

Previous winners of the HB Young Fruitgrower of the Year Title

Dean Astill - 2005



In 2005 Dean was working for Fresh New Zealand as an orchard Manger. He entered the competition encouraged by his employer and people from the industry training organisation. Since then he has moved toward an export related, rather than production role. Dean says “ my years in a production role gave me a great background to build on.”

Dean went on to work for Delica as an export manger and since then he has helped to develop a new company called RD8 along with Craig Hall. Last year he became a shareholder and director in that company.

Shane Lagas - 2006



The first year Shane entered the competition (2005), he had his arm twisted by industry people to enter. At the time he was a Foreman for Fruition Horticulture. The following year he changed roles and took on a management role for Apollo Pac. He was keen to give the competition another go and went on to win.

Shane is now sector Manager for Apollo Apples. Shane says “ the role is increasingly expanding along with my responsibilities. I still really enjoy pruning but don’t get enough time to do it.” He remains in orchard management, but on a much larger scale.

Ben McNatty 2007 & 2008



In 2007 Ben was working for AAA Orchard which was part of Unipac as a manager along side previous winner Dean Astill who encouraged Ben to enter. Ben stayed with AAA Orchards and later moved to Apollo Apples Ltd where his role has grown, and continues to grow.

Ben Says “I am still an orchard manager but then I was responsible for around 30 hectares. The area I now manage is 90 hectares and 15 permanent staff and the seasonal workforce which ranges between 50-100 people every season.”

Kevin McInnes - 2009



In 2009 Kevin had just completed his Cadetship Apprenticeship and was working for Wakes Fruit Company as a general orchard hand.

Kevin says “I entered the competition for a challenge, to test my skills against my industry peers, and to benchmark where I was at.”

Kevin is now a foreman at Freshco (formerly Wakes). He plays an important role in management decisions including IFP management, staff recruitment and forecasting and managing orchards. Kevin’s main interest is intensive planting, new techniques and profitability.

Jonathan Newby - 2010



In 2010, 27 year old Jonathan Newby claimed the HB Young Fruitgrower of the Year 2010 title. Employed with Graeme and Marion Hirst, Jonathan was determined to out-do his rivals in the competition.

Since then he has worked as a field representative for Skeltons (now Farmlands Horticulture) in Hawkes Bay and Bay of Plenty. After a period of time living and working in Australia, Jonathan has returned to Hawkes's Bay is the Operations manager for Rockit Apples.

Chris Treneman - 2011



Chris started working with JM Bostock when he left school in 2004, starting out as a tractor driver for the season, and progressing to orchard hand and management roles.

He entered the Young Fruitgrower of the Year, as he really enjoyed it last year and meet some great people.

He currently manages the growing of JM Bostock Gold Kiwifruit and Bio Dynamic apples and says that "kiwifruit is his main passion and the new varieties are exciting".

Ben James - 2012 & 2013



When Ben first entered the competition he was a team supervisor at Mr Apple NZ. Ben Says "I entered the competition because I wanted compare myself to my peers in the industry and I was encouraged to give it a go by my foreman at the time and others in the industry.

Since then I was promoted to a foreman's role within Mr Apple NZ." More recently Ben has moved to HNFC Management services (Rockit Apples) where he works as a foreman.

Graeme Hodges - 2014



Graeme entered the competition determined to win aged 29 in 2014. He says that he had to apply all of his experience throughout the competition. It was full on - the other guys really knew what they were doing so he had to put his best foot forward at every stage.

Graeme is employed as an orchard manager at Rutherglen Orchard, Havelock North and is responsible for running of the orchard and managing the staff. His goal is to achieve sustainably improved production and profits through being adaptable and innovative.

Andrew Kearney - 2015



Andrew, 26 at the time of the 2015 competition, works for T&G Pipfruit as a Senior Leading Hand. He entered the competition to test his experience gained throughout his career to date.

He said "*The other guys put up some real stiff competition and really knew what they were doing so I had to be on the front foot during every challenge. This competition is are a brilliant opportunity for any young grower in New Zealand to both test their skills and prove their capabilities to the industry. I*

would definitely recommend it to anyone serious about progressing their career in fruit growing."

Following the competition he would like to continue to be closely involved with the future growth and expansion of the industry through T & G.

Jordan James - 2016 & 2017



2016 Hawke's Bay's Young Fruit Grower of the Year Jordan James sees himself carving out a good career in the region's burgeoning apple industry.

"Apples are huge for Hawke's Bay," he says. "We're exporting to countries all around the world and that provides good job security. With corporates owning and managing orchards, there's also quite a career path in the industry. My next step is to become a foreman and there are 100 steps on the career ladder."

Working on Mr Apple's Close Orchard at Mangateretere, the 24-year-old got into orcharding by chance. He was working for a fast-food chain when a part-timer friend suggested he give it a try. That was 5½ years ago and Jordan has

never looked back.

As an apprentice, he's studying for the National Certificate in Horticulture (Advanced) (Fruit Production) (Level 4) through EIT. In fact, seven of the eight entrants who took part in the 2016 regional Young Fruit Grower competition were either studying or had completed their horticultural apprenticeships.