

Horticulture Happenings

Young Horticulturalist of the Year 2025

The recently held Young Horticulturalist of the Year event once again showcased the depth of emerging talent within New Zealand's horticulture sector. This annual competition is recognised as one of the most diverse and challenging career-development events in the industry, drawing together finalists from across the full spectrum of horticulture—from viticulture and arboriculture to floristry, plant production, amenity horticulture, and commercial growing. The Horticulture Trust are proud Silver Sponsors of this event.

This year's contestants again demonstrated exceptional professionalism, creativity, and technical knowledge.

Award Results

Jake Linklater, Jake's performance across technical, practical, and business-focused tasks set him apart, earning him the top honour. With the judges praising his high level of skill and his ability to see things through a broad lens. Runner up was Young Viticulturalist, Nina Downer, and Young Amenity winner, River Foster took third place.

Horticulture Trust Sustainability Award

Jake also received the Horticulture Trust sponsored Sustainability Award, acknowledging his commitment to environmentally considerate practices, an area increasingly crucial as horticulture responds to climate pressures, resource challenges, and expectations for low-impact production.

The competition's strength is reinforced by the expertise of its judging panel. Special thanks go to Horticulture staff: Andrew Goad and Chris Lowe who evaluated the Sustainability Award, within the Business Component, Chris Lees, for judging the Practical Soils module and Paddy de Vries, who oversaw the Pest & Disease component. Chris was on hand to present the Sustainability Award to Jake.

Congratulations once again to all finalists and award winners. Your achievements are a credit to both yourselves and the organisations supporting your growth.



Growing Better Crops Together



Fresh Facts 2025 Now Available!

Published by [United Fresh New Zealand Incorporated](#) and proudly sponsored by Horticulture Trust, Fresh Facts 2025 is out now, providing vital data and insights into Aotearoa New Zealand's produce industry. This year's edition highlights a \$1.69 billion surge in fresh fruit exports, driven by a major increase in kiwifruit exports. With total export values reaching \$6.85 billion FOB (free on board), the report indicates strong growth, with the Government's goal to double produce exports by 2034 well within reach.

Fresh Facts 2025 also highlights the growing role of Māori in the sector, with Māori-owned land now producing 5,715ha of fruit and vegetables, a 470% increase over 20 years.

New this year: detailed logistics data on the transportation of produce, including the role of New Zealand's rail network and ports. The publication also tracks industry sustainability efforts, revealing a gap between awareness and action, with just 13% of organisations using data to measure sustainability progress.

Fresh Facts 2025 is available now for download, along with companion documentation. [[Download here](#)] Hard copies have also been sent out to each branch.



Supporting the advancement of Horticulture and Viticulture in New Zealand



Central Otago Young Grower of the Year contestants

- Research & Development
- Training & Education
- Sector Conferences
- Young Grower Competitions
 - Scholarships
 - Sector Awards

The Horticulture Charitable Trust receives funding from



Young Amenity Horticulture

The Horticulture Trust will again return as Gold Sponsors Young Amenity Horticulture, this year held at the Hamilton Botanical Gardens on 12th May. The Trust will also provide the contestant clothing, a very welcome addition to this competition last year. This is the second year the Trust will be supporting this event, another wonderful opportunity to support the future of Horticulture in New Zealand.

Two Young Grower of the Year sponsorships locked in for 2026 already



The Horticulture Trust will again return as Gold Sponsors for the Pukekohe [Young Grower of the Year](#) Competition, contestant clothing will also be provided. Taking place on the 15th May. The Horticulture Trust will also again sponsor the Bay of Plenty Young Grower of the Year, taking place on 19th June in Tauranga.

The Trust is proud of its long standing support of the next generation of leaders of this industry.

Pukekohe Young Grower “BBQ and Beers”

The Pukekohe Young Grower event team kicked things off early for the 2026 Young Grower of the Year Pukekohe competition with a casual event. It was a relaxed BBQ and beer gathering that brought together potential competitors and some key supporters.

The goal was to get everyone talking about the competition and hopefully inspire a few to throw their names in the ring when registration opens. Such a great idea!

Horticulture Pukekohe Technical Field Advisor, Chris Lees, went along with a spot prize in support.



Pictured is Horticulture Chris Lees, presenting the winner of Horticulture’s spot prize to Harry of NZ Gourmet.

Cyclone Gabrielle Research Symposium

Facilitated by the Vegetable Research & Innovation Board, FAR and LandWISE and held in Havelock North during November, this important [symposium](#) was convened to bring together those who responded to the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle on New Zealand’s highly productive land. This gathering provided a vital opportunity to share findings, reflect on experiences and collectively draw out lessons that can inform and strengthen future responses. Questions covered included:

- What seemed to work and what didn’t?
- What was not studied and should have been?
- What resources can be prepared that others can easily access and use to guide decisions immediately after such events, and in the months and years to follow?

Proudly supported by the Horticulture Trust, Horticulture Hawke’s Bay’s Chris Herries and Rob Nichol went along to contribute to this important discussion.

Key takeaways from Chris and Rob included:

- A clear overview of how Cyclone Gabrielle affected horticulture and agriculture across the region, including the extent of silt deposition and the varying impacts on cropping land and orchard systems.
- Insight into what recovery approaches worked well and which proved to be a waste of time or resources—valuable guidance for ensuring future projects deliver good value and effective outcomes.
- Recognition that while significant research and investigation emerged following the cyclone, it remains a frustration that meaningful funding for such work often only becomes available after a natural disaster.

