

The Life Cycle of Russell Parrish

1952 February

Committed every last pound in my bank account to the purchase of a home. In return, I got a 25-year mortgage, a modest bungalow on an old quarry site and a 6-month postponement of my wedding while Mary and I slaved to save one hundred pounds to buy furniture.



1952 November

Moved in on our wedding day and set about supplementing the scraggy Prunus and Oak sapling we had inherited. One of the plants we bought was a grapefruit tree.

1979 Introduced by Ross King to the weird world of Mesclun. Those were the days when, to mention the word inevitably evoked the response "What's Mesclun?"

1999 Intrigued by the news that someone had bought the business and moved it to Katikati. Sounded a bit bizarre and needed investigating. Wound my way up Wharawhara Road and through a nondescript farm gate to be greeted by Gerard Martin. Loved his view – not so sure about the isolation.

Over the years I struggled with the basic mesclun problem of one or two of the components outgrowing and suppressing the rest. Barbara and Gerard cheerfully endured my regular phone calls seeking a solution. Gerard even concocted a mix specially for me. The best I have ever had. Next season, unfortunately, he couldn't remember what he'd put in it!

2011 While browsing the seed rack in my local plant shop spotted a new one – Mesclun Winter Greens and decided to give it a go. Really, really liked the varieties but frustrated by near total dominance of one or other at each sowing. Back to harassing the Martins to supply me the constituents individually. Eureka! Mesclun problem solved – grow everything separately.

2015 Late life crisis. The faithful old grapefruit tree in danger of succumbing to lemon borer. Its owners ordered by their doctor to set in place plans to go into Age Care if the need arose. By coincidence, we were given grapefruit from a couple of outside sources. They were not a patch on the quality of fruit from our tree. To use Land Agent speak, our bit of quarry had now become a *sought-after, Inner City, DGZ site*, and a prime target for intense development. Against those values an outstanding grapefruit wouldn't stand a chance. Old Faithful must be rescued. What to do? First off, get expert advice. Sent a grapefruit to Copperfield Nurseries. Grant Tennet confirmed the quality and offered to propagate a few trees for us.

2018 Received word that our trees were ready to pick up in Tauranga. I now faced the problem of where to place them to assure a long life where their quality would be appreciated. Bingo! Impose once more on the long-suffering Martin's and ask them to add one to their fruit tree collection in the grounds of their distribution facility. Ever helpful, Barbara readily agreed to foster the first of Old Faithful's offspring. When you visit, have a word with it. I'm convinced trees respond well to verbal encouragement.

