

David Timothy Sole



David Sole (RHS) being presented with his AHRIH award certificate by RNZIH President Dr Keith Hammett (LHS). Photo: Hayden Foulds.

David Sole was born in Dunedin before moving to Invercargill and later Wellington where he attended secondary school at Wellington College.

He started his horticultural career as a labourer with the Wellington City Council Parks Department in 1979. His interest in trees saw him progress into the tree team where he became street tree foreman. At the same time he commenced his horticultural studies and graduated with the National Diploma in Horticulture (NDH) with honours. His thesis was entitled *An implemented street tree planting programme*. He also won the David Tannock Memorial Prize for the highest national mark for Oral & Practical exam 3.

David left the Council in 1986 to establish his own arboricultural business. He was amongst the pioneers of modern arboricultural practice in Wellington based on some of the techniques proposed by Alex Shigo in the USA. In 1995 the business broadened into trees and landscaping with contracts ranging from a few thousand to more than a million dollars. At one point his company employed 12 staff.

During that time he was closely involved with the establishment of the New Zealand Landscape Guild (NZLG), the first professional body for landscape contractors. It later became the Landscape Industries Association of New Zealand (LIANZ), and now Landscaping New Zealand. David was involved with the association at both local and board levels. In particular he represented the landscape industry during the major changes to trade training in the early 1990s from apprenticeships to unit standards and

the establishment of industry training organisations.

In 2003 until the present day David has been manager of the Wellington Gardens, comprising the Wellington Botanic Garden, Otari-Wilton's Bush, Truby King Park and Bolton Street Cemetery.

During this time he has initiated major changes to the gardens management and development, including:

- Developing a long-term management plan for the four gardens, a landscape master plan for Otari-Wilton's Bush, and a 30-year tree plan for the Wellington Botanic Garden and Bolton Street Cemetery.
- Establishing new educator and conservation and science advisor roles.
- Opening the Discovery Garden next to the Treehouse in the Wellington Botanic Garden. The Discovery Garden is a place for children to learn about plants, develop an interest in their natural environment and aspire to live in healthy urban environments.
- Reviewing all major plant collection policies aimed at creating a high quality seamless garden experience for visitors.
- Completing major development projects including an upgrade of the gardens nursery, the Leonard Cockayne Centre and Troup Picnic Lawn development at Otari-Wilton's Bush, and a new walkway between the Lady Norwood Rose Garden and Bolton Street Cemetery.

David has also played a major national and international role in botanic garden management:

- Supporting and advocating for the development of an *ex situ* New Zealand plant conservation strategy and the role of New Zealand botanic gardens and DOC.
- Serving two terms on the Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) Council. He is currently the New Zealand Vice-President and BGANZ Council Member.

- Convener of the BGANZ-NZ region 2005–2012 and is currently Secretary/Treasurer.
- Representing BGANZ on Biosecurity 2025 Skills Development 5 work group, which advocates for the role of botanic gardens in biosecurity.
- Representing the RNZIH and BGANZ at the tertiary qualifications review in 2014.
- Conceiving and working with the NZ Recreation Association in creating the 'Up the Garden Path' conference in 2015 taking stock of the state of amenity horticulture in New Zealand.

David has been a member of the RNZIH for more than 30 years. He acted as Oral & Practical examiner 1992–1996. He was made a Fellow (FRIH) in 1996, became a member of National Executive in 2005 and served as Chairman and then President from 2006 to 2013. During that time he worked tirelessly to align the three strands of the Institute's work through the Notable Trees Trust, NZ Gardens Trust and Education Trust. He managed a major redraft of the Institute's constitution, and oversaw a relaunch of the NZ Plant Collections Register.

Much of his spare time is spent four-wheel driving and enjoying the opportunities to see the New Zealand landscape without having to hike into places. This enables him to take people to places they couldn't or wouldn't normally access and to talk about plants with the public. He has taken numerous trips into places like the Akatarawas to look at filmy ferns, large redwoods, and to tell the story about *Pinus radiata*. This has involved advocating for the environment with a group not normally known for environmental responsibility.

David Sole has a real ability to relate to and communicate with a wide range of people. His commitment and contribution to amenity horticulture in New Zealand has been immense for more than 30 years. It is therefore fitting that his many contributions are recognised by becoming a new Associate of Honour.

**Citation prepared by
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