

2019 WINNER

Ellen Watt  
Central Otago Young Grower of the Year



“Horticulture is a great place to be as a young person. There are some amazing opportunities out there – such as the Young Grower of the Year competition. After winning at a regional level, I took part in the national competition, which was a fantastic experience that I would highly recommend to all younger growers. Horticulture is a great field to work in. The only thing you’ll regret is if you don’t give it a go.”

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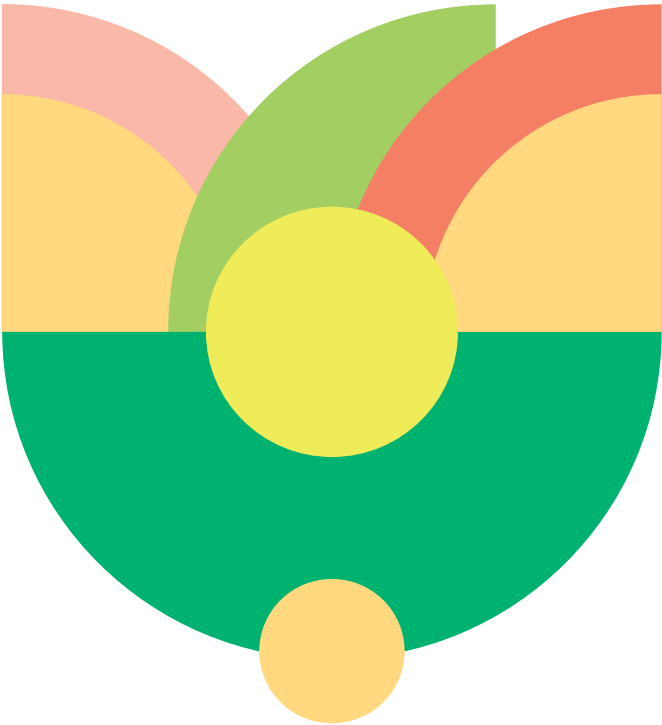
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Young Grower<sup>™</sup>  
of the year

CENTRAL OTAGO



2021 GALA DINNER

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MC ELLEN WATT

6.00pm	Pre-Dinner Drinks
6.30pm	Evening welcome and introduction Opening remarks: Alan Pollard Apples & Pears NZ; Kate Hellstrom, Summerfruit NZ; Barry O'Neil, President HortNZ
6.45pm	Quiz & Entrée
7.15pm	Speeches

Entrée

Roasted Butternut Soup  
OR Italian tomato and basil soup

Served with a warm soft roll

Mains

Traditional Lemon & Tarragon Roast Chicken  
cooked in Fresh Central Otago Herbs & Tuscan  
Seasoning

Prime Southland Ribeye with a Pinot Noir  
& Rosemary Jus served with a selection of  
Peppercorn, Mushroom & Blue Cheese Sauces

Roast Honey Maple & Mustard Glazed  
Ham Leg Served with Jus

Accompaniments

Herb Roasted Potatoes

Medley of Seasonal Roasted Vegetables

Minted Peas

Bacon, Broccoli, Raisin & Basil  
Pesto Pasta Salad  
OR Spinach, Feta & Potato Salad

Fresh Garden Salad

Condiments

8.00pm	Buffet Dinner
8.30pm	Guest speaker: Chanelle O'Sullivan/Borage & Bee Meadery
9.00pm	Dessert
9.30pm	Awards Presentation

Dessert

Sticky date pudding

Chocolate brownie

Accompanied by ice cream

Complimentary water, orange juice,  
tea and coffee

\*Please enquire about further  
options to cater to special dietary  
requirements



Megan Asher – Orchard: Webbs Fruit

Megan's previous role was in childcare. After discovering a passion for growing and propagating plants in her spare time, she moved to Cromwell to start a certificate in horticulture while working parttime on an orchard, which turned into a fulltime orchard role and she has not looked back. Megan has been involved in large scale cherry orchard developments and many aspects of growing from compliance, machinery, spraying and tree husbandry. She takes great pride in her work and is always trying to improve her skills. She recently joined Webbs Fruit to learn a greater diversity of crop types and challenge herself. She continues to study and enjoys hunting, fishing and playing the flute. This competition will get her out of her comfort zone and meet other young people in the industry.



