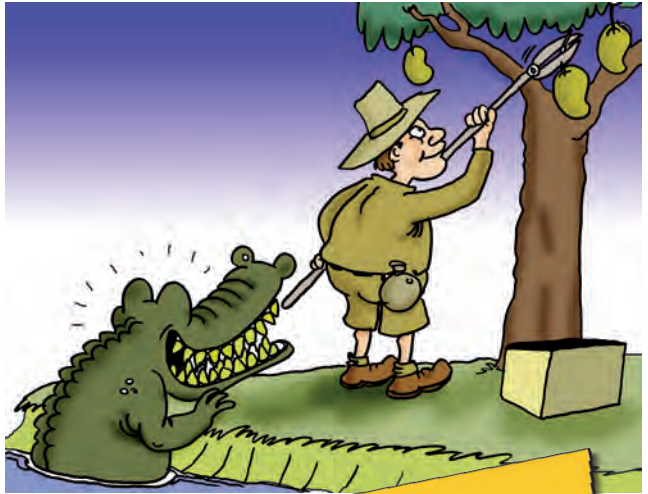
Many farms are located on or near rivers or billabongs.

Estuarine (salt water) crocodiles are common in the waters of the Tropical Australia, in both salt and fresh water.

Never enter water unless you know there are no crocodiles.

Never camp or sleep on beaches, riverbanks or waterholes.

Do not ignore warnings or signs.



## Problems on Farm

If you experience any problems on farm, what should you do?

1. Speak to your immediate supervisor or to higher management.
2. Speak to your employment agency.
3. Speak to a local industry association.

If your issue is safety or injury related and the above contacts cannot help, you will need to speak to Work Safe.

*This book was written and produced by Tracey Leo, Northern Territory Horticultural Association for the Australian Mango Industry Association.  
Cartoons by Stringer.*

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# My Notes...

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of 18 horizontal yellow lines.

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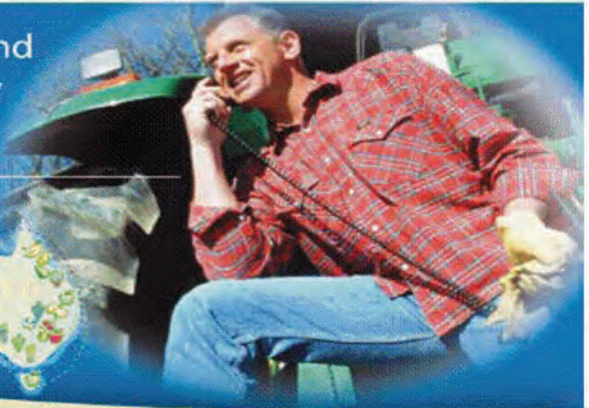
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and harvest workers  
find **JOBS**?

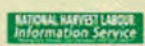
In all harvest regions  
growers and harvest  
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contacting **FREECALL**, the National Harvest Labour Information Service or visiting  
[www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail)

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Right job. Right place. Right time



**I SURVIVED...**

# **MANGO MADNESS**



## **MANGO HARVEST SEASONS**

Darwin: September & October

Katherine: October & November

Kununurra: October & November

Burkedin: November & December

Mareeba: December & January

**...in Northern Australia!**