

ripe & ready

STONE fruit fans should be a little happier this week, with the supply of cherries, apricots, nectarines and peaches improving. Mangoes are also becoming more plentiful, but Peter Kedwell of Rocklea Market wholesaler, Pershouse Produce, says buyers should pick their fruit carefully. "There's mixed quality out there," he says. "So look out for the cheaper blemished fruit which might be a bit blotchy." Kedwell says rain in the Darwin area is most probably to blame.

David Faranda of Naturally Fruit in Taranga says Kensington pride mangoes are the best eating at the

moment and there are also some good-looking custard fruit from Katherine coming on to the market. Queensland grapes are also starting to appear on the shelves at last. "Menindee seedless, the green seedless grapes from Emerald are coming in and they'll start going down in price over the next few weeks," Faranda says. Flame seedless grapes are also trickling through, Kedwell says, but expect these to remain pricey for the moment. Those in search of organic grapes will have to wait until after Christmas before indulging. Ross Cowling, of United Organics, says they are no longer any Queensland organic

grape growers, so the season begins much later than that for conventional fruits. Cowling says organic apricots are plentiful and reasonably priced, and cherries are also improving. Currently, organic cherries are coming in from Young but over the next few weeks more will start shipping up from South Australia. Rockmelons should also start to come on stream over the next few weeks, but there are still only a few organic peaches and nectarines around and they are very expensive. Organic bananas are reasonable and mangoes will continue to improve over the next few weeks. As far as vegetables are concerned,

Kedwell says the pick of the conventional market this week are the salad lines – everything from lettuce to tomatoes and cucumbers. Green capsicums are going up in price as supplies fall off, due to recent cropping of the riper red capsicums. In the meantime, Faranda says, New Zealand-grown avocados, tomatoes and capsicums are starting to arrive and the hydroponic tomatoes are particularly good eating. Now is also a good time to pick up well-priced brown onions and

zucchini, Faranda says, and there are some tasty Dutch carrots (with the green tops attached) also available now. Organic carrots are expensive, but jap pumpkin is coming back in price and Stanthorpe lettuce is good value and quality.

