New era of discovery

Linnaeus was established to offer a gene pool management service to the New Zealand grape growing industry with the long-term vision of being a plant material certification service for the horticultural industry.

Such a service was seen as critical to addressing the ongoing vine health issues facing the industry. The aim is to develop accreditation procedures that guarantee clients receive certified, true-to-type, disease-free stock of the highest possible health.

Its mission is to be a world-class source of superior quality, high health viticultural genetic plant material within three years.

Linnaeus is currently sourcing and selling budwood and rootstock plant materials that are 100% Elisa-tested for GVLR 1 and 3.

An ELISA laboratory has been established and over the next year, the aim is to establish cloning selection and improvement services for wine companies, nurseries and other interested parties.

This will involve the establishment of a Level 3 Quarantine greenhouse facility with an attached Level 3 Quarantine diagnostic laboratory with diagnostic scientists on staff.

General manager Craig Sinclair says these facilities will enable Linnaeus to provide its clients, including Riversun, with premium certified high health source plants. Linnaeus will also offer a range of associated services including disease testing and virus elimination, importation through a Level 3 quarantine facility, rapid propagation, research and development plus certification and accreditation.

The vision is long-term and involves carrying out extensive research and development into issues affecting the New Zealand viticultural industry.

New Zealand’s trump card in wine production is quality, he says. To stay at the top of the quality scale, it’s important to source and supply superior quality wine material. That’s what Linnaeus is all about.

What’s in a name?

Little more than a stone’s throw from Riversun’s Awarapu Road complex in Gisborne, Captain James Cook made his first foray onto New Zealand soil. The scientific team that accompanied him on his Endeavour voyage in 1769 included Banks, Solander and Parkinson plus Tahitian navigator and interpreter Tupaea. Riversun is sited on the corner of Banks Street. At its rear are Solander, Parkinson and Tupaea streets.

As Cook journeyed into uncharted territories, Banks and Solander were classifying plants and animals into groups using a system developed by Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), who produced the binomial system of classification.

Linnaeus’ system gave a straightforward means of sorting plant and animal life into species and genera. Although much modified, his hierarchical classification and binomial nomenclature have remained standard for over 200 years.

During the Endeavour voyage from 1768 to 1771, Banks and Solander collected 3607 different species of which 1400 were new to science. When they returned to Europe, Linnaeus described the collection as “a matchless and truly astonishing collection such as has never been seen before, nor may never be seen again.”

As his concepts were modified and as more and more plant and animal specimens were sent to him from every corner of the globe, Linnaeus continued to revise his Systema Naturae, which grew from a slim pamphlet to a multivolume work.

One of the 7700 plant species he classified was Vitis vinifera L., the fructing grape vine and mother vine of sub-species including chardonnay, sauvignon and cabernet.

Just as Linnaeus sought to construct a natural classification system that would reveal the divine order of God’s creation in the universe, so too does Linnaeus seek to accurately quantify the existing NZ grapevine gene pool.

The Linnaeus name is in a sense carrying on the tradition — order out of chaos.