Ipps International New Zealand Tour 2025

For those of you who have never been on or considered an Ipps International Tour I would have to suggest that if time allows you’ve been missing out. I hope within the context of this missive I can show you why such an experience should be in your portfolio.

Granted it’s a mighty long airplane ride for many of us to attend, but like all things worthwhile, it’s worth the effort and you will be rewarded handsomely.

New Zealand bills itself as the land of paradise. Much can be said of that but that description certainly comes close to fruition. To begin with the people of New Zealand are wonderful people to get to know and to spend time with. They are gracious and most hospitable and welcoming, and such was the case when we cleared customs and met our host driver, Anthony Toledo, tissue culture nursery , working on forest trees. Most accommodating and helpful. People like Tony are one of the reasons why International tours are so successful, there is simply no way to meet such fine folks as Tony and his charming wife, Grant and Robyn Hayman( our tour leaders), Dave and Shirely Oglesby (all around , get it done hands on deck and a host of others). Besides the wonderful people who set aside their lives to participate in a tour leadership there is the jumbled bag of marbles that drift in to take the tour. Eastern and Southern region members , too numerous to mention, European Ipps members , members from South Africa, Australia,and numerous spouses, offsprings, exchange students, and neerdowells, who combine in a mélange of interesting people to laugh and socialize with.

So what did we do, you rightfully should as. Plenty. Our tour starts in Auckland and progresses all though the North Island. The intent is a variety of experiences, some nursery and horticulture, so human interest , some cultural, and as much varied natural splendors as can be rolled into the traveling itself.

On day two after a decent night not on a plane, we immediately jumped on a ferry and headed to Waiheke Island, a pristine place located east of Auckland to see Christie Ralphs herb and cut flower operation, then over to Allpress Olive plantation with tasting and wine and then to Batch Winery for more wine and lunch. Spectacular views were never lacking.

After lunch a walk in a forest preserve and along a beach, natural sites are always welcome and then back to ferry to Auckland. I must say you have to pay attention, because if you get left behind it’s a long swim back to the mainland.

By bus on day 3 we descended upon Scot Base growing on nursery and Nga Rakau Seedling nursery. Our first encounter with the omnipresent New Zealand passion for growing native plants. Much of the New Zealand nursery industry is devoted to native plant production but not all. Our stop after lunch was at Van Liers greenhouse and cut flowers. New Zealand prides itself on being largely self sufficient and they restrict movement of plants and seed into the country to protect their native plant populations and ecology. An example of this is operations such as Van Liers which offer a large variety of product from Cyclamen, to Violets to Phellodendron and a host of cut flowers to satisfy market demands. Hard to import , well then let’s grow it here.

For day 4 we did a brief stop at Auckland Botanic Gardens, too brief because it’s a jewel and we seriously did not get a chance to properly see it. We did however make our way to Beaumont Nuseries and that was a treat. On tours we are all on the lookout for plants that are interesting and beyond anything we haven’t seen before, we were not disappointed. I might add tours allow for the making of new friends and the experience of two people who might not know each other well sharing a look at something extraordinary is unparalleled.

From Beaumont we skipped down the road a bit to Ardmore Nurseries, owned by a different Beaumont family member, who had a different product line. From there we made our way to Rainbow Park color and indoor plants. Another fine example of forming a nursery to fit a specific niche.

Day 5 took us to Hamilton Botanic Gardens, if you go to New Zealand and only have one day to kill, go to the Hamilton Botanic Gardens. A fabulous botanical garden with amazing array of mature trees both native and exotic, shrubs, ground covers, roses and seven artistic gardens devoted to specific themes. Exceedingly well laid out, maintained and expertly crafted. A whole day there would have been insufficient.

Normally I don’t have much to say about lunch venues, what is there to say? Good/not so good. But lunch at Daltons was a surprise. Daltons is a leading soil media company and they presented us with their various types of soil media products derived from Pinus radiata, the primary forest tree in New Zealand. The lunch was good, but the information and details presented were exceptional, it was not just an infomercial.

Switching to the cultural side of the fence. We visited the Hobbiton Movie Set. A journey into the bowels of the origins of the Hobbitt movie. Exceedingly well done, delightfully accurate to the movie and a near permanent attraction set in situ in sheep country with the surreal native natural environment as a back drop. An experience comparable to Disney or beyond.

Day 6. Let’s go see a garden center and we did. Palmers is a fabulous garden center, well laid out, bright cheery presentation and very good quality nursery product of all sorts. A worthwhile stop. Two crops are especially common in New Zealand, Feijoia (Strawberry Guava) and Avocados. Feijoia have come a long ways since I knew them in Florida. That tiny little fruit has emerged into a colossus and rivals a cucumber in size while maintaining desirability as a out of hand fruit. Avocados speak for themselves, but here in the US we get two types, Haas and Florida Giant. New Zealand has seven varieties which lends adage to the saying , you learn something new everyday if you get in the right place. Off to Saltus Avocados , where we learned of the ins and outs of both crops. Then on to Tharfield Nursery edible plants and DMS pac house and orchard. DMS is the New Zealand heavy hitter when it comes to Kiwi fruit. Enormous operation devoted to the handling and distribution of Kiwis on a world wide basis. Approximately 95% being the yellow kiwi, followed by the green kiwi. But wait! Coming to a supermarket near you, the RED kiwi will make a presentation. It’s in the works.

Day 7 was the last day for the first phase of our tour with the appearance of more of us for the extension out to the conference in Plymouth Bay. We started with Treeline Nursery, a wonderful nursery devoted to native seedling production. First class. We then went onto Timberlands tree propagation nursery. A vast enterprise devoted to supplying rooted cuttings to the Pinus radiata industry. Millions and millions of rooted cutings are produced annually. We saw some small experimental forests of Coastal Redwoods, (Sequoia sempervirens) and made our way to Wai-o-tapu, a Maori encampment nestled in the midst of a vast thermal area , with hot water sulfurous springs and geyers.

Day 8. Liz Dunham will give you the rest.