

Horticulture in New Zealand

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In the short time available to me I would like to present to you an overview of the nursery industry in New Zealand by way of a few slides.

- Most visitors to New Zealand are amazed at the number of sheep on pastures and country roads. This is typical New Zealand — travellers being held up by a flock of sheep off to the shed to be shorn. Wool is a major New Zealand export.
- New Zealand I.P.P.S. president John Liddle's nursery, Liddle Wonder, near Wellington, grows trees and shrubs for the garden centre market on capillary watering beds. Many nurseries are changing from planter bags to hard plastic pots to improve their presentation.
- Most New Zealand nurseries are small by international standards and are often family concerns but they are innovative. The New Zealand Rose Company, Whenuapai, a container rose nursery also grows in the field and the manager is the son of one of New Zealand's best cut flower and patio rose breeders, Frank Schuurman. Nurseries are palletizing orders and using trolleys to improve distribution efficiencies and profit.
- Duncan & Davies, one of the older tree and shrub nurseries, still producing field stock at Taranaki. The climate at Taranaki is windy and without shelter the plants would be severely wind damaged (no snow) and not make satisfactory growth in a season.
- Thirkettle Nurseries (Nelson) container tree and shrub growers use capillary watering for the 750 plus taxa in production. Thirkettle's has plenty of land and pot their plants by the beds with a tractor driven potting machine.
- Titoki Nurseries, Brightwater, Nelson is a small native plant nursery producing New Zealand plants for revegetation of pasture and hill country. Seed is saved from local gene types — which is called eco-sourcing.
- Bedding plant nurseries like Willow Grange (Pukekohe) supply commercial vegetable growers with transplants and garden centres with cell packs of new flower cultivars for home gardeners. The nursery uses European irrigation gantries and other labour-saving machinery to increase production to meet demand while keeping an eye on costs. A newly updated, inline, direct seeder is pushing production capabilities way ahead of market needs and has reduced the number of growers servicing the bedding market.
- Smaller growers are establishing to supply niche markets with special lines especially for larger grade perennials. Texture Plants (Christchurch), a one full- and one part-time staff retail nursery operation, specialises in architectural and interesting foliage plants.

- New Zealand native plants are being grown in increasing numbers for home garden beautification and farm and wetlands revegetation. Mike Growford (Nikau Nurseries, Nelson) produces and retails a wide range of native species in polythene planter bags, the most popular production container in New Zealand. The bags are available in 3/4 pint to 95 pint sizes — PB5, PB6, and PB8 are the most popular sizes for woody material.
- Gethsemane Gardens high on the hills above Christchurch, the second largest New Zealand city, has large display gardens based on religious themes. They produce and retail an extremely large range of small-grade plants in hard plastic pots from this sloping site. The production and propagation systems are simple.
- Auckland-based GOL producers, Prop-ex, were one of the first companies to install cover crop, open sided, polythene-covered structures to protect their stock from high winter rainfall.
- At Appletons' Nursery (Nelson) open-ground *Pinus radiata* seedling production is carried out with direct sowing of seed in beds in spring and lifting of the seedlings the following winter for forest planting. This crop is grown from selected hybrid seed raised by Government orchard nurseries from selected, vigorous, heavy-timber-producing clones. At Appletons' Nursery native tea tree is cut from natural stands and used to shade and shelter emerging tree seedlings. Sawdust is used as a mulch on the beds to keep the soil moist. A trial comparing frost cloth and tea tree for shade and protection is being done. Tea tree lasts two to three seasons.
- *Phormium* 'Firebird' is a new flax clone produced for export cut foliage, container/patio growing in Europe, and for garden beautification in Mediterranean zone areas. The foliage is used by native people, Maori, for making baskets, garments and weaving.
- The way we grow plants is changing. At Plants for Places, an Auckland wholesale nursery, wire forms are being used to grow ivy (*Hedera*) for patio plants, indoor decoration, and as Christmas trees.
- Growers are quickly learning to use new techniques and products. An example is a *Trichoderma*, a beneficial mycorrhizal fungus, being tested as a soil disease suppressant and for improved fertilizer uptake. The trial is one of seven polytechnic horticultural department replicates throughout New Zealand designed to transfer technology to the new nursery stock producers.
- Palmers Megastore, Auckland, is the newest outlet of the largest garden retail group in New Zealand. This store features the use of large graphics and banners to get across colour gardening images to consumers and promote impulse purchases of potted flowering lines for instant effect for garden and patio decoration. Colour gardening is a developing trend now 20 years old and showing no sign of abating.