

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

William ('Bill') Frank Charles Steans



Bill Steans FRIH.

Born in Gore, Bill Steans' life-long interest in horticulture began at an early age.

When he was eight years old, Bill was growing prize winning sweet peas for the school garden competition.

When he was nine, Bill was fascinated with the work of landscape contractors developing a neighbour's garden. By then he was maintaining much of the family garden, including cutting the hedges and sowing the vegetable garden.

In early 1976, Bill was approached to maintain the grounds of the Parata Rest Home in Gore, and he did so while at high school.

Upon leaving school at the end of 1976 he started work at Newman's Nurseries Ltd, Gore. This family business grew a variety of trees and shrubs in open ground and containers, and specialised in rhododendrons and conifers. Bill's employment there fulfilled a practical requirement for a Diploma in Horticulture course at Lincoln College, as it was known then (now Lincoln University).

The following year he completed an advanced Diploma in Horticultural Management.

In November 1979, Bill was employed by Gore Borough Council and a year later was appointed as assistant superintendent of parks

and recreation. There were always garden and street tree improvements during his time there and Bill gained valuable insights from attending Otago/Southland Branch meetings of the New Zealand Institute of Park and Recreation Administration (NZIPRA; now Recreation Aotearoa). In 1981, Bill served as acting superintendent of parks and recreation for a time.

Bill left the Council and started a landscape contracting business in 1983, designing and constructing commercial and residential gardens as well as planting farm shelter.

In 1985 Bill moved to Christchurch as reserves foreman for the then Riccarton Borough Council. This involved maintaining the grounds at Riccarton House and all parks within the former Borough, as well as completing the Riccarton town centre redevelopment.

While in Christchurch Bill began studying for the National Diploma in Horticulture (NDH), and joined the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture in April 1986. He attended RNZIH Canterbury branch meetings while living in Christchurch and was a judge of the annual garden and best street competitions for the Christchurch Beautifying Association.

In 1987 Bill was appointed as assistant director of parks and recreation for Timaru City Council where he completed the NDH qualification and was subsequently recognised as a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Park and Recreation Administration.

The following year, after the untimely passing of his mentor, Graeme Paterson, Bill found himself in the acting director's role for two years pending local body amalgamations throughout New Zealand.

On 1st November 1989 Bill was appointed director of parks and recreation for Timaru District Council, a position that he still holds today.

Achievements in this role, spanning more than 30 years, have included:

developing horticultural specifications, successfully advising on increasing the vigour of the 'Lovelock Oak' at Timaru Boys High School, introducing trees and plantings into the CBDs of four towns (Timaru, Temuka, Pleasant Point, Geraldine), initiating roadside plantings, redeveloping many parks including Caroline Bay and Timaru Botanic Gardens' plant collections, and native revegetation projects along 59 km of walkways and cycle tracks. The beach revegetation at Caroline Bay was acknowledged as the best beach revegetation in New Zealand by the Coastal Restoration Trust in 2010.

Another notable achievement was helping to secure the future of Trevor Griffiths' collection of old roses and establishing a garden to display them. The Trevor Griffiths Rose Garden received the Award of Garden Excellence from the World Federation of Rose Societies. At the time, in 2012, it was the 30th garden in the world to receive this award. It is also a New Zealand Gardens Trust five-star garden, as is Timaru Botanic Gardens.

Bill's community and horticultural interests in the region are evidenced by serving on the Timaru Horticultural Society as a committee member and judge (he has been a member since 1988), being a horticultural assessor on the Local Government Training Board (1988–1989), and a founding committee member and trustee for both the Friends of Timaru Botanic Gardens (1991–2017) and the Timaru Festival of Roses (2001–2004). Nationally, he is a board member of the New Zealand Parks Leaders Forum (since 2015), and internationally, he is a member of the World Urban Parks Association (from 2016).

The achievements outlined here, conducted over a horticultural lifetime, amply demonstrate that Bill Steans is a most worthy Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture.

**Citation prepared by
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