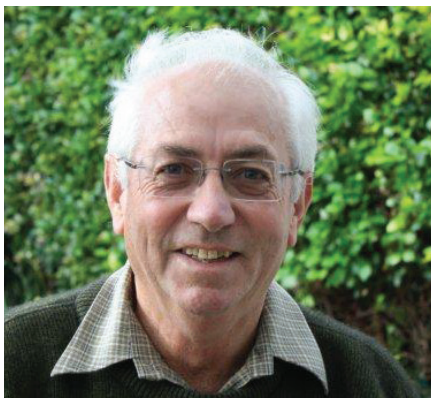


Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (FRIH)

George William Tregidga



George Tregidga FRIH.

In 1962, George started work alongside his father Percy and his brother Mark in the family business, PTO Growers, growing glasshouse tomatoes in Mangere, Auckland. George maintains that family-run businesses are a leading source of new ideas and innovations and throughout his life in horticulture he's been involved in many new initiatives in glasshouse vegetable production as well as in the management of horticultural enterprises.

In the early 1950s, PTO Growers was the first to convert to trickle irrigation in glasshouses, then the first to install warm air heating. In 1979, they were the first to convert to the Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) of growing which created a large increase in spring production and effectively revolutionised glasshouse crop production in New Zealand. In the 1990s they imported a state-of-the-art fruit grading machine from the US and packed tomatoes for more than fifty other growers. Six years later, they upgraded to a Compac grader which is still used today by T&G covered crops.

In the late 1990s, PTO Growers formed a joint venture with the then Turners and Growers to build a new glasshouse facility at Mangere. Between 2002 and 2012 George acted as project manager overseeing expansion of the businesses.

George has always appreciated the importance of the relationship between employer and employee, the challenges in attracting young people to careers in horticulture and the value of investing in staff training and further education.

In 1978, along with other like-minded growers, George was active in restarting the Horticulture Cadet Scheme in Auckland which managed cadet training in a range of industry sectors, including glasshouse and outdoor vegetable, pip and stone fruit, kiwifruit and flower production. At its peak the scheme had 48 cadets in grower training in the Auckland region. In those days the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture was the examining body for the Certificate of Horticultural Practice. Cadets studied theory by correspondence while gaining practical skills through on-the-job training. As well as being on the management committee and employing cadets, George was an examiner in the final year oral and practical exams. In the early 1990s, the cadet scheme was absorbed by the formation of the then NZ Horticulture Industry Training Organisation (now Primary ITO).

For his work with the Horticulture Cadet Scheme, the Auckland Vegetable and Produce Grower Society presented George, in the 1990s, with the Percy Tregidga Memorial Award for outstanding service to horticulture. George says it was an honour to be presented with this award named after his father.

In 1982, George joined the MIT (Manukau Institute of Technology) Horticulture and Agriculture advisory board where he represented the horticulture sector until 2009.

George became a member of the Mangere Rotary Club in 1979, served as president during the 1988–1989 year and was presented a Paul Harris Award for services to the community in 1995.

As a representative of PTO Growers, George was presented with the Westpac Manukau Excellence Award for the companies community service at the 1996 Manukau City Council Awards.

Since 1992, George has been a member of the Mangere Lawn Cemetery Trust where he is involved in running the cemetery.

Upon retiring in 2012, George based himself at Tindalls Beach, Whangaparaoa, and joined the then Probus Club of Hibiscus Coast, now the Rebus Club, and was president in 2017.

In 2008 George became a trustee of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Education Trust which manages the Young Horticulturist competition. He later took on the role of vice-chair, until retiring. Chair of the Trust from 2010–2015, Nicola Rochester, says having George as vice-chair was a privilege, that he was a fantastic listener with heart and without prejudice and always gave his time willingly. In the 2015 annual report of the Trust she wrote, "...you are not afraid to challenge or put a different view across. Your business acumen ensures we kept to budget and best of all have a laugh".

George's down to earth approach to people and life in general, along with his wisdom and experience at both the production and corporate level proved invaluable and enabled the Trust to make decisions with confidence that confirmed the position of the Young Horticulturist competition as an important annual industry event that meets its vision, to promote excellence and opportunities for young people across horticulture through a high profile competition. He was known to make things happen, for picking up the phone and sorting issues out quietly and efficiently. George continues to contribute, as a judge in the annual competition finals.

The award of Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture is reserved for "Members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture". Through his commitment to the advancement of training, his service as an advisor and mentor to others in the industry and to the wider community, George Tregidga is a worthy recipient of this honour.

**Citation prepared by
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