

## IPPS Western Region Exchange 2018

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### INTRODUCTION

When I first got offered the application to apply for the IPPS Western Region Exchange, I actually thought Grant Hayman my employer was having me on. Little did I know that applying for this and getting accepted was going to be one of the most mind - blowing, eye-opening and memorable experiences of my life.

I had never experienced travelling overseas before from my home country, so it was a very nervous but exciting feeling and buzz that kicked in when I first flew out of Auckland on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July. I'll try to summarise in this write-up as much as I can about the whole overall exchange.

I attended the IPPS Western Region Conference in Hawaii where I was picked up by Phil and Gail Gredler in Honolulu. The first day there I got to try the local beer and got to go to Pearl Harbor and learn about the history of the place. The rest of the tours included visiting the Punchbowl Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, the Foster Botanical Garden, visiting a Hibiscus breeder and even

made it to the waterfall at the Waimea Arboretum. From swimming in the gorgeous beaches of Hawaii to taking a whole lot of pictures, the start of my exchange it was an absolute breath-taking experience.



**Figure 1.** Corpse flower (*Amorphophallus titanum*) at Foster Botanic Garden.

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, I flew over to beautiful Kona, also known as ‘Big Island’. We visited the USDA National Germplasm Repository, Hawaiian Sunshine Nursery, Nani May Gardens, Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Factory and shop, Akastsuka Orchid Gardens (which were amazing, I never knew an orchid could smell so good!) and then we made our way back around the Southern end of the Kona Island.

On the last day in Kona I presented my speech to everyone at the conference. I think I did my employers Grant and Robynne Hayman and the New Zealand IPPS Region very proud and touched a few souls at that. After speeches, we went on our last tour for conference which included a visit to the Mountain Thunder Coffee Plantation and the Kona Cloud Forest Sanctuary (that was so incredible!). We ended at Dean’s Gardens and then headed back to our motel to get ready for our Hawaiian Theme Dinner!

I flew out of Kailua and flew into San Jose on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018. This is where the IPPS Western Region Exchange began. I got picked up by Don Dillon and spent my first night in Corralitos with Don and his wife Donna at their beautiful home.

The next morning in Corralitos, Don decided to show me around. We started with going and visiting a place called Roses of Yesterday and Today which was a fenced off section filled with roses, some alive and some dead. The roses were budwood plants. Our next stop was Don’s nursery, Four Winds Growers which is a wholesale citrus nursery. The nursery is mainly run by Lexa, Don’s daughter as a shared partnership with another guy. Four Winds got its name when alcohol was illegal during prohibition = speak easy, and the orange behind the logo is from Don’s grandad - Minneola tangelo. This was a very well set out nursery. Everything stays shut up to protect plants from ACP (Asian Citrus Psyllid) and HIB (also known as Citrus Greening or Yellow Dragon Disease).

Four Winds grow 60 different cultivars of citrus plants including Buddha Hand (the original dwarf citrus since 1950), Seedless Midnight Valencia Orange (semi dwarf citrus), Lamb Hass (PAT), Lemon Allen Eureka and Kaffir Lime. The shade house has bottom heating to help with rooting. All houses are kept very hot. The nursery has joined rails in houses to help with the transport of aluminum benches (massive trays) which seemed like a very good solution for transportation of plants to benches. 1 acre holds 125,000 plants which is 4x4 by 9 inches which then gets transported to a 3-gallon pot. They mostly sell to wholesale nurseries in California, Canada and are going to start selling to the East Coast. The glass house has insect proof vents with insect fabric on sides. For my first nursery to visit in California it seemed huge compared to Headford Propagators back home, I could not wait to see what was next. That about sums the tour of the Don’s Nursery.



**Figure 2.** Citrus plants at Four Winds Nursery

We went down what the Californian’s call a rough road which in New Zealand is just known as bumpy tar seal. I’d hate to think what their opinions of the some of the New Zealand roads would be. Along our journey, Don pointed out some of the Californian natives and told me a few reasons why

they're known worldwide. Redwoods are the tallest tree in the world at over 116 metres. Giant Redwoods are the largest trees in the world on the terms of trunk volume. I also learnt a cool little fact that 'casa' means house in Spanish. Over in the states, pretty much everywhere that is a working environment you have to be able to speak two languages: Spanish and English.

Later on that day I got picked up by Nicky Hughes. I stayed with Nicky and her partner for two days in Soquel. Over the two days we visited a number of places. We started at the Arboretum at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I was amazed by the number of gardens at this place from succulent gardens to a butterfly garden. They even had a New Zealand native garden and a place for the plants that attracted the bees. It was so bewildering seeing so many new, but different plant species and some that had so many similarities to the plants back home like the Red Fountain Cordyline. They even had White sage (*Salvia apiana*).

Next morning was filled with tours and sight-seeing. We visited Yamagami's Garden Centre and Nursery. There I learnt that a plant called *Asarum caudatum* is pollinated by ants, butterflies have tongues and Gazania 'Daybreak White' is from the sunflower family. We also visited the Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden in Palo Alto CA, alongside an absolute beautiful garden placed in the centre was a big old historic home. While driving along checking out the ocean and beaches off Highway 1, CA, we pulled over to go check out the Pigeon Point Lighthouse, which was just in the process of being restored. It's always windy there so a good place to lose your hat.

