

Award of Associate of Honour of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (AHRIH)

Murray Ian Dawson



Keith Hammett, President of the RNZIH (left) presenting Murray with his AHRIH award certificate. Photo: Penny Cliffin.

Murray Dawson began his science career as a Technical Trainee at the former DSIR Botany Division, based at Lincoln, from 1981. During his traineeship he studied for a NZ Certificate in Science while also gaining a wide range of experience in botany, working in the herbarium and in the pollen, wood anatomy and cytology labs. Plant chromosome studies (cytotaxonomy) became one of his main areas of expertise.

For several of those early years, Murray also had regular field trips in the Crow Valley of Arthur's Pass, in all weather conditions, to gather data for the late Dr Peter Wardle's timberline studies. This field work formed the basis of his life-long interest in hiking.

Murray continued his career at Lincoln following the disestablishment of the DSIR and the creation of Landcare Research (one of New Zealand's Crown Research Institute's) since its inception in 1991 to the present time. His long institutional knowledge provides many perspectives on the changing nature of science delivery and workplace cultures in New Zealand. In recent years he has developed smartphone identification apps, which have resulted in interviews on Radio New Zealand.

In 1995 Murray took study leave to undertake an MSc (in Pure and Applied Plant and Fungal Taxonomy) at the University of Reading in the UK. University life proved to be a rich and rewarding experience for Murray, relatively late in his career. His thesis was on species, hybrids and cultivars of *Leptospermum*, a subject which was furthered by a D.D. Baker Award he received through the RNZIH.

Murray joined the RNZIH in July 1996. Following the introduction of the RNZIH website, Murray approached the National Executive expressing interest in redeveloping the site and expanding its content. The new website was launched in October 2000 and Murray was duly appointed Webmaster. He was also co-opted onto the National Executive, positions he still holds today. In recognition of his development of our website and other contributions, Murray was awarded a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Horticulture (FRIH) in 2002.

Murray took a lead role, with Canterbury Branch's three David's – Given, Moyle, and Shillito, organising the October 2003 "Greening the City: Bringing Biodiversity Back into the Urban Environment" conference. This conference was highly successful, and was held in the Chateau on the Park, Christchurch, so it is fitting that he received the AHRIH award at the same venue.

When Jayson Kelly of Dunedin championed the creation of the NZ Gardens Trust (formed in March 2003), Murray worked with Jayson to develop the technical specifications of the new database-driven website, which still delivers listings of gardens open to the public. During the early establishment of the NZGT, Murray also acted as their Webmaster.

In 2005, Murray took on the role of principal editor of the *New Zealand Garden Journal* (Journal of the RNZIH). Murray is a strong believer of community outreach and science communication, and has written many horticultural and applied botany articles for our journal, which Andrew Maloy co-edits. Murray also produces our Newsletter and has a voluntary administration role since our paid Administration Officer left in 2011.

Murray has led or facilitated several successful funding applications for RNZIH projects, including those which enabled publication of conference proceedings (2003), relaunching of the Notable Trees Database (2008), creating the Plant Collections Register (2011), and digitising the Duncan & Davies Nursery Catalogue Collection (2012–2014).

In addition to his many contributions to the RNZIH, Murray is also Webmaster for the New Zealand Botanical Society (a site he created in 2009; www.nzbotanicalsociety.org.nz) and the Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens (created by him in 2012; www.friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz).

In 2013, Murray was appointed Registrar of New Zealand native genera for the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA).

In 2015, he was awarded the NZ Biosecurity Institute Peter Ingram Memorial Award for pest plant advocacy and education.

His longstanding and dedicated contributions in applied botany and horticulture, and his outstanding contributions to the RNZIH demonstrate that Murray Dawson is a most worthy recipient of the Associate of Honour of the RNZIH.

**Citation prepared by
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