

Passionate about Berries.

Taurion Colquhoun is passionate about everything berries. He is an Assistant Berry Grower at Kaipaki Berries in Kaipaki, near Cambridge. The company produces 500 tonnes of strawberries and 70 tonnes of raspberries per year. Taurion is from Raupunga near Wairoa, in the Hawkes Bay and attended Wairoa College (2014-2018).

Taurion is currently responsible for growing the berries. He carries out numerous tasks to ensure high quality and yielding berries. These include,

- Watering and fertilizing plants
- Crop work team management
- Raspberry harvest team management
- Pest and disease management
- Record keeping and recording
- Irrigation maintenance



How did you get to where you are now?

I originally moved to Waikato to study a Bachelor of Management Studies at the University of Waikato. Coming from a secluded rural area, I was drawn to city life and the better opportunities it offered. My first introduction to horticulture came through a summer job on a kiwifruit orchard, where I worked on tasks such as clipping, pruning, and thinning. This sparked my passion for horticulture, and I found great satisfaction in working with plants and watching them grow as the season progressed. The following summer, I moved into strawberry picking. Naturally, being a competitive person, I raced to be the top picker each day. My performance led to a promotion as a supervisor, which taught me to cope under pressure and lead teams of people much older than me. I grew more confident, always striving to improve in every role I took on. The next season, I moved on to supervise our dispatch team, handling quality checks, organizing transportation, and helping train the next team of supervisors. My success in that role led to an opportunity to learn the growing side of the business. Since then, I've managed teams, operated water systems, and implemented Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to help the business grow and produce high-quality berries.

What other qualifications do you have and where did you get them from?

- Certified Handler (Growsafe)
- NCEA level 3

What do you enjoy about the job, the business, or the industry?

In my role, I get to apply the knowledge I have gained in school and university. For example, I calculate work efficiencies, task times, and use chemistry-based knowledge to optimize fertilizer mixes. I enjoy applying this knowledge to real-world situations. I also appreciate working outdoors, as it is refreshing compared to the typical office setting. Seeing the full process of berries transforming from flower to fruit, and then being sent to market, is particularly rewarding. On several occasions, I have walked through a Woolworths



store and seen customers filling their trolleys with punnets of our branded strawberries. It is a great feeling to know the work I do brings joy to people and families.

Another highlight of the job has been visiting horticulture businesses across New Zealand and Australia. Observing how other growers operate has allowed me to identify areas for improvement and build collaborative relationships.

The opportunities in this industry are vast. Throughout my career, I have found that new roles are consistently available within the business. Recently, I was selected for the Horticulture New Zealand Leadership Programme, where I networked with other growers and industry leaders. The experience was invaluable, providing me with new leadership skills and the chance to meet influential figures, including ministers.

These experiences combine to make my work enjoyable and keep me motivated to make a positive impact on the industry.

Where do you want to go or progress in the future?

Looking ahead, I plan to compete in the Young Grower of the Year competition. Even attempting it would be a significant career milestone for me, as achievement is a major motivator in my life. I am focused on pushing the boundaries of strawberry production in New Zealand, aiming for over 1.8 kg per plant. If I can contribute to that achievement, I will feel proud of my progress.

In the longer term, I aspire to take on a larger operational management role, like head grower, and eventually contribute to industry governance as a director. My goal is to leave a meaningful, positive impact on horticulture as a whole.

Finally, I hope to be considered for one of the HorticultureNZ industry awards. If that happens, it would be the culmination of a fulfilling career. I don't take these ambitions lightly, and I understand that achieving them will require a deep commitment to a long and dedicated career.