Jordan Carrol – CentralPac

Jordan is the orchard manager and harvest manager at CentralPac. He has a degree in industrial design at Massey university. Jordan spent summer holidays at school and university working on orchards, but it was not until someone asked him what career he would pursue that he realized horticulture was the industry for him. He has worked his way through his career to date, from trainee to orchard manager and has done a cherry season in Canada. Jordan has entered the competition to push himself (as well as the chance) to meet other young leaders in the industry. Jordan says it is great to see more young people getting involved in events within the industry and it is a great chance to network. In his spare time, Jordan is heavily involved with the Alexandra United Football Club.



Adam Dewar – Fortune Fruit

Adam has been involved in orchard development and is the head sprayer at fortune Fruit. He is enthusiastic about growing and works with apricots and cherries. Prior to his horticulture career he worked in hospitality, bar tending and management but grew tired of the antisocial hours and loud music! Adam made the move from Dunedin to Cromwell and only wishes he had started his horticulture career sooner! He entered the competition with the encouragement from his employer and he is hoping to pick up some new skills and ideas on what elements of horticulture he would like to focus his studies on. Outside of work his latest interest is in DIY carpentry which he really enjoys in his free time.



Samantha Maaka – Fortune Fruit

Samantha is 19 years old, originally from the North Island. Samantha has been working at Fortune Fruit in Cromwell seasonally since the age of 12 and has gone from bird scaring to shifting bins to now looking after the irrigation during the season and pruning off season. She holds a phytosanitary certificate and is currently studying a certificate in fruit production. She is a hard worker and willing to learn. Her employer has seen the potential in her and has encouraged her to enter the competition to test her knowledge. Samantha enjoys art and loves the outdoors, she plays sport, mountain bikes and kayaks.



Tim Officer – Dunstan Hills

Tim started horticulture back in 2016, which feels like a lifetime ago now. He studied a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Otago and worked as an auditor in London until he decided to come home and started working at Dunstan Hills. In his role as orchard supervisor, he helped implement the health and safety system, supervised, pruned, did frost fighting, harvesting and anything orchard related. Tim completed his certificate in fruit production level 4. Currently he helps look after the cherry crop, manages the cherry harvest and co-ordinates their health and food safety responsibilities. He is entering the competition to get more involved in the industry and sees himself in the industry long term. He has the ambition to gain as many skills and knowledge as he can. Outside of work he enjoys anything to do with water.



Lyssa Jones – MA Orchards

Lyssa went to school in Timaru and university in Dunedin and studied Communication and Marketing. She worked at MA Orchard during her university holidays, helping with thinning, pruning and tree training. Lyssa enjoys working outside, the growing process and seeing how much work goes into the produce encouraged her to take a fulltime role at MA Orchard. Her role include H&S and compliance coordinator, monitoring and making sure audits are complete with necessary documentation as well as all harvest documentation. Her major achievement is having no non-conformances two years in a row for global gap. She sees this competition as a good way to test the skills she has learned and hopes to learn some new ones.

Skills - Communication, passion, problem solving, initiative. Qualifications - BA Majoring in communication, minor marketing, and level 4 certificate in horticulture



Christie Kirk – Hortinvest

Christie is an orchard foreman at Hortinvest and is currently working across multiple orchards. She is entering the Young Grower competition as an opportunity to grow her knowledge and get to know other keen young people in the industry. She grew up on an orchard and knew from a young age that this was the career path she wanted to pursue. Christie's greatest achievement so far is successfully managing the first cherry harvest at one of their orchards and hearing all the amazing feedback from their customers overseas. Her family is the driving force behind what they do at Hortinvest, and she is extremely grateful to be involved. Outside of orchard work she has an interest in growing plants at home and enjoys cooking.

Christie hunts a bit with her partner, loves tramping, camping, fishing and boating.