

2014 Young Horticulturist of the Year winning speech

Caitlin Thorburn¹



Caitlin Thorburn with Steve Sexton, Countdown, on the left and Simon Hooker, NZ Winegrowers, on the right.

Good evening to you all. My name is Caitlin Thorburn and I am a florist. I represent floriculture for this year's competition.

I am currently living in Christchurch and am privileged to be managing the flower shop at Aromaunga Baxters Flowers.

I am in love with my job and I would love to share my passion for flowers and plants with other young florists and flower growers embracing the entire horticulture industry as we consider our future.

So how do we get more young people into the horticulture industries in New Zealand?

We already have gateway qualifications driven by Primary Industries, encouraging 11–13 year olds to complete unit standards while at school and there are many eco-schools in New Zealand teaching children about growing food.

I appeal to you that promotion of horticulture must be driven by the industry itself, with a hands-on approach to promotion and involvement from all sectors. We cannot leave it to the government to entice new interest in our sectors; we must take responsibility for our own future.

I ask you to consider this – let our own children of Aotearoa be the leaders of our future horticultural market.

How do we do this, you may ask?

The answer is easy ... adopt a school.

It may sound simple, and that's because it is.

ADOPT A SCHOOL

Growers can give a box of flower seeds, a bag of seed potatoes, a grape vine, native tree saplings, plants. Adopt a school and put the growing experience in the hands of the children.

The New Zealand industries will respond when Adopt a School "horticulture in the hands of children" programme is launched. With children's enthusiasm for growing flowering plants and food we would be sucked in by their passion for our product.

Produce appeals to the senses. It is colourful and must be touched, smelled or tasted to be appreciated. With all the love and care we pour into the propagation and growing of our produce, it has a soul and all good produce is young and fresh. Let our young children of Aotearoa show the way, by the horticultural industries adopting a school.

I am proud to be a New Zealander and I want to support local industry and buy New Zealand grown produce. I want New Zealand children to grow up understanding their environment and knowing they are making a difference. I want them to be able to find employment in our industry and further grow Aotearoa's horticulture sectors.

So I challenge you all present here this evening, when you leave and return home – adopt a school. Don't be afraid to adopt a young school.

Just get involved.

Go out and ADOPT A SCHOOL.

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