

Horticulture Happenings



April 2025

Horticulture to Present at Upcoming Kiwi Heights Open Day

Horticulture is proud to support the rescheduled Kiwi Heights Open Day following the recent success of Blair Dyer and Steve Atkinson, who were named Regional Supreme Winners at the 2024 Bay of Plenty Ballance Farm Environment Awards. **Bay of Plenty** Regional Manager Erik Thomas and Technical Field Advisor Paras Dhuria will present on the day, sharing how Horticulture partners with innovative growers to deliver practical, sustainable results in orchard production.



Regional Supreme Award Winners - Blair Dwyer and Steve Atkinson of Kiwi Heights

Kiwi Heights is a 190-hectare family-run property in Te Puke that has been farmed by the Atkinsons for over 50 years.

Originally focused on livestock, the

business has evolved to include 27 hectares of kiwifruit while continuing to run young stock across the remaining land. The orchard reflects a well-balanced land use approach — blending productive horticulture with native planting, environmental protection, and smart, future-focused farm management.

Erik and Paras will highlight how the Maximally Efficient Strategy (MES) — using the right product, at the right time, in the right amount — has been applied across both young and established blocks. Their presentation will cover building soil health, seasonal foliar nutrition, PSA protection tools, and how Horticulture provides growers with on-the-ground support tailored to their crop.

As a 100% New Zealand-owned business, Horticulture is proud to reinvest into the horticulture industry. Supporting events like Kiwi Heights Open Day reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation, grower success, and the future of sustainable farming.

We congratulate Blair and Steve on this well-deserved recognition and look forward to celebrating with them on the day.

The Field Day was to be held in April, however it was moved due to the weather, new date TBC.



Catch Erik and Paras at the upcoming Kiwi Heights Field Day.

Growing Better Crops Together





Young Grower of the Year National Final

The Hortcentre Trust are again Platinum sponsors of the Young Grower of the Year National Final. This year's final will be held earlier than in past years, on the 10th & 11th September in Canterbury - the region most recently rejoining the competition. Winners from the regional competitions in Pukekohe, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Nelson, Canterbury and Central Otago will come together to compete for the coveted title. *"This is an annual event run by Horticulture New Zealand, designed to recognise and celebrate our most talented young growers. The competition highlights the skills, knowledge and leadership potential of our next generation, ensuring the industry remains strong and sustainable."* (Hort NZ). The Trust greatly appreciates this opportunity to support the future of the industry!

Young Grower[™]
of the year



LandWISE: Getting to Carbon Positive

In conjunction with a host of other industry sponsors, the Hortcentre Trust is proud to sponsor the upcoming LandWISE: Getting to Carbon Positive conference, taking place 21st & 22nd May in Havelock North.



LandWISE 2025 will deliver practical insights and case studies on the journey toward becoming carbon positive in horticulture, with a strong focus on regenerative practices, innovative technologies, alternative energy use, and the power of industry collaboration for climate-smart farming.

Hawke's Bay Regional Manager Chris Herries Technical Field Advisor Rob Nichol, will attend to gather insights and share learnings with the wider group. The conference features a packed programme of speakers, hands-on field demonstrations, and updates from the Carbon Positive regenerative cropping project, including expert sessions on carbon accounting led by Dr Pii-Tuulia Nikula. Attendees will also explore new tools for assessing nitrate levels, soil stability, and insect pressure—all aimed at supporting more sustainable growing practices.

The Trust is proud to support this important initiative and contribute to the industry's shift toward a more sustainable future.

International Plant Propagators Society Conference & 'Six Pack'



The Hortcentre Trust are proud to be Platinum sponsors of the ['To The Future' IPPS](#)

[Conference](#), taking place May 8–11 in New Plymouth. With the theme "To the Future," this year's event wraps up the IPPS International Tour and brings together leading growers and researchers from around the globe. Attendees will enjoy a packed programme of presentations, local nursery tours, and networking opportunities. The Trust are excited to support this important event that continues to foster innovation and global collaboration in plant production. Hortcentre's Nutrition Product Category Manager, Marco van den Berg will attend on behalf of the Trust.



In addition to this sponsorship, the Trust also sponsor the clothing for six interested young people, the 'six pack', to wear while they attend and help with the running of the conference. It is a great opportunity for young people currently new to the industry or studying Horticulture to meet other people in the industry and learn what IPPS is about.

