

## Award in Garden History

### Associate Professor James John Beattie



Associate Professor James Beattie, 2022 recipient of the RNZIH Garden History Award, photographed at the Lan Yuan 蘭園 Dunedin Chinese Garden.

The RNZIH Garden History Award (Award in Horticultural History and Conservation) is granted to any nominated individual or organisation within New Zealand making distinguished contributions to horticultural history and conservation. Associate Professor James Beattie is the 2022 recipient of this award.

James Beattie is a garden, environmental and world historian whose works focus on the Asia-Pacific region, mostly over the last two hundred years. His many books and articles explore cross-cultural exchanges occasioned by British imperialism and globalisation, especially through gardens and plant exchanges. James grew up in the Wairarapa in the North Island and Yorkshire in the UK, and studied history at the University of Otago, where he gained a BA Hons (first class) and a PhD.

From 2005–07, he was Asia New Zealand Postdoctoral Fellow (University of Otago), where he worked on projects related to Lan Yuan 蘭園: Dunedin Chinese Garden, and Japanese gardens. This position culminated in two major works: (editor) 蘭園 *Lan Yuan – The Garden of Enlightenment* (2008); and, with Duncan Campbell, *Lan Yuan 蘭園: A Garden of Distant Longing* (2013).

He then worked for 10 years in the History Programme at University of Waikato, becoming professor in 2017, and from 2017 at Victoria University of Wellington. Throughout, James has strived to promote the study of garden history amongst students and the general public, and to give the subject greater acceptance amongst

the academy by demonstrating its applicability to a wide range of topics – from class, gender and race, to ecology, cross-cultural exchange and world history. At Waikato, he developed a cross-cultural graduate course on histories of gardens and landscapes, using the internationally renowned Hamilton Gardens in teaching, as well as giving numerous talks. He also co-founded the Garden History Research Foundation, which promotes understandings of historical gardens through public talks, papers and popular blogs. In 2017 he co-founded Routledge Research on Gardens in History, which publishes books on garden history. His *Gardens at the Frontier* (2018) aimed to give greater academic rigour to the discipline, while he has also attempted to place New Zealand in an international context, through co-editing guest issues of international journals, like *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, and having work published with major presses, including Oxford University Press and Dumbarton Oaks/Harvard University Press, as well as giving numerous public talks on these subjects.

In 2018 he was appointed Honorary Curator, Lan Yuan 蘭園 Dunedin Chinese Garden, and holds honorary research appointments with several universities in East Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australasia.

James is currently working on several garden-history-related projects, related to Chinese migration, garden-making, health and botanical exchange: an environmental history of Chinese in the Pacific; with Richard Walter, an historical archaeology of an overseas Chinese settlement; *Migrant Ecologies: Environmental Histories of the Pacific World*, forthcoming with Hawaii University Press, with Edward Melillo and Ryan Jones.

He feels privileged to work in the area of garden history, not least because of the many wonderful people he has met and with whom he has collaborated, as well as the magnificent gardens he has visited.



#### References

- Beattie, J. (ed.) (2008). *Gardens at the frontier: New methodological perspectives on garden history and designed landscapes*. Routledge. ISBN 9780367589707.
- Beattie, J. (2008). *Lan Yuan – The garden of enlightenment: Essays on the intellectual, cultural and architectural background to the Dunedin Chinese Garden*. Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust, Dunedin, New Zealand. ISBN 9780473134655.
- Beattie, J. and Campbell, D. (2013). *Lan Yuan 蘭園: A garden of distant longing*. Shanghai Museum and Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust. ISBN: 9780473257996.
- Beattie, J.; Jones, R.T.; Melillo, E.D. (eds.) (2022; in press). *Migrant ecologies: Environmental histories of the Pacific world*. University of Hawaii Press. ISBN-13: 9780824891060.

#### Websites (accessed June 2022)

- Lan Yuan 蘭園 Dunedin Chinese Garden: Scholars Garden and Study: [www.dunedinchinesegarden.com/history/scholars-garden-and-study](http://www.dunedinchinesegarden.com/history/scholars-garden-and-study)
- Routledge Research on Gardens in History: [www.routledge.com/Routledge-Research-on-Gardens-in-History/book-series/RROGIH](http://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Research-on-Gardens-in-History/book-series/RROGIH)
- The Garden History Research Foundation: <https://gardenhistoryresearchfoundation.com/>
- Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka: Associate Professor James Beattie: <https://people.wgtn.ac.nz/james.beattie>

**Citation prepared by  
Murray Dawson**