

Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (FRIH)

Ian Arthur Soper



Ian Soper, Fellow (FRIH) of the RNZIH for 2022.

Ian Soper comes from a gardening family and had his start in horticulture as a thirteen-year-old at Gales Garden Shop in Mosgiel (Dunedin), breaking down fertiliser, seed potatoes and green manure crop seeds into domestic sized retail bags.

Ian formally began his horticulture career as an apprentice at Wallis's Nurseries (East Taieri, Mosgiel).

After a brief role with Dunedin City Council leading an operational team overseeing city parks and reserves in the north of the city, Ian went the retail route before going out on his own maintaining some high-profile horticulture spaces such as Olveston, Dunedin Teachers College, and Carrington Residential College.

Ian then moved to Nelson to take on a role with Sicon as Horticultural Manager, delivering amenity horticultural maintenance to Tasman District and Nelson City Councils.

The next step took Ian to Gore District Council where he spent 16 years as Parks and Recreation Manager having oversight of high-profile public parks such as Gore Public Gardens and Bannerman Park, as well as other parks, playgrounds, street trees, city plantings, and annual bedding displays.

In 2021 Ian moved to Ashburton District Council to take on the role of Open Spaces Manager. Ian values being able to deliver communities with quality 'places and spaces'.

He has always supported training initiatives and advocated for employers to train apprentices. This was evident at Sicon, Gore District Council, and now ongoing with new apprentices at Ashburton. Ian says, "Growing our own [future gardeners and horticulturists] is the way to go".

He is a dual assessor for the Sports Turf Industry Training Organisation (NZSTITO) and Primary Industry Training Organisation – Horticulture (PITO Horticulture).

Several organisations have gained from Ian's wealth of knowledge and experience, namely the NZ Recreation Association (now Recreation Aotearoa) where Ian was the Otago/Southland Regional Branch Chair and served as the Regional Advisory Group delegate for two terms (six years), and the NZ Park Agencies Managers Group (now Park Leaders Forum) where Ian was a foundation member and is current Chair of Finance. Ian has also served several years and is a current member of the Yardstick Steering Group for both Parks and Facilities – which benchmarks service delivery seeking excellence.

Ian has held a strong connection for more than 15 years with the NZ Gardens Trust (NZGT), having two registered gardens in Gore, and now has aspirations with the NZGT for registering Ashburton gardens. Ian Soper has been a member of the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture (via the NZGT) since 2006, and following his move to Ashburton as an individual member.

**Citation prepared by
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Trotts Garden, Ashburton, a NZ Gardens Trust Six-Star garden.