

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

Clare Louise Shearman



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Clare Shearman's interests in horticulture were fostered while working during the weekends (in between her studies) in a private English garden of about 5 acres (2 ha) of heritage roses, herbaceous borders, water features and woodland/bog gardens. The lady who owned the property was a knowledgeable plantswoman who passed on to Clare her passion for gardening and an understanding of plants and how to compose them. She used to quiz Clare on the plant names and Clare made sure to learn them!

In 1995 Clare completed qualifications in horticulture and landscaping (City and Guilds of London Institute Diploma) at Hadlow College, England.

In 1994, while also completing her studies, Clare took on a position at Hever Castle, Kent, a 13th century castle that was once Anne Boleyn's childhood home. Hever Castle is open to the public and surrounded by themed gardens, including mazes, topiary, an Italianate garden and fernery, herb garden and rose gardens. Clare had a challenging start to her horticultural career managing a small team responsible for maintaining the Tudor gardens. While there, Clare was mentored by the Head Gardener at that time, Doug Goodyear, and gathered a wealth of knowledge and experience.

After Hever Castle, Clare followed her passion for garden design and continued her horticultural training at the Physic Garden at Chelsea, London's oldest botanical garden, established in 1673.

Clare then went on to run her own garden design business for 14 years, based in Tunbridge Wells in Kent. While running her successful business she gained teaching qualifications in 1998 for adult education and applied her passion and enthusiasm for plants and their uses to develop and teach courses on garden design and plant planning at city council adult education centres and college night schools.

Clare and her husband Martin enjoyed several extended holidays in New Zealand and fell in love with the open spaces and friendly people. They decided to emigrate and in 2009 Clare had the pleasure of working as Head Gardener at Government House, Wellington, at a time of major renovation and redevelopment of the gardens. This gave Clare hands-on experience with New Zealand garden design as well as an introduction to a new flora.

She then spent five years developing a large private country estate called Fernside, in the Wairarapa. This is a grand arts and crafts style garden established by Mr and Mrs Elgar

in the early 1900s. Clare's English background, her love of heritage gardens and design skills were all put to good use at Fernside to manage the gardens team; together they restored the gardens and brought them back to their former glory. New gardens were also created to complete the perfect garden journey, from restored to new.

In December 2016 Clare joined the team at Wellington Botanic Garden where she is enjoying her role as Plant Collection Team Manager, developing the collections by both respecting their historical value and moving with the times alongside other botanic gardens. This role is varied and includes team leadership, partnership building, and planning projects and installations alongside the Visitor Experience Team.

Clare was co-opted on to the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture National Executive in June 2017 where she has a continuing role, representing Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ-NZ). In 2019, she took the lead organising a one-day RNZIH symposium in Wellington, held 24th October 2019, commemorating the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook and his botanists' arrival in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Thanks to Clare's efforts, and those of Yvonne Baker and Dharini Marinkovich, the conference was a great success with more than 60 people attending.

An RNZIH fellowship is awarded to "Members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture".

Clare Shearman's impeccable horticultural background in the UK and her continued professionalism in New Zealand make her a most worthy new Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (FRIH).

**Citation prepared by
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