

Staffed To Give Service FRASERS GARDEN



THE REGULAR STAFF at Frasers Garden Centre, from left, Mary Thompson, Kevin Hood, Kaye Johnson, Chris Parkes, Stan Smith, Graeme Campbell, proprietor Peter Fraser, Michael Watt, Carol Fraser, Murray Colville, Susan Gravatt, Helen Dominic, Murray Dyson, Bev. MacKenzie, John Sanders, Barry Cullen and Jill Reeve.

Frasers Garden Centre Largest In Waikato

It is ten years this week since Frasers Garden Centre opened for business. Today it is the largest garden centre in the Waikato catering principally to the domestic market.

Peter and Carol Fraser took over their property on the southern side of Kihikihi in 1974 and the Ministry of Works helped put in the entrance to it.

Work began on the development of a nursery first and was followed by the erection of a shop and retail "sleeper" beds ready for the opening on April 3, 1976.

Hard work, good business acumen and continuous development has since seen the centre expand each year to its present large complex.

PROMOTION

Peter Fraser paid particular attention to promotion of his business through advertising and, in the early stages, to buying in quality plants wholesale to meet the demand.

He first began television advertising in June 1977 and had amazing results. People began arriving from a wide area to buy their home garden needs.

The shop had to be expanded, a large greenhouse built, and the car park, which initially had space for 18 cars, has been enlarged twice to its present 40 spaces which are hardly enough on busy days.

EXPANSION

Over the years expansion

has also taken place in the growing areas from a quarter of an acre container area and half acre of field grown shrubs to five acres of container or potted growing trees and shrubs and a further six acres of field grown plants.

Expansion of the enterprise has also led to increased employment from a staff of three in 1977 to 17 plus casual staff today.

Patronage has also grown to include a large share of the Otorohanga and Te Kuiti areas as well as other parts of the Waikato outside the immediate Te Awamutu area.

"People think nothing of travelling from Rotorua, Hawera, Auckland or the Bay of Plenty just to select plants from our extensive range," Peter Fraser said.

EXTENSIVE RANGE

"While a number of garden centres maintain they have connoisseur trees, we carry a total range of rare, unusual and common species outnumbering those of our competitors."

Frasers Garden Centre now propagates and grows 75 percent of all the plants it sells and is only too well aware of changing garden pattern and colour fashions.

"There has to be continuous forward planning to produce the right article and right colour at competitive prices," he said.

The nursery is currently producing in excess of 200,000 trees and shrubs an-

nually for sale direct to the public. The garden centre is not a wholesaler, though it does supply J. Jones Garden Shop on a regular basis.

CLIENTELE VALUED

"We value the clientele we have built up over the years and endeavour to meet their needs and provide them with the best possible service we can," Peter Fraser said.

Training seminars are held so staff have the knowledge to assist people in making their selection of plants to grow in a variety of positions and climatic variations.

Free coffee facilities have been put in and the children's play area enlarged so that clients can take their time in viewing what the Garden Centre has to offer.

"Our range is so extensive that it has to be seen to be believed," Peter Fraser said. "I have always been critical of our operation, but today I believe it is among the best of modern garden centres."

INCREASING DEMAND

Peter and his wife Carol are still not entirely satisfied because they are looking at further improvement of their facilities and possible expansion of the nursery to keep pace with the spin-off from past and present promotions.

These have included showing their wares at Mystery Creek Fielddays, talking to garden circles and taking

tours around the complex, and running competitions with bikes or glasshouses as prizes.

The glasshouse one was run in conjunction with an extensive mail order catalogue that proved to be one of the biggest operations the Frasers have undertaken.

A HIGHLIGHT

There are some highlights in their busy lives they remember vividly, such as the party of Japanese tourists who called in unexpectedly one day.

The Japanese took a liking to clematis plants and made free use of a tap to wash the

roots clean of soil so they could take them in plastic bags on their homeward bound plane they were due to catch the same day.

"They were absolutely rapt with the plants," Peter said. "Their delight was something you never forget."

PBA

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