

Award of Associate of Honour of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (AHRIH)

Maxwell John Paynter



John Paynter (LHS) being presented his 2017 AHRIH award certificate by David Moyle (RHS). Photo: Murray Dawson.

John Paynter comes from a long line of prominent fruit growers and fruit advisors. His great grandfather, John senior, moved from New Plymouth to Nelson and started fruit growing in 1862. In 1916, John senior retired from his Nelson orchard and built a home in St Georges Road, Hastings. Since then St Georges Road has been the location of six generations of the Paynter fruit growing family.

Throughout his long career in the fruit industry John Paynter has made a significant contribution to the New Zealand pipfruit, kiwifruit and stonefruit industries.

Pipfruit – apples

Since the 1960s under John's leadership, the family business has grown from 5 hectares to more than 600 hectares and at the peak of the season employs more than 600 people, 100 being Samoan pickers many of whom return every year. For many years Samoan pickers have been an integral part of the picking force, especially with stonefruit¹.

Under the Yummy Fruit brand, John markets apples in New Zealand all year round with the packhouse operating double shifts 52 weeks of the year.

He has been responsible for introducing many new apple varieties to New Zealand customers. Current new introductions are 'Sweet Tango', 'Ambrosia', 'Genesis' and 'Lemonade' cultivars.

John started producing nursery fruit trees in 1968 and has grown millions of trees over the years for planting on company properties.

Orchard innovation and marketing strategies have always been paramount to John. In 1975 he introduced wind machines to New Zealand following the loss of two successive 'Granny Smith' apple crops to frost damage. These machines are now in widespread use throughout the country.

John started corporate growing in New Zealand, establishing orchards for Brierley Investments Limited. He developed more than 500 hectares for Brierley's over a twenty-year period. These orchards now form part of the Mr Apple operation.

From 1976 to 1997 John served as a Grower Member, then a Government Appointee of the New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board, and latterly as a Commercial Director of ENZA Fruit NZ International Ltd. For the New Zealand fruit industry he was the Founder Chairman of FIPIA (Fruit Industry Plant Improvement Agency) New Zealand Ltd – now known as ENZA Tree Ltd. The role of this company was to introduce and commercialise new apple selections for the New Zealand fruit industry.

John also masterminded the plan to commercialise ENZA apple varieties in the Northern Hemisphere.

Kiwifruit

Because of his marketing knowledge, John was appointed in 1987 to the New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Authority as the Government Appointee. He played an instrumental role in the formation of the Kiwifruit Marketing Board of which he was a Director from 1989 to 1996.

From 1996 to 1997 John was the Founder Chairman of Zespri International heading the rollout of the Zespri brand.

Stonefruit

Since a young age John has been a passionate stonefruit grower and marketer, leading by example.

In 1973 John and his business partner Peter Andersen wanted to differentiate their peaches and nectarines. Hence

the formation of the Yummy brand. Yummy stickers, which are put on each individual fruit, can be exchanged by schools for sports equipment and over twenty years four million dollars' worth of sports equipment has been given away. Today his Yummy Fruit Company produces approximately 70% of all North Island nectarines.

John has had a lifetime passion of travelling the world pursuing new varieties and importing them into this country. His company is the major shareholder in the New Zealand Tree Company and Zee Sweet Ltd who are the importers of these new selections. Annually his company releases at least one new stonefruit variety to the New Zealand market. As a result of travelling to the fruit growing regions of the world John now has a global network of connections with like-minded horticulturists.

John was a founder Director of HortResearch, is a holder of the NDH (National Diploma of Horticulture) and has been a member of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture for many years. His grandfather and father were also members, so the Paynter family have supported the RNZIH since its inception.

Alan Pollard, Pipfruit Chief Executive said "No one came close to John's achievements of planting 1400 hectares of fruit trees across the Heretaunga Plains. His vision, leadership and thirst for innovation has made one of the greatest impacts in shaping the Hastings landscape and the economy of Hawke's Bay, along with the ongoing success of New Zealand's horticultural industry."

In 2016, John Paynter was the recipient of the Pipfruit New Zealand Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Pipfruit Industry. It is fitting that for 2017 the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture also recognises his life-long contributions to horticulture by conveying their highest award, an Associate of Honour.

**Citation prepared by
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¹ In recognition of the orchards long time association with the Poutasi District in Samoa the Johnny Applesed Holdings Ltd operations manager (Len Thompson) was made an Honorary Samoan chief in 2015.