Soquel Nursery Growers is a nursery covers 9 acres and is right next door to where Nicky and her partner lived. The nursery has a crew of only 11 people - two propagators, a crew of six on potting and orders, a full-time manager and two part time sales people. They

buy in liners and do propagation by cuttings and seed. For transportation they have one pick-up truck and a box truck. Electric carts can hook on a trailer. They grow their plants in pots from one gallon at the smallest to 15 gallons roughly being the biggest. Potting mix is from Sunland and has Redwood bark, peat, coir and lava rock instead of pumice. This is used as a four-month slow release formulation. We also visited Gurdnsneider Nursery where they use whitewash to stop the sunlight coming through their roofs.



**Figure 3.** Part of the large selection of plants at Yamagami's Garden Centre and Nursery.

Nicky works at a community college called Cabrillo College in Aptos, CA. We went for a tour and she explained to me what they do at their college. They were currently doing an Aquaponic lettuce crop, which involved a big tub filled with water and wee lettuce plugs were placed individually into polystyrene and the roots were just growing freely into the water.

Later on, that day we went out for tea in a gorgeous town called Capitola. This had to be one of my favourite places with my stay with Nicky. We went out to Margaritaville - what better place to have a margarita and some seafood. I really loved my stay with Nicky and her partner, not only did she give me awesome tours but she left me with a

whole head filled of new knowledge and was never short of an answer for every question I asked.

The next day I met up with Danny Taiko, my next host and his family in Fresno. This is where I first got a glimpse from a distance of just how bad the bush fires and droughts over in California are. Danny is the owner of Taiko Nursery which is a propagation nursery and his daughter Lisa mainly runs the business now. Danny's nursery is a very well-established nursery and I was shown a demonstration of his Elle pot machine. Elle pots seems to be very popular overseas.

Now for some more of the fun stuff, I got the opportunity to go to Disneyland from morning to night! What a blast that was so much fun with Lisa and her partner Darren. The next morning, we drove to San Jacinto, California. This was my next drop off to my hosts Jim and Andi Conner. I had already met Jim and Andi in Hawaii, so it was a pleasure to see them again. I also wanted to spend more time with Andi so that she understood my kiwi lingo before I left the country and flew back home.

Jim had no time to waste with tours starting right away. First up I got the pleasure of a tour round their nursery, Alta Nurseries and wow, what a beautiful portrait of scenery you get with the nursery and the San Jacinto mountain ranges in the background. I visited so many different nurseries it was hard to write them all down. Jim gave me so much of not only an open mind, but also taught me so much about horticulture in California.

Before our first nursery visit, we stopped in at a winery and although it was too early for wine testing, I was able to shake hands with the owner of the winery who just happened to be a billionaire. That will probably be the first and last time I will ever get to do that.



**Figure 4.** Alta Nurseries with the San Jacinto mountains in the background

We visited Olive Hill Greenhouses, which produce hardier indoor plants, and also Western Cactus where I never knew you could grow so many different varieties of cactuses and succulents! Jim also took me to a flower market, which is a real talent the way people can design bunches of flowers.



**Figure 5.** Indoor plant production at Olive Hill Nurseries.

We visited Shearman Nursery which is owned by a German guy called Jim Shearman. Some plants he grows that I took a major interest in were *Eucalyptus deglupta*, *Ficus dammaropsis* from New Guinea and the Grape tree (trunk gets huge). Here I also got the opportunity of holding my first ever snake!

I had the pleasure of staying in Jim and Andi's condo in Oceanside. Oceanside has a gorgeous waterfront with a pier that reaches 400 metres out to sea. They also have a big surfing competition on one side of the pier. Andi and I even got in some time to do some local shopping at the Oceanside Street Faire. They were lovely hosts and made me feel so at home, Jim couldn't have showed me around more in the small time I stayed with them.

Next Jim dropped me off to Glenn and we drove through Malibu and the majority of the cruise was just beautiful by the coastline. It was also different to see how close the big oil rigs were to the coastline which being a kiwi we don't have that over here. We finally made it to San Luis where I got dropped back off to Lexa for my last couple of nights before flying back to New Zealand.

The next day I got the opportunity of going for a visit with Don (Lexa's Dad) and her two children Max and Cora to go see the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which was just awesome! We saw everything from Otter's being fed, heaps of different kinds of fish, eel, Sand dollar, Sting rays, birds, jelly fish (Moon Jelly had to be my favourite) and plenty more, I would go back there in a heartbeat.

I spent my last day at Four Wind Growers with Lexa while she completed her work in the office for the morning before driving to San Francisco. To fill in some time before my flight, we visited the famous San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge which honestly TV and movies do it no justice until you see it in person. Lexa also showed me the Palace of Fine Arts, a beautifully designed building with so much texture and art that was incredible to see.

A massive thank you to the IPPS New Zealand Region and IPPS Western Region Exchange for giving me this amazing opportunity and making this trip possible. It has given me an insight to a bigger world of horticulture. It has also made me realize how lucky we are as New Zealanders that we don't get droughts, nor do we have a high risk of bush fires like over in the United States. Thank you to all my hosts, IPPS members and to my employers Grant and Robynne Hayman for getting me out of my comfort zone. This has been a life-changing experience and has made me have so much more knowledge that I can put to use.