

The RNZIH Plant Raiser's Award

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Some years ago I requested a list of people who had received the Plant Raiser's Award, and learned that there was no single file held at the RNZIH Office at Lincoln. The relevant information was scattered through various files and publications, and would take some time to assemble. Concerned that this award needed more publicity, I searched previous issues of the RNZIH *Journal* and *Newsletter* to compile a list of recipients of the Award, and of the plants they had raised. I have appended the list below. I hope that anyone finding omissions or errors will contact me so that the necessary changes can be made to the record.

History

The RNZIH Annual Report for the year ending September 1960 [*New Zealand Plants and Gardens* 4(2), March 1961] announced the institution of the Plant Raisers Award. The Award is an inscribed medal awarded to the raiser (individual or organisation) of a sufficiently meritorious plant cultivar. The cultivar must be of New Zealand origin and sufficiently "fixed" to be suitable for propagation. Furthermore, it must have been in cultivation for at least three years.

No nominations were received for the Plant Raiser's Award in 1961 or 1962, but there were three in 1963, and two Awards were made [*New Zealand Plants and Gardens* 5(5), December 1963]. One Award was made to Dr R.S.R. Francis of Napier for the floribunda rose 'Cresset'. The other was to Dr J.S. Yeates of Palmerston North for *Lilium parkmannii* hybrids, especially *L. 'Excelsior'*. As Drs Francis and Yeates were the first recipients of the RNZIH Plant Raiser's Award, I have provided notes on them and the selections that they raised.

Dr Rodney Francis

Dr Francis was a medical man, a tuberculosis specialist who advocated closing the sanatoria and relocating TB patients to special wards in ordinary hospitals. He considered it demoralising to put all TB patients together in isolated facilities. A little of his background and work with roses can be found in "Letters from Dr R.S.R. Francis" by Raymond Appleyard in the 1967 *New Zealand Rose Annual*. The author had corresponded with Dr Francis in 1961 and 1962. Despite the limitations of a busy medical practice and a quarter acre section, Dr Francis had pursued a carefully thought out breeding programme, and also contributed articles to the *New Zealand Rose Annual*. Sadly, Dr Francis died before his Plant Raiser's Award could be made, and the Dominion President, Mr J. Living, presented the medal to his widow at the National Rose Society's convention in November 1963.

Dr Francis described *Rosa 'Cresset'* as a "planned cross, worked out in the winter - not a whim when walking round the garden - and an attempt to combine near-species roses." "My new rose 'Cresset', to be sold by Mason of Feilding this next season, was an attempt to combine the factors of *Rose Multibracteata* (through Queen Elizabeth) and the *Wichuriana* and *Moschata* factors present in *Cocorico*, ...So there should be plenty of *Moschata* and *Wichuriana* genes present in *Cocorico*...". An article in the *Rose Annual* in 1964 covering the National Rose show includes this note: "The new rose 'Cresset', produced by Dr Francis was shown well. It is a cross between Queen Elizabeth and *Cocorico* - a wonderful grower of *Starfire* form and colouring. It was awarded the gold medal of the NZ Rose Society". It was a vigorous

plant, considered disease resistant and rated well at the New Zealand trials. *Rosa 'Cresset'* appeared on three New Zealand stamp issues between 1975 and 1979.

Earlier this year (2003) I contacted Alan Mason who told me it was some years since the nursery had stocked this rose. He knew of a garden in Hawke's Bay where several plants had been grown. 'Cresset' made an appearance in several New Zealand stamps during the 1970s. After being let go for some years this garden was renovated recently, and Alan was sure the roses would have been removed as they were badly infected with petal fleck virus, which ruined the look of such a bright red rose.



Rosa 'Cresset' in perforated form, this image of which was kindly supplied by Terri Waddell [webmistress@rosetamps.com], who says three variations of this stamp were issued in 1975 and 1976.

Dr John Yeates

Dr Yeates (1900-1986) was foundation head of the Department of Agricultural Botany at Massey College where he taught botany, weed control and plant breeding to students studying for degrees and diplomas in agriculture and horticulture. He was a skilled plant breeder with particular interest in lilies and rhododendrons. A good

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friend of Edgar Stead, Dr Yeates continued the breeding of the Ilam azaleas after Stead's death, particularly the Ilam Melford series. Many of his Melford azaleas are listed in *Azaleas* by F.C. Galle (1985, Timber Press, Oregon). Rhododendrons that he bred and were registered with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) are listed in *New Zealand Rhododendron Association Bulletin* (1987, 75: 60-62), and a broader description of his contribution to rhododendron breeding in New Zealand is given in *Crossing the Rubicon: New Zealand Raised Rhododendrons, a Handbook* (1998, Canterbury Rhododendron Society). His writings include *Farm Trees and Hedges* (1942 and 1948 editions, Massey Agricultural College Bulletin No. 12, Palmerston North), *Agricultural Botany* (co-authored with Ella O. Campbell, 1954 and 1960 editions, Government Printer, Wellington), and numerous articles in the *RHS Lily Yearbook*, the *RHS Rhododendron Yearbook* and the *New Zealand Gardener* magazine.

