

Groom and Bloom not Doom and Gloom at Auckland TD

Kerry Johnstone reports

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. These words from an old Johnny Mercer song may best describe the general mood of exhibitors at Auckland Trade Day on April 1 at the Auckland Showgrounds.

Indeed, the line, "Groom and Bloom not Doom and Gloom" penned for her Trade Day catalogue entry by top topiary grower, Claudia Gorringer of Standards of Excellence, also echoed the attitude of exhibitors and visitors.

And visitors had plenty to see with 50 nurseries and a strong showing of suppliers and service providers showing off their best.

Autumn has been promoted for many years now as a great time for planting and five Quality Growers nurseries – Bruntwood, Container, Growing Spectrum, Naturally Native and Te Horo — again emphasised this by exhibiting as a group and presenting tried and true as well as several new plants.

Bruntwood's stand featured compact and frost-hardy *Lorepetalum Iceberry* which sports an attractive bronzey new growth. Container displayed *Metrosideros Firebird Red Baby*, from the Aussie Winners' stable. "It's small growing with clear, distinctive, blood-red flowers, quite profuse and is a plant lending itself to formal hedging," says Mark McCrae.

Growing Spectrum displayed *Coprosma Lemon* and *Lime*, *Cordyline Earthstrike* and *Berberis Maria*. The nursery's long-serving sales rep Marie Kay, on her last Trade Day before heading overseas, also showed new *Polemonium Stairway to Heaven*, one of the Inplant range. It develops pink margins in cooler weather and bears blue flowers on long spikes.

Naturally Native highlighted the varie-

gated dwarf *Phormium Moonraker*, expected to be released in May.

There were new plants on other stands as well. Veteran Trade Day exhibitor, Tom Johnson of Totara Grove, showed new *Coprosma Emerald Spreader*. "It's a form of repens and its great prostrate habit makes it an excellent groundcover for large banks. I reckon one plant can cover about two metres," says Tom.

Looking quite stunning on the nearby Palmco stand were three new releases – a 15 year-old 2.3 metre *Bismarkia nobilis* with large fan-shaped, grey-green leaves, a *Brahea armata* and a *Sabal palmetto*.

Annton, ensconced pretty firmly in its prime spot near the Trade Day entrance, featured two new plants — *Coprosma Pina Collada* with is brilliant orangey-red foliage, and *Hebe Marilyn Monroe* accompanied by excellent POS poster material and labels.

Roses will always have a market and the long Summer meant Roach's Nursery still had some of its colourful range in bloom including the striking new floribun-



Above: Auckland Trade Day - 'Accentuate the Positive'



Left: Ian Fankhauser of Lowlands Nursery - one of 5 'Naki' nurseries at Trade Day



Left: Kiwi Colour showed some of their larger landscape grades

Below: From New Plymouth, Millfield Nurseries' Keith and Yvette Lowe with Luke Webster enjoyed their first Trade Day



Tropi-Folia's new dwarf Bougainvillea Pixie Queen



Left: Jenny Cowan with Annton's new Coprosma Pina Collada Middle: Carl Banks of Sinclair Plants says Lucky Bamboo is popular in USA Right: Mike Scott of Scott Base Nurseries holding Dracaena Sky Tower Below: Mike Hopkins of Bark and Soil Distributors

das Summer Passion and Sunset Glow.

Topiary expert, Claudia Gorringe of Standards of Excellence, highlighted her 15 year-old *Prunus lusitanica* showing just how good this standardised topiary with its dark green foliage and large white flower can look.

Tropi-Folia featured dwarf Bougainvillea Pixie Queen, which has lime-yellow and green variegated foliage with a strong pink flower. Also new was *Streptocarpus*

Blue Eyes, interesting because of its single leaf habit.

Mike Scott of Scott Base Nurseries showed new *Dracaena Sky Tower*. An accompanying photo showing a mature specimen some 12m high was most impressive.

And from Sinclair Plants was a 10 year-old plaited *Pochira aquatica* specimen as well as some spiralling Lucky Bamboo, one of the top selling plants in USA and Canada according to sales manager, Carl Banks.



Below left: Geoff White of Te Karanga makes first TD appearance Below right: Colin Purchase with Ubinati seeder Far right: Artfully Yours with figurine made from treated material

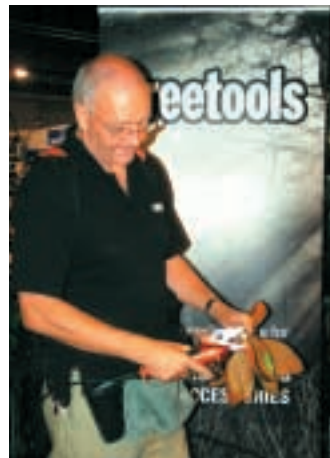




Top left: *Coprosma Emerald Spreader* is a great groundcover says Tom Johnson of Totara Grove. **Above:** Denis Hughes speaks on a propagation topic **Right:** Julie Roach with new *Floribunda Summer Passion*



Below left: Mark McCrae, Container Plants, with the compact, profuse flowerer *Metrosideros Baby Red*. **Below:** Tree Tools' Karen Tregoweth tries out stable ladder and right: Richard Tregoweth puts the powerful electric pruner through its paces **Far right:** Karen Moffatt with Palmco's *Bismarckia nobilis*



New on Glucina's Tropical Exotics stand was the interesting and health-giving Goji berry tree while Gellert Nurseries promoted their advanced vegetable lines of truss and cherry tomatoes, capsicums and grafted eggplants.

