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## Nuts Having a Field Day

by Sandy Myhre (*Northern Farming Lifestyles*)

*The Macadamia Society is keen to establish a national standard of growing and care to a certifiable level because overseas markets, in particular, demand it.*



**Duncan and Bev Worthington**

Despite being Australian, the macadamia is considered a most aristocratic of nut; small, sweet and sensitive.

Actually, the nut is only sensitive before drying but as any macadamia aficionado will tell you it's the delicious, delicate, taste that gives this nut its blue-blood quality.

And despite being so patrician, macadamias are not what could be called high-maintenance. Indeed, they are an ideal crop for small block holders or life-stylers because growing them is relatively easy care.

They need little investment in machinery or equipment, lambs can be grazed under the trees and, most importantly, macadamias can be quite profitable. It was for all these reasons that Duncan and Bev Worthington decided to enter the macadamia-growing industry.

Although they lived in Ruawai at the time they had a plot of land, more a small farm than a lifestyle block, in Kara, just outside Whangarei, and from there began growing the little product 20 years ago.

"We were both working full-time then and decided we could cope with a macadamia orchard on the property in Kara so we just went to a nursery and bought about one hundred trees and started from there," says Duncan pragmatically.

Now they have 800 trees. Of those there are about 150 which are fully productive at the moment while the rest will come literally to fruition next season — making the supposedly-retired Worthingtons busier than ever.

When they started the venture there was a co-operative of macadamia orchardists in existence but by the time the Worthingtons had established their orchard the co-operative had folded. There was one processor only, based in Helensville.



**Small, sweet and sensitive**

Today there are two processors and a multitude of what Duncan calls 'boutique' processors, those orchardists who process the nuts themselves in typical Kiwi DIY fashion. Moreover, there is now a fully-fledged New Zealand Macadamia Society — of which the Worthingtons are members.

Duncan says the society is keen to establish a national standard of macadamia growing and care to a certifiable level because overseas markets, in particular, demand it.

"The Asians, for instance, would like to have a large and regular supply of macadamias and they would require an identifiable standard from that supply source."

As Bev Worthington points out, at the moment customers, consumers, members of the public, don't know how the nuts have been grown or how well they have been treated or handled.

"There is no guarantee, for example, that the nuts haven't come into contact with animal waste, she says.

"A standards quality will remove that doubt."

In August and October The New Zealand Macadamia Society will be running what are essentially workshops for prospective and current growers and those wishing to revitalise a run-down orchard.

The first workshop will be held on Sunday 29th, August 2010 at M. Goettler's property, 326E Patamahoe Road, Pukekohe. Phone: Ross on 09 233 4152.

A second workshop will be held on Saturday 2nd, October at the Worthington property, Kara, Whangarei. For more information contact Duncan or Bev, 09 434 7255. Email: [bdworthington@xtra.co.nz](mailto:bdworthington@xtra.co.nz).