IPPS 'Six Pack' of 2024

NZ Plant Protection Society Conference

The Horticulture Trust is proud to support the important work of the New Zealand Plant Protection Society, an organisation that has been serving New Zealand's primary industries for over 76 years. The Society plays a key role in sharing knowledge and research on the management of weeds, pests, and diseases affecting our pasture, arable, and horticultural crops.



New Zealand Plant Protection Society
Protecting Plants with Science

One of the key ways this knowledge is shared is through the Society's annual conference, a cornerstone event for the plant protection community. It's an opportunity for researchers to present findings that benefit both industry and the wider public, while also encouraging the exchange of ideas across sectors.

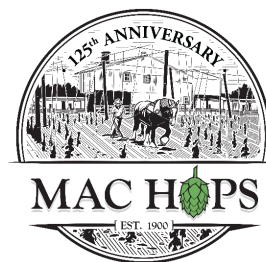
The conference also provides valuable learning experiences for students and fosters connections across New Zealand's agricultural and horticultural industries.

This year's event will take place from 12th to 14th August 2025 at Rydges Latimer Square in Christchurch, and we're pleased to be part of an initiative that strengthens our industry through collaboration and innovation. Find out more about the upcoming conference [here](#).

Out and about around the regions

MacHops 125th Celebration

Earlier this month, the TasmanCrop **Motueka** crew had the pleasure of attending and sponsoring a very special event — Mac Hops Ltd's 125-year anniversary celebration. The event was held on their original Motueka farmland, first purchased in 1900. As TasmanCrop, part of the Horticulture Group, we were proud to stand alongside a business whose story so deeply reflects the resilience, innovation, and community spirit of New Zealand horticulture. Reaching 125 years is an extraordinary milestone, it represents five generations of passion and perseverance, adapting through changing times while remaining grounded in quality, sustainability, and family values.



The celebration, held on April 5th, brought together a vibrant crowd of industry partners, family, and friends — many with multigenerational ties to the region. There were locals from the many businesses that have supported Mac Hops over the years and many old family names and businesses gathered for the celebration. Mike caught up with his cousin Jon who works at Burnett Auto Electrical, started by both of their fathers back in Motueka the 1950's.



All set up ready to celebrate!

It was a warm celebration, filled with good conversation, local food, and of course, plenty of craft beer brewed especially for the occasion using Mac Hops' signature varieties.

Our wider team will remember visiting Mac Hops as part of our Technical Get Together in Nelson last year—another reminder of the value of these knowledge-sharing events and the strength of collaboration across our industry.



Mac Hops Family photo: Kim, Andrew, Ria, Brent, Gertrud, Richard, Michelle (Johnstone), Owen (Johnstone)

Napier Port Hawke's Bay Primary Sector Awards



The **Hawke's Bay** Awards Night, held at the beginning of April, was a tremendous success, with a sold-out venue hosting just over 400 attendees for a fantastic celebration of the local primary sector. Traditionally dominated by the Agriculture sector, this year's event marked a significant milestone for Horticulture, with four of the nine awards going to individuals from the horticulture industry.

Pictured is our Technical Manager, Chris Herries awarding the Horticulture Charitable Trust Horticulturalist of the Year to Liam Sykes of Ngāi Tukairangi Trust. It is an honour for the Trust to support such a highly regarded event in the industry

for Hawke's Bay. Radar served as the MC for the night, providing plenty of laughter and good spirits along the way.

Horticulture Out and About!

The season may have quietened in several regions but we are out and about keeping abreast of the latest industry insights and we look forward to meeting up with you! Where you will find our team over the coming months..

IPPS New Plymouth: Marco

Central Otago Young Grower: Mariette, Dan & Zuli

Young Amenity Horticulture: Molly and Andrew

LandWise: Getting to Carbon Positive: Chris H & Rob

Pukekohe Young Grower of the Year: Steven, Molly, Chris Lowe & Chris Lees

Hawke's Bay Young Fruitgrower of the Year: Chris H, Rob, Aimee, Rob & Garry

NZ Ethical Employers Conference: Gavin, Laurin, Aaron

OWNZ Organic & Biodynamic Winegrowing Conference: Aaron, Dan, Gerard & Blake

Nelson Young Grower: Mike, Julian, Mags, Alex, Paul & Tim

Young Plant Producer of the Year: Marco

Summerfruit NZ Conference 2025: Mariette, Rob & Julian

Bay of Plenty Young Grower of the Year: Erik, Paras, Katherine & Natalie B

Gisborne Young Grower of the Year: Gerard, Gareth, Hugh & Bruce

NZ Apples & Pears Expo: Gavin, Chris H, Garry, Hugh, Mags & Julian

Potatoes NZ Conference: Shelley & Chris

New Zealand Horticulture Conferences: Jon, Gavin, Marco & Chris Lees

And more! Read more about how Horticulture supports these events and register to attend on our [website](#).

