

MEDIA RELEASE

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Medal grant supports trial of saltbush ‘solar pumps’



Ian Walsh with the GSDC Medal he received in 2019.

Cranbrook farmer Ian Walsh is hoping to enhance his decades-long fight against salinity with the help of funding he received as part of the most recent award of the GSDC Medal.

Mr Walsh received the sterling silver medal in June 2019 in recognition of his innovative work reducing the impact of rising salinity on his farm, using salt-tolerant plants to reclaim degraded land.

Along with the medal, he received a \$5,000 grant from the GSDC to continue his work. He has put the funding towards a trial of grey saltbush, a potentially useful but previously overlooked species.

Mr Walsh said grey saltbush had been tried 30 years ago but was discarded in favour of other species.



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“Saltbush is a pioneer species that draws down salt and allows other species to grow in between the rows,” Mr Walsh said.

“I class them as a heap of solar pumps.”

Mr Walsh’s GSDC Medal grant is supporting the propagation of 4,000 grey saltbush seedlings, which will be planted in spring and assessed for their contribution to the productivity of degraded land.

The grey saltbush will be planted with two other varieties in a random mix and will be grazed for the first time in autumn 2022.

“We’ve only been working on saltbush for 35 years but we have been selectively breeding wheat for thousands of years,” Mr Walsh said. “There is a long way to go.”

The 2021 GSDC Medal will be awarded to one of three shortlisted nominations on Friday 11 June at a dinner event featuring local produce and a showcase of Great Southern wines.

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