

Pots of gold

Rainbow Park Nurseries, Auckland NZ

At Rainbow Park Nurseries, you can always expect a riot of colour but, thanks to some canny growing decisions, business is also blooming.

Located on 16 hectares of land at Ramarama, just 40kms south of Auckland, Rainbow Park Nurseries specialises in the production of house plants for sale to leading plant retailers. An impressive 15,000 square metres of heated greenhouses are home to an enormous variety of, mostly flowering, plants. These include anthurium, bromeliad, phalaenopsis orchids, spathiphyllum and begonias, to name but a few.

"We have around thirty people employed on site," explains Ken Caldwell, Nursery Manager, "and sell our plants to DIY chain stores, garden centres and supermarkets." Rainbow Park also has a thriving tree nursery, selling to councils, landscapers and garden centres.

It's their interesting range that has tongues wagging. By fostering exclusive relationships with a number of European and American breeders, Rainbow Park has introduced some of the very newest and latest varieties to the New Zealand market. Just some of these include Parade roses, Dutch Lady Series hydrangeas and Rijn Plant anthuriums. In fact, Rainbow Park's owner, Peter Tayler, can often be seen boarding a plane for overseas himself, to ensure the best outcomes, and to learn first-hand about the latest European growing technologies.

Of course, with such an enormous range of products comes specific fertilising needs as well. And that's where Scotts comes in.

"These days we incorporate Osmocote Exact into our growing media," says Ken. "If we need any specific additional fertilisers, we add it through a process of fertigation, using both Peters Professional and Peters Excel – two other Scotts products." Ken adds, "As Scotts products have evolved, we have followed. Of course, we've dabbled in other brands, but have always had the impression that Scotts products have been better – not putting the other guys down, of course."

Production Manager, Brian Frost, has had a similar experience using Scotts' range of fertilisers. Brian has been in the industry since the late '60s, when he undertook an apprenticeship in horticulture. According to members of Brian's family, he actually started playing with plants about the time he started to walk.



L to R: Ken Caldwell, Andrew Tayler, Brian Frost

He has been with Rainbow Park for nearly eleven years now, and is number one on the ground when it comes to their range of house plants.

"We use Peters Professional and Peters Excel products for a lot of our supplementary feeding," says Brian. "As part of the rose program, we use Peters Professional Rose Special, for instance, and we use Peters on pretty much all of our anthuriums.

"Peters has a huge range and, because we have lots of products, it's highly applicable for us. The good thing is you can get one that's pretty much suitable for any crop."

Brian adds, "Scotts has very specific feeds that don't require any pre-mixing, so Peters is very easy to use and very cost effective. Mind you, Peters is always willing to do something special for you, but we haven't needed it yet. The Peters approach allows us to get on with looking after the plants, and give that job (the pre-mixing) to someone else."

"The best thing that has happened to our begonias and impatiens in the last 12 months was when we changed to Peters Excel Hi K. It's really made a difference to the flowering and colour intensity". He adds, "Growers often say they can't afford to use it. I say you can't afford not to."

And finally, in praise of his staff's work, Rainbow Park's owner, Peter Tayler, says, "The crop timing is so important, particularly with a crop like impatiens. When you are selling 60,000 in a matter of months, all orders are pre-booked, and it is very important that we are bang on with our timing. So far Ken and Brian have got it right!"



Growing success