

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

Isabel Rosa Powell



Liz Powell holding her 2021 Fellowship certificate (left) alongside RNZIH President Keith Hammett (right). Photo: Penny Cliffin.

The Auckland Botanic Gardens (ABG) is fortunate in that very good relations and cooperation exist between the professional staff at ABG and the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens. The prime objective of the Friends is to promote and support the development of ABG. That the relationship has been so successful is in large part due to Mrs Isabel (Liz) Powell who has been a leading member of the Friends Executive Committee for the past twenty years.

Her continuing service can be summarised:

2019 – present	President and Chair of Trustees, Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens
2018 – 2019	Vice-President
2008 – 2010	Past-President
2008	Chair, Editorial Committee for the book <i>The first twenty-five years</i> ¹
2006 – 2008	President and Chair of Trustees
2005 – 2006	Vice-President
2000 – present	member of Executive Committee.

In addition, she has been involved in many of the Friends activities:

- volunteer in the Rambles Programme
- volunteer in the Botanic Gardens Library and currently Chair of the Library Management Group
- member of the Growing Friends
- organiser of the annual Friends Soup Day as well as the catering of many Friends functions
- organiser of the Friends bus trips.

Mrs Powell has been particularly active in promoting interactions between ABG and the arts. She has been an enthusiastic supporter of the biennial exhibition, Sculpture in the Gardens, which is now one of the most important and popular public exhibitions of sculpture in New Zealand. She has fostered the Visiting Artist programme which is run in alternate years to Sculpture in the Gardens. She is a member of the Friends Art Group and was one of the co-organisers of the New Zealand contribution to the Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition in 2018. These various exhibitions bring many additional visitors to the ABG.

Part of the citation when she was elected a Life Member of the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens in 2010 reads:

“As President, Liz led by example: she is well organised, focussed and meticulous, determined and sees things through to completion. She is not scared of hard work, she leads from in front, not from behind. And it is characteristic of her that she undervalues her own contributions and that she generously acknowledges and praises the work of others, of members of the Friends Executive or of individual members of the Gardens staff.”

The staff at ABG holds Mrs Powell in particularly high esteem. Partly this is due to her unwavering support for staff development that has resulted in several staff undertaking overseas and domestic travel to attend conferences and spend time at leading public gardens. The Friends have also supported many other learning opportunities including participation in specialist horticultural courses and seminar attendance. She is a strong advocate of such opportunities and has encouraged the Friends Executive Committee to prioritise staff development.

Mrs Powell is, at home, an enthusiastic but not unthinking gardener and it is typical of her that she has taken several extension horticultural papers from Massey University to increase her knowledge and understanding of plants and their requirements, of soils, of landscaping, and of the therapeutic benefits of gardening. It is this love of plants that has been behind her work for the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and her participation in activities such as the Rambles, which introduce the public to particular groups of plants, the Growing Friends and the Friends Art Group.

Mrs Powell has been a member of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture since 1994. Fellowship of the RNZIH is for members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture. It is fitting for the RNZIH now to recognise the many contributions that Mrs Powell has made to horticulture, particularly her continuing contributions to the promotion and development of the Auckland Botanic Gardens.

**Citation prepared by
A.R. Ferguson and Jack Hobbs**

¹ *The first twenty-five years: Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens, 1983–2008*, published 2008, ISBN 9780473132156.