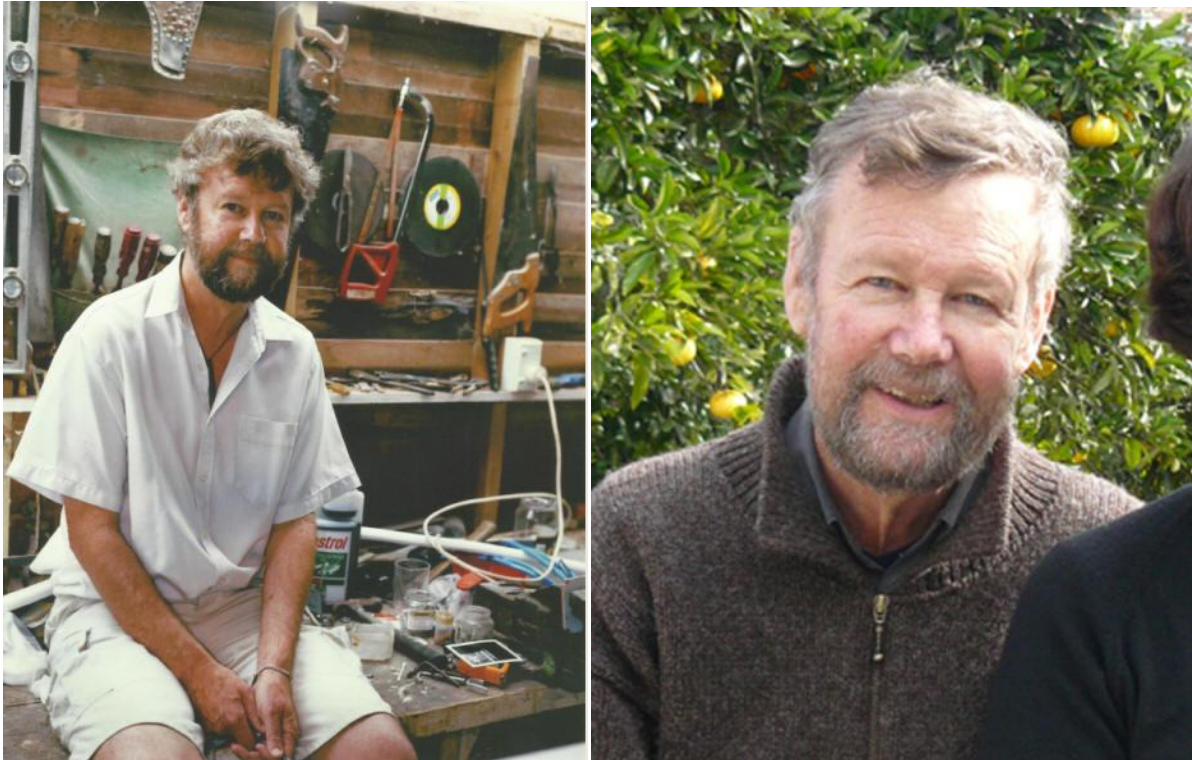


## John M. Young

1942-2013



Plant bacteriologists and bacterial systematists who knew John Young, either personally or by reputation, will be saddened by the news of his death on 30th September 2013 at his home in Auckland, New Zealand.

John MacBean Young was born on 9 January 1942 and began his scientific career at the Plant Diseases Division (PDD) of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), New Zealand after completing an MSc at the University of Canterbury. He took time away from his post to pursue further study and was awarded a PhD by the Department of Agriculture, University of Aberdeen, Scotland on 25 October, 1972. His thesis, entitled “Phytopathogenic Interactions of Selected *Pseudomonas* Species with *Phaseolus Vulgaris L*”, marked the beginning of his fascination and life-long study into plant pathogenic bacteria, an interest that he would maintain and develop throughout the 40 years of his professional life.

On completion of his studies and his return to New Zealand, John took over responsibility for PDD’s culture collection, a world renowned resource that has since evolved into today’s International Collection of Microorganisms from Plants (ICMP) culture collection (<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/collections/icmp>). He also began a fruitful collaboration with Doug Dye, a relationship that shaped many of his thoughts and subsequent work into the systematics of plant pathogenic bacteria. In his early career, John became engaged in the debate leading up to the publication of the Bacteriological Code in 1975 and the subsequent publication of the Approved List of Bacterial Names in 1980. The impact of these events sent shockwaves through the field of phytobacteriology because the

names of many pathogens, particularly those belonging to the genera *Pseudomonas* and *Xanthomonas*, ceased to be recognized as a result. The solution, devised jointly by John and Doug, was to generate a system of nomenclature for pathogens at the infrasubspecific level, the 'pathovar system', which John subsequently presented on at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Plant Pathogenic Bacteria, Angers, France in 1978 (Young *et al.*, 1978a & b). It's hard to comprehend now, but at the time this naming standard was met with much hostility. However, with the passing of time it has become the established system for naming these significant, yet taxonomically difficult to differentiate organisms.

Much of John's career can be viewed through the prism of his involvement with the International Society of Plant Pathology's Committee on Taxonomy of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria. He was elected onto the committee in 1983 and retired from it in June 2008. John astutely led the committee for 25 years as its convener and was the driving force behind much of its work; most notably the publication of the first comprehensive list of names for bacterial plant pathogens (Young *et al.*, 1996). Possibly as a consequence of his location, more probably as a result of his enthusiasm for his science, John was a great correspondent with colleagues across the globe. He was widely read and took a great interest in history and politics, frequently mixing discussions on the validity of pathogen names with the justification, or lack thereof, for the various World conflicts raging at the time.

John was a strong proponent of the study of phytopathogens, taking time with less experienced colleagues to explain the intricacies of their nomenclature (Young, 2008). He never shied away from controversy and was the driving force behind the taxonomic revision of the genera *Agrobacterium/Rhizobium* (Young *et al.*, 2001). The public debate concerning his approach to this intractable problem raged throughout much of the subsequent decade. Those who knew John well will know that he revelled in this type of debate; it injected him with an enthusiasm and excitement that was invigorating to witness though also, at the same time, slightly unnerving! Although in many respects the heat has gone out of this particular issue, John would have taken much delight in research that remains to be done and the continuing debate.

John worked at DSIR, latterly Landcare Research after the establishment of the Crown Research Institutes in New Zealand, for his entire working life. He remained active even in 'retirement' and maintained a lively interest in bacterial diseases of plants, particularly bacterial canker of kiwifruit caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae*.

John was a man of great inner strength and determination and underwent a lung transplant in 2003. This operation gave him a new lease on life that he embraced with his characteristic enthusiasm, continuing to work on until 2012. Sadly he developed neurological problems and he died peacefully at his home in Auckland surrounded by his family. Ever the scientist, his body went to the Auckland Medical School for further research!

John is survived by his partner Philippa and their children, Eloise and Nick. The Committee on the Taxonomy of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria would like to extend their deepest sympathies to John's family. He was a great and true colleague, and he will be sadly missed.

Prepared by the International Society of Plant Pathology Committee on the Taxonomy of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria (ISPP-CTPPB) ; Carolee T. Bull, Teresa A. Coutinho, Timothy P. Denny,

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