

# Pioneering new crop

JENNIFER CRAWLEY

TASMANIAN horticulturist Richard Weston has won a \$29,000 Nuffield Scholarship to study growing, harvesting and marketing white asparagus.

White asparagus is much sweeter than green asparagus. It is popular in Europe and is known as the "King of Spring".

The Brighton farmer said winning the Nuffield was "a little out of left field".

"I was really lucky to get it," Mr Weston said. "The scholarships usually go to larger production farms."

He believes there is a real market for the labour-intensive crop in Tasmania.

"White asparagus has great potential in Tasmania because it grows really well here," Mr Weston said.

The Westons live on a 5.5ha property. Richard, his wife Belinda and 10-year-old sons Lloyd and Campbell work in the vegie plots, garden beds and olive grove together.

Mr Weston said when they bought their property in 1992, it was "a blank canvas".

"There was not a stone or a tree, just cropping land," he said. "I did the paddocks and Belinda did the house."

Mr Weston worked on the farm on weekends, after work and during holidays. Two years ago he decided to quit his job and take his production to the next level.



**STUDY TOUR:** Richard Weston with sons Campbell and Lloyd.

Picture: KIM EISZELE

He said winning the Nuffield was a family commitment.

"It's a 16-week scholarship study tour,"

Mr Weston said.

He wants to use the scholarship to travel to Germany, which is a large producer and consumer

of white asparagus.

Hobart chefs Luke Burgess, of Garagistes, and Jay Patey, of Pigeon Hole, are big supporters of

Mr Weston's produce.

"They are a real inspiration for us to go further into vegies," Mr Weston said.