Perhaps the most unusual plant in the Show was the exotic chocolate-coloured *Tacca chantrieri*, or Bat plant, on Gellert's stand. John Lok's impressive 9 year-old *Cycas revoluta* was another eye catcher.

Newcomers to Trade Day, the enterprising Keith and Yvette Lowe of Millfield Nurseries in New Plymouth, were determined to grasp the opportunity to do well. A blackboard announcing that their entire stand was for sale worked — 10 minutes before pack-up it was sold to a Matamata retailer.

Revege specialists, DJ Scott Associates, also made their first Trade Day foray bringing a fine range of well-grown plants.

From New Plymouth and sharing a stand, were Te Karanga owned by ex-D&D's Geoff White and Ian Fankhauser of Lowlands Nurseries. Both showed healthy stock — one of the advantages of growing plants in the 'Naki!' they said. And if one region, apart from Auckland,

was well-represented, it had to be Taranaki with five nurseries led by stalwart Cedar Lodge trekking north.

From Motueka and buoyed by success in Christchurch, Peter Trevas of Colorscape in Motueka again set a high standard with his display, focusing on *Cordyline Renegade*.

Back at Trade Day after a few years' absence were Warwick and Karen Wilson of Kiwi Colour with a fine range of large landscaping trees.

Suppliers always contribute greatly to the interest of Trade Days and there were several newbies this Autumn. Among these was Kathy Hopping of Montagues who filled her stand with classical, Renaissance and Mediterranean-influenced objects, saying, "There are people

who want authentic, formal pieces."

Trade Day neophytes, Richard and Karen Tregoweth of Tree Tools, carried a great range of pruning and cutting tools. Richard demonstrated the efficiency and speed of an electric pruner. And for orchardists and arborists, a very stable third-leg ladder also took the eye.



Marie Kay with Growing Spectrum's *Polemonium Stairway to Heaven*



Right: Heather Tait of Living Earth with Organic Vegetable mix



Left: John Francis of Kingflora - "You have to attract people"! Middle: Naturally Native's Miriam Manley with new dwarf Phormium Moonraker Above Right: Metal Art's Carl Longstaff with new wicker container. Below: Ben Roundtree and David Hall - first timers for DJ Scott Right: Fine specimen of topiarised Prunus lusitanica from Standards of Excellence



First time to Trade Day, Carl Longstaff, new owner of the former Wellington-based Metallion, enjoyed the day on his Metal Art stand where his new range included wicker-patterned containers.

From Whenuapai, new owners of Bark and Soil Distributors (formerly Bark Distributors) used large pictures as a background to show their media range. And Dom Health is another new name, this one for distributors of the Garden Care range of fertilisers, media and bark, formerly part of the Redvale operation.

Garden furniture is increasingly popular and on the Overton Garden Furniture stand, owner Robert Epskamp featured a huge table inlaid with stones down the centre. "People are staying at home more and need garden furniture for their outdoor rooms," he says.

Garden statuary in general has been a little noticeable by its absence so it was pleasing to see first-

timers, artists Margaret Daubé and Jenny Foster of Artfully Yours bring some of their unique pieces. These are made from natural textiles like cotton, linen and silk which are stiffened and painted in an antique bronze. Light, economical and durable, they can be used indoors or out.

New and different

Among new products spotted was Woodham Manufacturing's new, long flat-topped barrow which is ideal for wheeling plants or products outdoors for quick and effective display.

On the Living Earth stand was new Rain Garden, a sand, compost and topsoil mix for moisture-loving plants. Strongly-growing vegetables in a container of Living Earth's new Organic Garden mix were also on display.

Tui Products' Scott McCullough showed EcoPest, an organic pesticide which, paired with companion

product, EcoFungicide, helps keep plants healthy.

Transplant Systems featured its compact Urbinati seeder ideal for the smaller nursery and capable of doing 200 trays an hour.

And Mike Whitford of Willory Agencies proudly displayed one of his Coroniotiki pots – which are made of clay but a special treatment gives them a rusty metal look.

During the day, IPPS members held seminars on various aspects of propagation.

As at Christchurch Trade Day, the expert foursome comprised Denis Hughes, Jeff Elliott, Ian Williams and Eddie Welsh. During his breaks, Jeff 'Michelangelo' Elliott took time to do three-minute sketches of passing people.

Trade Day exhibitors use many wiles to attract people to their stands, from straight visual impact to such enticements as cake, chocolates, Easter eggs, pens, freight and plant discounts and lucky draws.

HortFert Plus continued its tradition of providing a sought-after draw prize. This time a Kiwi barbecue went to Gordon Scott of Scott Base, one of many who bought 25kg of Triabon necessary to enter the draw.

Kingflora's John Francis donned a bright yellow wig and used heli-



um-filled balloons to bring people to see the large-grade camellia specials on his stand.

A good gauge of how things are going in the horticultural industry is the number of interactions, both on a business and a social level, one sees going on around the Trade Day hall and in the cafe. And there were plenty of these throughout the day with a good crowd also staying after pickup for drinks, nibbles and a chat. In the evening some 36 people enjoyed a Comm Hort-organised dinner at the nearby Grand Park Chinese restaurant capitalising on the opportunity to socialise and network.

Next Trade Day in Auckland is 12 August -- see you there!