Meet the Team: Sonny Prithvi

Customer Services Representative / Stores – Horticulture Whangārei

How long have you been with Horticulture: *I started in June 2018.*

What crops are you passionate about? *I have a passion for indoor hydroponics. To me, indoor hydroponics is like a factory, where the grower is in full control and it tests your knowledge and growing skills.*

What inspired you to join the horticulture industry? *I come from a farming family in Punjab, India, where we grew cotton and wheat. Farming is in my blood. Punjab is known as the "food bowl of India.". After gaining NZ residency, I started a hydroponics operation in Ruakākā mainly growing tomatoes and cucumber, but also eggplants and capsicums. Outdoors, we grew watermelon, rock melon, pumpkins, courgette, spinach, radish, and water cress. I experimented on different crops before we went full flow — and that's how I first connected with Horticulture, as a customer.*

What do you like most about your work? *Food is one of the most basic needs of humans, and I feel proud that at Horticulture we can help growers. During COVID, I realised the importance of Horticulture to New Zealand's horticulture sector. At our Whangārei branch, we are like a family, most recently under the great leadership of Steve. Bernie, Eileen, Rhod, Judith, Ian, Jack is a very good team at Whangārei. I would like to thank Steve and Rhod for giving me a job at Horticulture. Special thanks to Bernie and Eileen for tolerating me during all these years.*

What's a common challenge in your role, and how do you handle it? *Growers come in with crop health issues — insects, fungal diseases, weed control, and more. I enjoy finding the solutions. I do a lot of research online and also learn from our senior technical team. I'd like to thank Rhod, John Wilkinson, Andrew, Jon, and Marco for sharing their knowledge. I'm currently working on a New Zealand Weed Database — I've documented over 100 common weeds, including photos at different growth stages and notes on control methods. I'm proud that we now use this database as a reference for weed control at Horticulture Whangārei.*

What's one piece of advice you'd give to growers? *Keep your plants healthy with a good nutrition programme.*

What do you enjoy doing outside work? *I live in Whangārei with my wife Kiran, my son Josh, and daughter Gracy. The rest of my family is still in Punjab, India. I enjoy reading classical literature and watching good movies. I'm also one of the founding members, ex president and captain of the Kensington Cricket Club here in Whangārei. I love to watch and play cricket. I also enjoy gardening and spending time with my family. Apart from horticulture, space, science and politics are my hobbies. Thanks to Rhod Mitchell, I've also picked up shooting and hunting — maybe that'll be my full-time hobby when I'm too old for cricket.*

If you weren't in horticulture, what would you be doing? *A teacher of Political Science or Economics.*

What's a fun fact people might not know about you? *Because I am a student of dialectical materialism philosophy, political science, and economics, I like to keep an eye on all local and geopolitical affairs and like to play a political prediction game in my mind based on dialectical materialism.*

Thank you, Sonny—it is a pleasure to work alongside you!



Sonny always has a smile for the customers in our Whangārei branch.

Vegetables NZ Roadshow – Multilingual Food Safety Grower Guides



Above: Vegetables NZ Roadshow in action.

Molly recently attended the **Vegetables NZ Roadshow** in **Pukekohe** where around 100 attendees gathered for updates from key industry bodies including **PotatoesNZ**, **VegesNZ**, **TomatoesNZ**, **OnionsNZ**, and **VICE**. All of the speakers delivered excellent insights, however, Molly found the presentation delivered by **Farzana Adams**, CEO of the **Fresh Produce**

Safety Centre (FPSC) Australia

& New Zealand particularly interesting, Farzana shared valuable insights into FPSC’s role in supporting food safety across both countries. It was especially great to learn about the free resources offered—ranging from chemical use and traceability to pre- and post-harvest water management. These resources are available in **six languages** (including Arabic, Punjabi, Mandarin and Vietnamese) making them incredibly useful for growers who may face language barriers. Molly has shared examples two useful documents—**‘Chemical & Pesticide Use’** and **‘Food Safety for Small-Scale Growers’**—which could be great tools to keep on hand when working with diverse grower communities, find the full suite of translated documents [here](#).

Chemical and Pesticide Use

- ENGLISH
- ARABIC
- PUNJABI
- SIMPLIFIED CHINESE
- TRADITIONAL CHINESE
- VIETNAMESE



Growing Better Crops Together