

# Protea grower aims at international market

## A Taranaki man sets an example

Maori land owner Grant Knuckey is determined to create employment opportunities for local Taranaki Maoris by utilising his land.

With the help of a Regional Development investigation and establishment grant his goal is well in sight.

His business — protea growing — was selected partly because it was labour intensive.

"I am not a horticulturalist," Grant freely admits. "But I knew that we had to find commercial ventures utilising our land to employ ourselves and build up an economic base."

Last year, Grant attended a business course in Wellington run by the Department of Maori Affairs. It was there he decided to begin to grow proteas for export — and he was also given information on what regional development assistance was available.

"The Regional Development grant of around \$9,000 was the best thing that has ever happened to me," Grant said.

"It meant I could start up a business at half price. The benefits are tremendous."

Grant expects that many other Maori land owners will follow his example over the next 12 months.

"We have a lot of land and people resources — it is just a matter of getting the two together," he said.

The first 300 proteas were planted in August last year.

"We will be gradually building up the number of plants," he said.

"By May this year we plan to have 6,000. If everything goes according to plan there should be 40,000 plants in the 4ha block by 1983."

By 1983 Grant also hopes to start exporting the flowers.

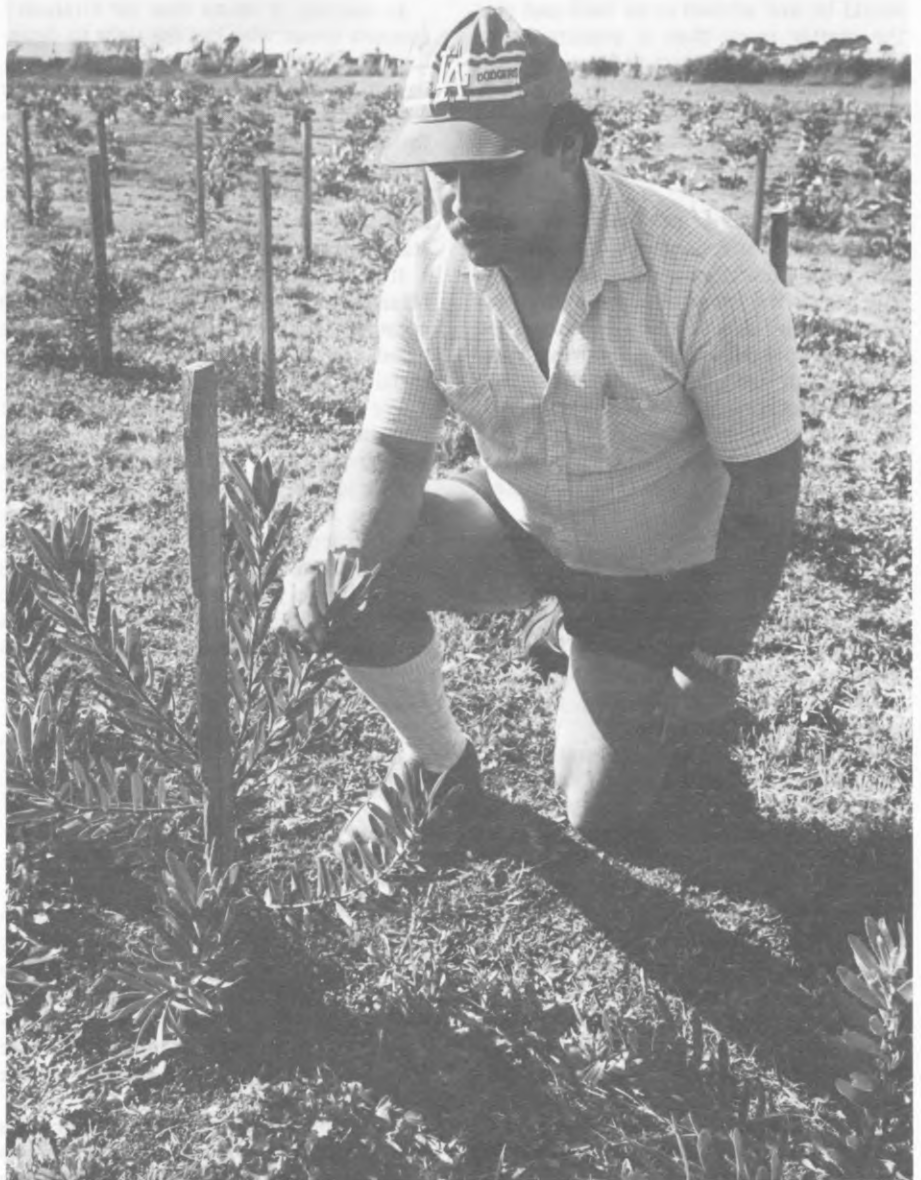
"There is really no local market for proteas, and at this stage we intend exporting 100 per cent. However, once production starts a local market may be developed."

They will be air freighted — probably to countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the USA.

"They have a vase life of 20 to 30 days, after that they can be used in a dried flower arrangement. Millions of dollars worth are being sold each year overseas," he said.

On a larger 24ha block of land — Grant is planning to plant 7.2ha in pine trees, and some of the remaining land will be used to grow citrus fruit and avocado.

"These projects will all be export-oriented," he said.



*Grant Knuckey with one of the protea bushes he grows on his Taranaki property. By 1983, he hopes to have 40,000 plants established on a four hectare block. He also plans to start exporting by 1983 to countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States.*