

Sharing love of plants

Each week you tell us about what you do. Girlboss stories will also appear online on NZME's new career hub, www.yudu.co.nz, where you will find more career inspiration, news, advice and job search tools

Name: Lara Bui (Weston)
Job title: Business owner
Company: Cool Plants
How long worked here: Nearly two years

What does your job involve?

Growing, buying and selling cool indoor plants for home and work. Empowering my customers with knowledge and support on how to get the best from their greenery.

Why and how did you get into this profession?

Not being able to have kids was the main reason I started Cool Plants. My husband and I found gardening and growing plants very healing after unsuccessful rounds of IVF treatment. A passion for gardening developed and people started asking for our services for landscaping and also interior plant styling. Gardening is something I would not do without now. We get to grow life in a different way.

What's the best part about your job?

Much of my business is driven by return customers. It's so cool to see ex-plant killers become true plant lovers and carers! I really enjoy sharing my love for plants with others.

What's the most challenging aspect of your role?

Being able to source plants and be competitive in a growing market. As a small business, I don't have the purchasing power of the large garden centres but I genuinely try to add value through personalised service and ongoing advice.

What's your proudest work moment?

I won a competition to have a brand video created by Vanessa at Indigo Moon Photo



Lara Bui, owner of Cool Plants in Tauranga. PHOTO/JAY DREW PHOTOGRAPHY

and Video. I was blown away by Vanessa's beautiful videography and the amazing feedback my customers gave about Cool Plants. Often when you're working for yourself you can be plagued with self doubt. That video showed me that I am making a difference and doing a good thing.

What training/experience have you had to prepare for your role?

I have always been interested in gardening and landscaping, and I worked at a local tree nursery for two years. I have a Level 2

certificate in horticulture and did a course on creating food forests with the Koanga Institute. I also have trained in botanical distilling and make my own essential oils and hydrosols.

What's the best piece of career advice you've received?

Be kind. I have no idea what sort of day someone has had when I meet them so I try and approach my customers with kindness. That way you create a better connection with the person, and you can both relax and enjoy the experience.

What's the most important thing your current role has taught you?

To not underestimate the difference plants can make in someone's life. So many of my customers are looking to make positive changes in their lives. Plants add life to our homes and workspaces, and they make us feel better, cleanse the air and look great.

Describe your work wardrobe?

If I'm potting or gardening, it's a stunning ensemble of old clothes and a sunhat, but I make more of an effort when meeting customers of course. Clients can visit my showroom at home by appointment, but there have been quite a few times when people have turned up unannounced. I can look quite "organic" when I answer the door!

Anything else?

Something I have found fantastic is the level of support for women by other women in small business in the Bay. I am in awe of all the switched-on women creating businesses from their interest or passion. There is support on social media, by word-of-mouth and through collaborations. There is a general feeling of lifting each other up rather than competing. It's very cool.