

# 2014 Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Awards

## Award in Garden History

### Dr Michael David Wilcox



When one reads of Mike's associateships, honorary positions, memberships and accumulated accolades throughout his career it becomes apparent that Mike is a great 'man of the trees' – an arboreal taonga.

Mike's authorship of *Auckland's remarkable urban forest* (2012)<sup>1</sup> was the culmination of more than 20 years of dedicated research, involving seemingly endless visits to public parks, domains and open spaces throughout Auckland.

The resulting publication of his book by the Auckland Botanical Society celebrates the diversity and history of Auckland's native and exotic tree stock. It brings a sharp focus on the need to recognise and preserve our urban trees and to value their aesthetic and ecological values.

Mike had a long career with the New Zealand Forest Research Institute (now Scion, formerly the Ministry of Forestry and the NZ Forest Service) then as a forestry consultant researching timber species and applications for their timber products. His research took him around the world where he was able to see a wide range of tree species and he took a special interest in *Eucalyptus* and *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. Can there be a greater accolade than Australian botanists naming a previously unrecognised eucalypt after a New Zealander – *Eucalyptus wilcoxii*?

New Zealand has a strong track record of producing great foresters – S.W. ('Bob') Burstall being amongst the most well known. Perhaps what distinguishes Mike is his connection with urban trees and his ability to tell their stories and histories in meaningful ways.

*Auckland's remarkable urban forest* has rapidly become the benchmark reference for trees in urban environments for public administrators, garden historians, researchers and students of arboriculture but with the added ability to be an accessible read for anyone with an interest in Auckland's, and indeed New Zealand's, undervalued urban tree estate.

It is with pleasure that the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture presents Dr Mike Wilcox with the 2014 Garden History Award.

**Citation prepared by David Sole and Murray Dawson**

<sup>1</sup> Reviewed in *The New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 34–35.

## Plant Raisers' Award

### Vance James Hooper



Vance Hooper (RHS) being presented the Plant Raisers' Award by RNZIH President Dr Keith Hammett (LHS). Photo: Morten Damsted.

In past years the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture has acknowledged several *Magnolia* breeders. Vance Hooper is another outstanding *Magnolia* breeder in this esteemed lineage<sup>1</sup>.

Vance began his apprenticeship with Duncan and Davies nursery on 14th May 1979 and from 1987 to 1994 worked under Jim Rumbal's

guidance<sup>2</sup> in the Research and Development department. It was here, despite the tedium of mass production, that Vance gained his passion for magnolia hybrids – with more than 500 selections being trialled. In *Commercial Horticulture* magazine (Dec/Jan 2014, p. 37) Vance was quoted as saying of magnolias "They brighten winter. That's what first captivated me about them". Few would argue.

<sup>1</sup> Previous Plant Raisers' Award recipients who have been recognised for their breeding of magnolias include Ian Baldick (*New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 28), Peter Cave (*New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2009, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 25), Mark Jury (*New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2007, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 21–22) and his father Felix Jury (*Horticulture in NZ*, 1984, Vol. 32, p. 5).

<sup>2</sup> Jim Rumbal is also a recipient of the Plant Raisers' Award – see *New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2012, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 30–31.



Whilst at Duncan and Davies, Vance was also involved in breeding *Vireya* rhododendrons and *Cordyline* selections. He went on to work at a number of nurseries before ending up at Waitara in 2005, on land made available to him for growing magnolias and citrus.

Vance established Vanplant Nursery and Magnolia Grove mail order nursery. In a comparatively short time he has become a highly respected plant breeder and commercial nurseryman in his own right. As well as magnolias, Vance has been breeding *Agapanthus*, *Aloe*, and *Prunus subhirtella* × *campanulata* hybrids.

He currently has eight magnolias on trial in the Netherlands and to date has bred 18 cultivars. *Magnolia* × *soulangeana* 'Sweet Simplicity', found as an incorrectly labelled seedling in a garden centre, has been the cornerstone of Vance's breeding in the genus since 2000. Its seedlings generally start flowering two years from seed and he first used it as a parent in 1987 when he worked at Duncan and Davies.

He still regards *Magnolia* 'Margaret Helen' as his best all round *Magnolia* yet. This cultivar was named after his mother and raised from a cross he made in 1987 or 1988 during his time at Duncan and Davies.

In 2011 he won the prestigious Best Novelty Award in the category 'Trees and Shrubs' at the International Trade Fair for plants (IPM Essen) with *Magnolia* 'Genie'; he followed that with another win of the award in 2013 for *Magnolia* 'Cleopatra'. These are also the two cultivars for which the Royal New Zealand Institute has presented Vance Hooper the Plant Raisers' Award for 2014:

*Magnolia* 'Genie' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra') × (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M.* 'Black Tulip') makes a small tree to about 3.5 m tall × 2.5 m wide in 10 years. Its growth is compact as the abundant summer flowers slow the growth rate and increase the bushiness of the plant. The foliage is a healthy dark green with small to medium sized rounded leaves. In New Zealand, its flowers begin to appear in the first week of August, and the last open in the first week of November. The buds consistently open a rich black-red throughout the season, even with the early summer foliage.

*Magnolia* 'Cleopatra' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M.* 'Black Tulip') is a small to medium sized pyramidal tree with upright to spreading growth. The vibrant red-purple flowers open to face upwards and are reminiscent of *M.* 'Lanarth'.

Pictured above: **A**, *Magnolia* 'Genie'. **B**, *Magnolia* 'Cleopatra'.  
Photos: Vance Hooper.

*Magnolia* 'Cleopatra' flowered first about 2001 with some of her sisters, and the *Magnolia* 'Genie' cross was made with an earlier flowering sister. *Magnolia* 'Genie' flowered with five flowers two years from seed about 2002 and was immediately grafted. The three year old seedling had more than 100 flowers. It has performed consistently well ever since.

The recognition received by Vance over the years, including the 2014 Plant Raisers' Award, acknowledge his highly developed skills as a breeder of magnolias – skills he attributes to the principles of plant physiology and common sense which help the most when breeding plants – not just the 'rules'!

**Citation prepared by David Sole  
and Murray Dawson**

**Other magnolias raised by Vance Hooper, with the parentage in brackets:**

- Magnolia* 'Advance' (*M.* 'Burgundy' × *M.* 'Vulcan')
- M.* 'Amethyst Flame' (*M. liliiflora* × *M.* 'Vulcan')
- M.* 'Billowing Cloud' (*M.* × *soulangeana* 'Amabilis' × *M. cylindrica*)
- M.* 'Bon Vintage' (*M.* 'San Jose' × *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra')
- M.* 'Brixton Belle' (*M.* "Cameo sister" × *M.* 'Sir Harold Hillier')
- M.* 'Brixton Salmon' (*M.* 'Genie' × *M.* 'Sir Harold Hillier')
- M.* 'Cameo' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M.* 'Black Tulip')
- M.* 'Deryk' (*M.* 'Sweet Valentine' × *M.* 'Genie')
- M.* 'Lilac Chalice' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra')
- M.* 'Margaret Helen' (*M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' × *M.* 'Bernie Hollard')
- M.* 'Mighty Mouse' (*M.* "Genie sister" × *M.* 'Genie')
- M.* 'Old Port' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra')
- M.* 'Red Flare' (*M. liliiflora* × *M.* 'Vulcan')
- M.* 'Shirazz' (*M. denudata* × *M.* 'Vulcan')
- M.* 'Sweet Merlot' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M.* 'Black Tulip')
- M.* 'Sweet Valentine' (*M.* 'Sweet Simplicity' × *M.* 'Black Tulip')