

Books to go!

Gap in market sees distributorship flourish

TUCKED into a tranquil valley on the Taihape Road is the last thing you would expect to find – a large and successful book distributor.

But, for nearly 20 years, Peter and Diane Arthur have sold and sent books throughout the world from the idyllic spot.

Peter's family have owned and farmed the 240ha property since the late 1800s, but during the past 10 years the couple have leased the farm so they can concentrate their business, Touchwood Books, The Growers Bookshop.

You could say Peter's interest in selling books, and transition from farming, grew from a small acorn – well, a farm tree actually.

He had always been an enthusiastic grower and became involved with a group from the Farm Forestry Association, who were looking for the ideal farm tree. It had to be one that grew straight, on its own in the paddock, put up with wind and drought, have good timber, was preferably deciduous and preferably nitrogen fixing. In other words, the perfect tree.

It was while on this journey of discovery



Touchwood Books has more than 20,000 books in stock.

that Peter's interest was piqued, along with the fact he could see a gap in the market where specialist books were needed.

So from starting the business literally on the kitchen table, to moving into an old garage, Peter and Diane expanded by building new premises two years ago.

Touchwood Books is now well-established and specialises in books about gardening, farming, horticulture and trees – in fact, anything that grows and relates to growing, but interestingly not pets.

"The pet shops generally carry a good range of books about them," Peter says.



Peter and Di Arthur, owners of Touchwood Books.



The set-up on the farm for the book outlet

Reading needs met

They sell either new or second-hand books by mail order or on the internet and have around 20,000 in stock.

Peter and Diane also attend many gardening shows throughout the year, including the Commercial Horticulture Trade Day, Central Districts Farm Fieldays, IPPS Conference, Mystery Creek Farm Fieldays at Hamilton and the all-important Ellerslie Flower Show, plus lots of other smaller shows.

Peter loves to spend hours on the database sourcing books, meeting people at shows, getting out in his garden and forever planting new trees. Diane writes book reviews for the many fliers sent out during the year and she is also a keen gardener, with a special interest in old roses.

Touchwood Books, The Growers Bookshop is truly what it's all about. If you ever need a book on anything that grows, this is the place to go and, if they don't have it, they will find it. To contact Peter or Diane phone 874 2872, e-mail mail@touchwoodbooks.co.nz or go to the website touchwoodbooks.co.nz



Diane hard at work at her desk.