

Award of Associate of Honour of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (AHRIH)

Dr John Raymond Liddle



John Liddle AHRIH.

After graduating from Massey University in 1982 with a PhD in chemistry and a Bachelor of Business Studies, John began a professional career as a scientist working in the trace element animal nutrition section of the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' Wallaceville Agriculture Research Centre in Upper Hutt (1982–1984).

He then moved to the commercial sector (1984–1989), as Manager and Chief Analyst for Analytical Services Ltd in Cambridge, a company providing specialist laboratory services including soil testing, plant tissue analysis and water testing.

From there, John returned to his horticultural roots (1989–1995) with DJ Liddle Ltd, a family owned production nursery established by his father, Don Liddle, in Lower Hutt in 1951, which moved to Waikanae in 1958. Don retired in 1995 and John established Liddle Wonder Ltd. Liddle Wonder is well-known for introducing

new and interesting plants onto the market, and produced around 450,000 shrubs and perennials annually. They also sold bedding plants, growing media and fertiliser. John employed a base of 15 staff that grew to 30 during peak seasons.

Although the nursery closed in 2009 the Liddle Wonder website remains as a useful resource at <https://liddlewonder.nz/>. This website was built by John's own website development company, KingGrapes Ltd, which he established in 2000. KingGrapes focusses on nursery sector enterprises and has created sites including Go Gardening, Incredible Edibles, KiwiGold, Lyndale Liners, Colourwave and Thirkettles, with the latter two currently undergoing redevelopment.

John then embraced the corporate world in Wellington, as Chief Executive (2009–2017) of the NZ Plant Producers Incorporated (NZPPI) (formerly the Nursery and Garden Industry Association of NZ Inc; NGIA). This is a major role, as the NZPPI are active in nursery industry and member advocacy and representation, capacity development, and biosecurity and industry promotion. Some of the industry initiatives that John undertook as Chief Executive include work to realign NZPPI's focus more closely with a wide range of plant producer interests, industry responses to the myrtle rust incursion, and advocacy for an expanded approach to recognise the full range of exotic plants in New Zealand.

In recent years, John continues working on key initiatives within the plant production and nursery industry, as a consultant under the resurrected

company name Liddle Wonder Ltd. Prominent in this work is a lead role in the team developing the Plant Production Biosecurity Scheme, a certification programme for nurseries, and most recently assisting in the industry's COVID-19 response.

With his extensive background in the nursery industry, from the potting shed to the board room, it's not surprising that John Liddle has held many memberships and voluntary roles, including with, to name a few: DOC Loder Cup Committee (NZPPI representative, 2015 to present), Primary ITO (chair of the Nursery Production Industry Partnership Group, 2013–2017), GERMAC (chair of the Germplasm Advisory Committee, a collaboration among MPI, industry, EPA and CRI's to facilitate the safe and efficient importation of plant germplasm, 2012–2017), National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA; member of Steering Group, 2010–2017), NGIA's Growers Sector (committee member, secretary and treasurer, 2000–2007), and International Plant Propagators' Society (2nd vice president through to international director, 1993–1999).

An Associate of Honour is awarded to "Persons who have rendered distinguished service to horticulture". Dr John Raymond Liddle is recognised as achieving the highest standards of professionalism in horticulture, and is accordingly a most worthy recipient of the highest award conferred by the RNZIH.

**Citation prepared by
Murray Dawson**