

Making the Most Out of What You Grow — A Client's Perspective[©]

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INTRODUCTION

Milne's Plant Link is a plant supply company that puts together list of plants for the landscape industry and for the major plant users. We are very focused on what we do and do not get involved in design, planting, or growing. We just supply plants. There are four staff pricing and selling, an excellent backup person in administration and the support staff for inwards goods and dispatch. We have a depot in East Tamaki, Auckland, where much of the product is delivered to and dispatched from. Clients come to us for several reasons, a major one being quality. Our clients' expectations are high, so please ensure that any plants you despatch to us are of the best quality available. We are in an age when information technology is the prime importance, so communication by email is increasingly significant. We welcome emailed trade lists and replies to inquiries.

TRADE LISTS

Ensure these are updated and sent regularly to provide relevant information. I suggest price breaks for quantities are worth considering, and try to provide prices "freight in store" rather than ex your nursery, as no one likes surprises. Lists are best, when all plants are alphabetical A to Z, rather than lists within lists, and an indication of what numbers are available is helpful. Naturally Native's list is a good example of what's required.

LABELLING

Do those who don't want a label on every plant need to subsidise those who do? Likewise, with cleaned pots, I suggest that if your client requires attached labels and clean pots, then they should pay for it. Therefore those who don't require the above should pay less — fair enough, don't you think?

CONSISTENCY OF SUPPLY

Since the days of plants only being available ex rows of field-grown product, the age of plants as a commodity has arrived. Think of the other commodities and how they are marketed. One of the keys is consistency of supply. Cereal manufacturers never run out of cereal. Here's a list of plants that are commodities, and if any of these are plants you grow, then you should endeavour to always have them. That way, your clients will always buy them from you:

- *Rosmarinus officinalis* Prostratus Group
- Green and black mondo (*Ophiopogon*)
- *Choisya ternata*
- *Syzygium floribundum* (syn. *Eugenia ventenatii*)
- *Syagrus romanzoffiana*
- *Agave attenuata*
- *Convolvulus cneorum*

- *Clivia miniata* (syn. *C. grandiflora*)
- *Camellia sasanqua* 'Setsugueka'
- *Griselinia littoralis* and *G. lucida*
- *Cordyline australis*
- Nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*)
- *Iresine herbstii*
- *Trachelospermum jasminoides*
- *Phormium cookianum* green dwarf flax

COMMUNICATION

It's very difficult to do business when you cannot talk to people. A good phone system is critical. Personally I don't mind if I can only phone you on a cell phone, as long as you are always available on it. Milne's Plant Link communicates with its two top suppliers almost exclusively by cell phone.

DELIVERY

The distribution of your plants to market in an efficient manner, which suits both you and your client, is fundamental. Personally, we try to be as flexible as possible to accommodate deliveries, but please understand that your plants may be just a fraction of a whole job, so time frames are very significant. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at your conference, and I trust the above comments will help in this ever-changing market.

Replanting for the Future: Environmental Restoration and a Look at What Is Happening in Tauranga City®

Mark Dean

Naturally Native New Zealand Plants Ltd, Gamman Mill Rd, RD 3, Tauranga

INTRODUCTION

Tauranga City Council has been committed to a programme of restoring native vegetation and developing wetlands for a number of years. This has been done in association with its storm water programme, where ponds have been built to control flooding. As Tauranga has a number of valley systems cutting through the city into the harbour, this has become a major on-going programme.

Naturally Native New Zealand Plants Ltd first grew plants specifically for revegetation in 1983. These first plants were planted into Johnson Reserve, Welcome Bay, a suburb of Tauranga City. Since the early 1990s Tauranga City has purchased and planted revegetation-grade plants each year.

In 2001 Naturally Native developed a set of plant standards. This was done to set a production standard for the nursery staff to help improve quality. However it was soon realised that the Naturally Native Plant Standard was a sound marketing tool when Councils started adopting it to use in their plant purchase contracts, as a means of defining the standard of plant they required.

It was as a direct result of developing the Plant Standard that Tauranga City signed a contract with Naturally Native to supply and install (plant) revegetation plants each year. Much of this is being done in the extensive wetland areas around the city.