

Meadows farm flowers

DIVERSITY is the key to success at Gooseberry Hill Farm, Meadows.

Gooseberry Hill specialises in growing flowers, potted herbs, vegetable seedlings and a range of fruiting plants.

The property has been in the Page family for 35 years, and there are now three generations working the land - Geoff Page and his partner Karen Parry, Geoff's parents Milton and Jean, and his daughter Peta all play an active role in production.

"The property is 40 hectares," Karen said. "A large portion of it is used for sheep grazing and hay production, but several hectares are used for flower production and the nursery for our certified organic herbs and vegie seedlings."

A vast quantity of flowers can fit into a few hectares!

"We worked out the other day that we have more than 100 varieties of flowers," Karen said.

They include daffodils, jonquils, irises, freesias, Christmas and Pineapple lilies, ranunculus, callas and belladonnas, and bulbs when the plants are dormant. There are also cut flowers such as sunflowers, alstroemeria and

gomprena, and always a plentiful supply of proteas in the winter months.

"The soil type varies from mid-range loam to quite sandy areas, so it is suitable for a wide range of plant types - that's a big plus for us," Karen said.

They also make use of mushroom compost, and have drip irrigation available.

The organically-certified herbs are hand-watered using only rain water, and varieties include a range of mints, thymes, parsleys and basils, oregano, rosemary, dill, lemon grass, sage and horse-radish.

Vegetable seedlings vary, but according to the season, customers will find tomatoes, cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, broccoli, eggplant, zucchini, pumpkins, peas and beans, and there is also a range of fruiting plants such as rhubarb, currants, elderberry and cape gooseberries.

"We always have quite a range to take to the farmers' markets," Karen said.

"Geoff and I are both keen on direct selling. Our customers know they are getting the freshest possible product, and the markets family atmosphere.

"In spring we also take produce to some of the country shows and expos.

"The personal contact we establish through these marketing areas means that many of our customers become our friends.

"There couldn't be a better environment."

• **Need to know more?**
Gooseberry Hill Farm
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The attractive Gooseberry Hill flower display make Karen Parry's stall a 'must' for market visitors.

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