Unfortunately, this pattern has occurred before and is likely to happen again.



Intra Eco Shield

Unique blend of nutrients



The infographic features three rows of nutrient information. Each row consists of a circular icon with a chemical symbol, a green arrow pointing right with the element name, and a larger green arrow pointing right with a description of its function. To the right of the infographic is a white plastic container of Intra Eco Shield.

Nutrient	Function
Si Silicon	Enhance the tolerance of plants to various abiotic and biotic stresses
B Boron	Helps in uptake of Silicon and moves sugars in the plant
Mo Molybdenum	Molybdenum is the key to convert nitrate to proteins

- ✓ Intra Eco Shield is a future proof bio-stimulant
- ✓ Unique formula with a high level of plant-available ortho-silicic acid
- ✓ Balances the plant in nutrient uptake and works as an elicitor
- ✓ Supports the plant in any kind of stress situations
- ✓ Easy to use as foliar and via irrigation
- ✓ Applicable for young, indoor and outdoor plants
- ✓ Preventing production losses and improving yield

The advertisement features a white plastic container of Intra Eco Shield. Above the container, the product name is written in a stylized font, followed by the tagline 'Strengthens your crop for future proof growing'. A small plant icon is in the top right corner.

Intra Eco Shield
Strengthens your crop for future proof growing

Congratulations on 25 years service with Horticulture Group, Jon Harris!

Meet the Team: Jon Harris —Technical Manager

How long have you been with Horticulture?

25 years – I started November 27th 2000 when we were known as Veg-Gro Supplies!!

What crops are you passionate about?

Greenhouse Vegetable and Ornamental crops, but I have a keen interest in all crops of course!

What inspired you to join the horticulture industry?

I grew up on a Dairy Farm at Te Toro and while I liked working with the animals, I loved seeing crops like Maize and Lucerne grow and be used as feed. I started growing my own vegetable crops from seed with my Father's help when I was around 10 years-old and a few years later did some small-plot fertiliser trials on the farm, so I guess that's where it all began!

What do you like most about your work?

Helping Customers get great outcomes from the use of Horticulture products – particularly our more exclusive ranges.

What's a common challenge in your role, and how do you handle it?

After 25 years, you realise that you are often repeating yourself (for better or for worse) because people do not take the time to record and/or store information.....it's easier to make a phone call isn't it? Handling that.... as the expression goes "patience is a virtue" 😊

What do you enjoy doing outside work?

Spending time with my wife, I also enjoy travelling overseas, beach-walking every day, playing Table Tennis and watching Cricket and Rugby (particularly Counties).

If you weren't in Horticulture, what would you be doing?

I think I would have liked being a Groundsman – particularly Cricket wickets as I've spent about 20 years bowling on the things!

What's a fun fact people might not know about you.

I worked as a Barman in a 18th Century Pub in Shere, England for 18 months and got to love room-temperature Real Ale!!

Thanks for these insights, Jon — and a massive congratulations on hitting your 25-year milestone this month! It's an incredible achievement. Jon now joins five others in the Horticulture Group in an exclusive 25-year-plus club, a reflection of the depth of experience and expertise we are so fortunate to have within the Group.



One of Horticulture's uber knowledgeable Technical Managers—Jon Harris

Christmas & New Year Opening Hours 2025/2026

22 Dec	Monday	Open
23 Dec	Tuesday	Open
24 Dec	Wednesday	Open (closing 1pm)
25 Dec	Thursday	Closed
26 Dec	Friday	Closed
27 Dec	Saturday	Closed**
28 Dec	Sunday	Closed
29 Dec	Monday	Open
30 Dec	Tuesday	Open
31 Dec	Wednesday	Open (closing 1pm)
01 Jan	Thursday	Closed
02 Jan	Friday	Closed
03 Jan	Saturday	Closed**
04 Jan	Sunday	Closed
05 Jan	Monday	Normal hours resume

****Hawkes' Bay open until 12pm**



Fire Safety

Recently, our Fire Wardens at each branch attended updated training to ensure we are fully prepared to keep our staff, customers, and sites safe in the unlikely event of an emergency, and FENZ are visiting our branches. Fire safety is everyone's responsibility, so here are some key preventative housekeeping reminders:

- Keep passageways, hallways, corridors, fire exits, and areas around firefighting equipment completely clear and clean at all times.
- Ensure all products are stored correctly according to their hazardous class.
- Remember: No smoking or vaping is permitted on site.
- Store LPG cylinders in designated cages and ensure they are securely chained.
- Remove waste from the building promptly and place it in the appropriate external receptacles for collection.
- Maintain clean and visible fire safety signage throughout all areas.
- Ensure lighting is maintained for clear visibility in all workspaces.
- Report anything that may present a fire risk to your Fire Warden immediately.
- Know who your site Fire Warden is, understand their responsibilities, and recognise their full authority to conduct evacuations if required.

By staying alert and following these simple steps, we can all help ensure a safe working environment for everyone.

Signing off: As we wrap up the year, we want to extend our sincere thanks to all of our valued customers, staff, and suppliers for your ongoing support. We know this is an especially busy period for growers, and our teams will of course be on hand throughout the season to provide the support you need. Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a safe, successful season ahead.



Growing Better Crops Together

Horticulture TasmanCrop

Members of HORTICENTRE GROUP