



February 2011 Feature Story:

“Where are our champions?”

Blackcurrant’s research champions are showing the potential for its unique purple polyphenols and other plant compounds, to do amazing things: from muscle recovery in sports champions to the health of key organs such as the heart and liver and even be a key part of the concept of anti-aging itself.

But for these values to turn from science to supplement (or into delicious ‘ready-to-drink’ smoothie beverage or the like) the industry needs champions of the marketplace as well.

One such champion is the Japanese company, Four Leaf Japan.

Four Leaf Japan is one of a few companies worldwide that has appreciated the true potential of the blackcurrant and as part of its business philosophy, Just Cause Business, Four Leaf Japan has developed its own blackcurrant champion programme.

Globally Four Leaf Japan is the founding sponsor of the International Blackcurrant Association (IBA). This sponsorship has allowed the 18 country global industry to start to rationalise its resources and research focus. Specifically, Four Leaf Japan has its own research programme and for example is sponsoring clinical trials on the potential of blackcurrants for gastro-intestinal health. At the consumer level Four Leaf Japan has developed a unique crop-to-consumer education programme that includes bringing its own customers and consumers to the blackcurrant farms where it sources its berries. And as part of its industry-good role Four Leaf Japan supports community projects in the towns of its blackcurrant suppliers.



As part of its Blackcurrant Champion programme Four Leaf made the blackcurrant the primary focus of its annual company conference in 2010. At the Four Leaf Commons 2011 Four Leaf Japan sponsored a presentation by the IBA General Manager Bill Floyd. Floyd spoke on the future of the Blackcurrant (see story on that presentation below). As part of its supplier-company philosophy Four Leaf Japan also sponsored attendance by New Zealand blackcurrant growers Mark and Louise Eder who spoke of their local country community and its growing cultural and commercial links with the Japanese consumer through Four Leaf Japan.

5000 delegates attend the Four Leaf ‘Commons’ in Yokohama, Japan, in December last year. The blackcurrant was a key theme of the event with a presentation by the International Blackcurrant Association on the future of the blackcurrant.

This commitment by Four Leaf Japan, to conceptualise and affect the full potential of the blackcurrant for the benefit of the consumer and the grower, is the type of initiative that creates a long-term sustainable future for the blackcurrant industry. It’s an approach that should be encouraged in other countries with other champions!