



IN GOOD COMPANY

## A new leaf

WORDS Leigh Harris PHOTO Cassandra Kovacs

**K**im Odering is back. After 16 years out of the public eye, the woman who was the face of one of Christchurch's most prominent horticultural dynasties, the Oderings, has launched a landscape design business.

KO&Co, the brainchild of Kim and her husband, Zhenya Evgenov (Eugene), enables Kim to again share her enviable horticultural knowledge with the city's homeowners and gardeners.

It was front-page news in 2002 when word got out that Kim had decided to cash in her shares in the family business. Then, as today, the company was New Zealand's largest family-owned garden-centre chain. It had its own weekly TV show, *Oderings Homes and Gardens*. For six years, Kim, one of five siblings, presented weekly advice segments on everything from potting mixes, to lemon tree varieties, from planting roses and choosing gardening tools. Whenever Oderings profiled its 'Plant of the Week', despite careful planning to boost stock levels, it was almost guaranteed to sell out within a few days.

Gardening courses strongly through Kim's veins. Her grandfather, Ray, was a builder by trade who, along with her great-grandfather, Alf, had to lay down his tools during the Depression. Ray turned to growing flowers, which proved to be much in demand with the number of soldiers getting married before heading off to World War 2. Meanwhile, Alf was growing large volumes of vegetables that were distributed free to the local community.

However, it was Kim's father, Donald, who proved to be the entrepreneur of the family when

he combined the family's nursery operation with retail – the first time this had been done in New Zealand on a major scale.

Kim says she left Oderings because she needed time out and wanted to try some different things. As well, she had three children aged 12, 11 and 8. In the intervening years, she has remarried and had a fourth child.

'I've never lost my love of plants,' says Kim. 'Engaging with clients in my new business has also reminded me how much I love the educational aspect.'

'Anyone can buy a plant, but not everyone can keep it growing, let alone flourishing. When I work with my customers I'm constantly teaching them about ongoing care.'

Many of Kim's clients commission her simply to design their garden and specify the plants, while others want KO&Co also to project-manage everything from planting to hard-landscaping, which is Eugene's department.

'It's been fantastic to be able to work together,' says Eugene. 'Kim's knowledge of plants is unsurpassed and there's no questioning her passion for what she does. Our clients really pick up on this and they quickly relax and trust her to do what's best for their garden.'

'Yes,' reflects Kim. 'A garden needs to reflect the personal tastes of its owner.'

She is there to help that happen. 'There are just so many wonderful plants to choose from, all with amazingly different colours and textures that can be placed in infinite combinations.'

Yes, the human face of Oderings is back and ready for action.