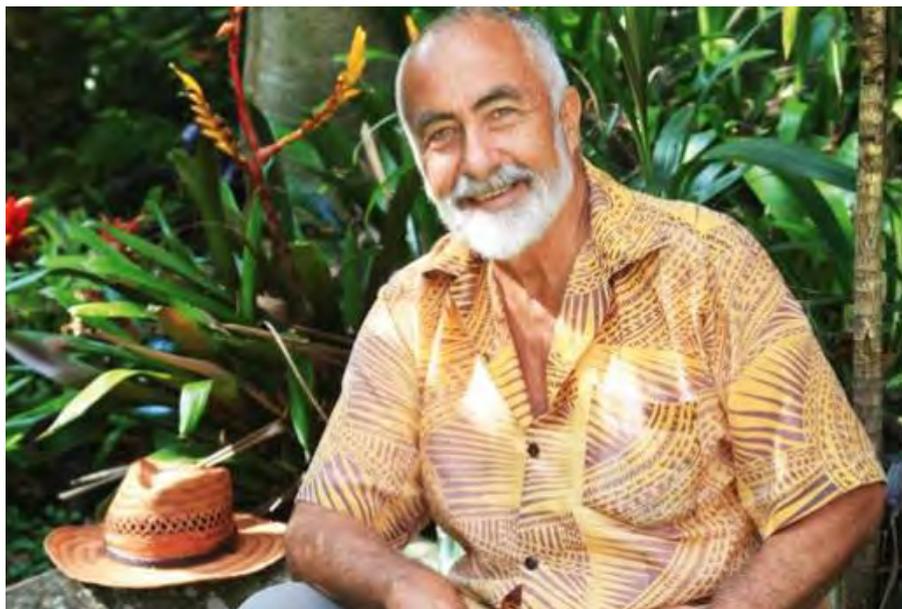


Russell John Fransham 7 May 1948 – 5 December 2017



Russell Fransham at home in his Northland garden. Photo: Sally Tagg.

One of the most respected figures in New Zealand horticulture, Russell Fransham, has died.

He passed away on 5th December, 2017, 10 days after suffering a heart attack.

The Northland plantsman and owner of Russell Fransham Subtropicals was well-known for his love of horticulture, landscaping and plants. He was an authority on adapting unusual and subtropical plants to New Zealand conditions, writing regularly for *NZ Gardener* magazine.

“His column was always a joy to read due to his infectious passion for the plants he wrote about,” says the magazine’s editor Jo McCarroll. “He combined the authority of an expert with the enthusiasm of someone discovering a plant for the first time.”

Fransham’s deep and abiding love for horticulture started early. “Growing plants has been a passion all my life, a legacy of growing up on the family farm in Waikato,” Russell himself wrote last year in *NZ Gardener*. “My grandparents and parents were all passionate gardeners who never stopped being excited about the beauty of trees and gardens.”

His own garden in Matapouri Bay was much admired for its ‘magical’ quality. Russell has written movingly about creating the garden that he had

dreamed of as a child and living “in a house on wharf piles at the edge of a small lake, surrounded by trees and nesting herons, pāteke, kingfishers, shags, tūi and kererū.”

NZ House & Garden associate editor Rosemary Barraclough got to know Russell when he designed a garden for the Matapouri bach her family owns with friends. “The garden he created for us three years ago has given us a huge amount of pleasure,” says Rosemary.

“Russell had a great eye for garden design and was such a humble and generous person. He’d always take the time to chat about what he’d planted and was so knowledgeable about plants that grow well in the north.”

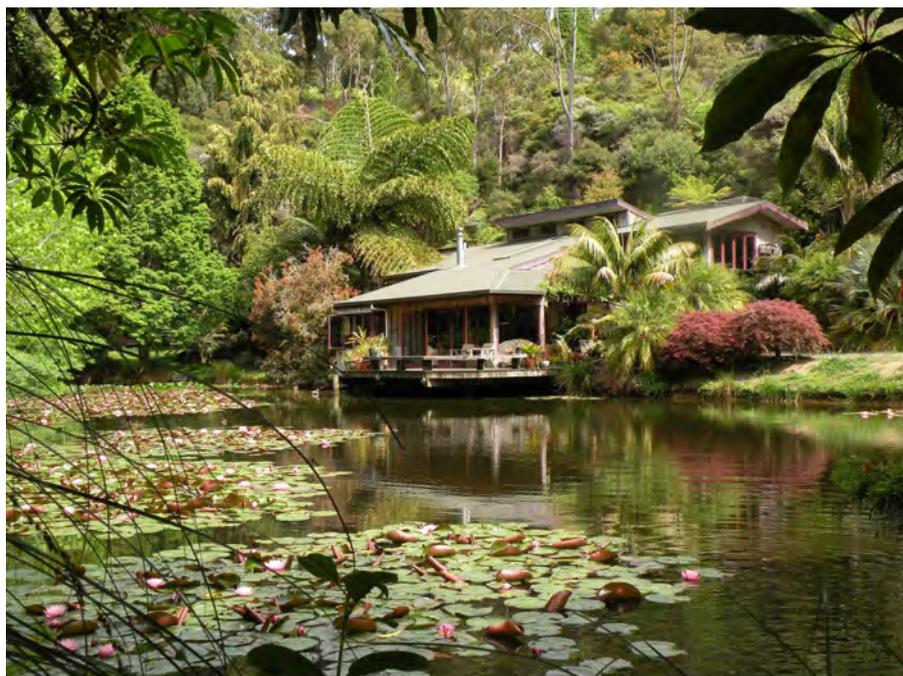
Just this winter, Russell planted the second stage of the bach garden, battling pūkeko and rabbits to get it established.

“I feel really lucky that Russell finished our garden for us. It’s going to be a reminder for us of someone who was a much-loved member of the Matapouri community.”

As news of his death trickled out, tributes from members of the horticulture community, former students (Russell had taught high school biology after obtaining a degree in zoology from Auckland University) and customers have also flowed in on social media.

Russell’s service was held in Whangarei on 11th December, 2017.

Obituary compiled by Mei Leng Wong, and reproduced courtesy of *NZ Gardener* magazine.



Fransham’s house at Matapouri Bay nestles into the lake edge, catching the sun all day. Photo: Russell Fransham’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/russell.fransham.5.