

Obituary

David Haig Pufflett

7 April 1952 – 2 November 2012



David Pufflett. Photo: Skills Update Training Institute.

David Pufflett, 'Puff' to his many friends, passed away suddenly at home during the evening of Friday 2 November, with his wife Lyn by his side.

David made a huge contribution to horticulture over his career, especially to horticultural education and in latter years to the Young Horticulturist of the Year competition managed by the RNZIH Education Trust.

He combined his practical experience as a grower with a strong educational background that included a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from Massey University in the early 1970s.

His many achievements in the field of horticulture and education included building up the School of Horticulture at Manukau Polytechnic (now Manukau Institute of Technology, MIT) and close involvement in the establishment and running of the Young Horticulturist of the Year. This competition has proven most successful and runs on a similar basis to the Young Farmer of the Year.

Around 1980 Dave was appointed Agricultural Training Officer (ATO) with Auckland Federated Farmers for the upper North Island and based in Auckland. His role was to support regional Horticultural Cadet Schemes which guided and helped train young people in the industry. In the late 1980s, following disestablishment of the Agricultural Training Council, David took on the role at MIT where he remained for almost 20 years with many hundreds of students passing through the department.

During his time there he set up the horticulture school from scratch and

created a successful horticultural training unit with very good facilities and a reputation for producing quality graduates. He was an active participant and leading light in the Primary Industry Polytechnic Teachers Association (PIPTA) which is still active.

In 2003 Dave became one of the founding members of the RNZIH Education Trust, set up by the Institute to provide input to the Horticultural Industry Training Organisation. In early 2004 David resigned as a board member and accepted a full time role working for the Trust, moderating horticultural training throughout the country for the Horticultural Industry Training Organisation. At the time David mentioned he wanted a new challenge and to do something to advance the careers of young horticulturists, and especially to help retain them in the industry.

More recently David has worked independently in his own company, Horticulture Training Solutions, still training emerging horticulturists. Over the past four years (2009–2012), David was involved with Skills Update Training Institute (SUTI), a large New Zealand private training establishment based at first in Mangere and more lately in Papakura. There he had a number of roles including training facilitator, consultant, programme and curriculum developer, course writer, advisory board member and moderator. His extensive knowledge of both the horticulture industry and how the education system works was invaluable in supporting SUTI to become the largest horticulture education provider in the country.

One of David's latest projects was to develop a Skills Update Diploma in Horticulture which has been approved by NZQA and he was in the process of developing the individual courses for this diploma when he suddenly passed away.

Another of David's main achievements in recent years has been with the Young Horticulturist of the Year competition which was

first held in 2005. David was one of the innovators of this national competition which culminates each year in a grand final. In these finals, the winners of up to eight sector competitions compete for tens of thousands of dollars worth of personal development-focussed prizes. The aim of the competition is to develop leadership in the horticultural industry, a passion of David's and indicative of his dedication to developing the knowledge and skills of others.

One of David's main roles in the competition was preparing the practical sessions and this involved him approaching his many contacts in the industry and persuading them to help in one way or another. David's huge network of industry contacts is the stuff of legend – if something needed to be done David knew someone who could get it sorted.

From a young age David was strongly community minded and in his latter years he was very active in the community affairs of Patumahoe where the family lived, near Pukekohe. He was coordinator of Whakaupoko Landcare who recently developed a new walkway 'Te Ara O Whangamaire' near Patumahoe village. He was also an active member of Patumahoe Village Incorporated.

David was a keen tennis player and had been an ardent supporter of Patumahoe Tennis Club for the past twenty years. Three of his five children, Tracey, Aimee and Sam all represented the club at interclub level. Dave served as vice president and as sponsorship coordinator for the club over the past few years.

David has left a lasting legacy to horticulture in this country and along the way influenced the careers of hundreds of people. David's ready smile and positive attitude, generosity, humility and sincerity will be sorely missed, and his dedication to his students and contribution to the New Zealand horticulture industry will long be remembered.

Obituary compiled by Jack Hobbs and Andrew Maloy.