In addition to the Plant Raiser's Award for *L. 'Excelsior'*, Dr Yeates received many honours, among them the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal (1968), the Lytell Lily Cup at the International Lily Conference (1969) and an OBE (1978). He was only the third New Zealander to be awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal, following Sir Victor Davies of New Plymouth, and Douglas Cook of Gisborne. In his later years, while breeding continued at Awapuni, his lily growing largely moved to Kimbolton where altitude and climate deterred aphids. Kimbolton was also suitable for rhododendrons and Dr Yeates, with others, was a driving force behind the establishment there of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association National Garden ("Heritage Park"). Dr Yeates was elected AHRH in 1956, and served on RNZIH council for many years. Further details can be found in the *RNZIH Annual Journal* (1978) 6: 78-79.

"Description: 'Excelsior' Cl. (*auratum* var. *platyphyllum* 'Jillian Wallace') (Yeates 1952): Yeates/Harrison catalogue (1956): China Rose (H.C.C. 024/1) with narrow white margin and segment tips; *auratum* type; sometimes called *parkmannii* 'Excelsior' P.C. (R.H.S.), 12 August 1958." *New Zealand Plants and Gardens* (1963) 5(5): 211-212.

Thanks are extended to Gregor Yeates for checking and adding to the details in this article.

Sue Davison joined the RNZIH in 1959, and has been active in branch affairs in various ways over the years. As a member of the Friends of the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens she is involved in volunteer work in the Visitor Centre and Library. She would be interested to hear from anyone with further information or comments about the Plant Raiser's Award, especially about the plants and people listed in the first 10 years of the Award's existence.



Lilium parkmannii 'Excelsior', an image from the photographic collection of John Yeates, kindly supplied by John's son, Gregor Yeates.

Recipients of the RNZIH Plant Raiser's Award

To the best of my knowledge, the chronological list below is complete. It is possible that there may be omissions due to an award not being notified in RNZIH publications.

Year	Recipient	Plant	Reference
1963	Dr R.S.R. Francis	<i>Rosa</i> 'Cresset'	<i>NZ Plants & Gardens</i> (1963) 5(5): 211-212. (Annual Report for year ended 30.9.63).
	Dr J.S. Yeates	<i>Lilium parkmannii</i> 'Excelsior'	"
1964	Mr H. (Bert) Blumhard	<i>Cymbidium</i> 'Little Tiki'	<i>NZ Plants & Gardens</i> (1964) 6(1): 86.
	Dr B.W. Doak	<i>Camellia</i> 'Phyl Doak'	"
1967	Mr L.E. Jury	<i>Camellia</i> 'Grand Jury'	<i>NZ Plants & Gardens</i> (1967) 7(5): 213.
1968	Mr W.B. Brockie	<i>Phormium</i> 'Smiling Morn'	<i>Journal of the RNZIH</i> (New Series) (1969) 1(2): 68.
1969	Mrs J. Wright	<i>Gladanthera</i> 'Lucky Star'	<i>Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1970) 1(6): 264.
1971	Mr A. Farnell	<i>Gerbera</i> "Farnell's All Doubles"	<i>Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1971) 2(5): 228.
	Mr L. Robinson	<i>Photinia</i> 'Red Robin'	"
1981	Mr O. (Os) Blumhardt	<i>Camellia</i> 'Gay Baby'	<i>Horticulture in NZ</i> (Bulletin of the RNZIH) (1981) 19: 4.
		<i>Camellia</i> 'Tiny Star'	"
1982	Mr I. Bell	<i>Leucadendron</i> 'Safari Sunset'	<i>Horticulture in NZ</i> (1983) 28: 3.
	Mr H.J. Clark	<i>Leucadendron</i> 'Bell's Sunrise'	"
		<i>Camellia</i> 'Craig Clark'	"
		<i>Hibiscus</i> 'Apricot Parade'	"
		<i>Protea</i> 'Clark's Red'	"
Mrs E.J. Stevens	<i>Rhododendron</i> 'Sandra's Scarlet'	"	
	<i>Leucadendron</i> 'Red Gem'	"	
1984	Mr F. Jury	<i>Camellia</i> 'Waterlily'	<i>Horticulture in NZ</i> (1984) 32: 5.
		<i>Magnolia</i> 'Iolanthe'	"
		<i>Magnolia</i> 'Serene'	"
		<i>Phormium</i> 'Yellow Wave'	"
		<i>Rhododendron</i> 'Felicity'	"
		(renamed 'Felicity Fair')	"
1988	Dr K.R.W. Hammett	<i>Dahlia</i> 'Showpiece Hybrids'	<i>Horticulture in NZ</i> (1988) 47: 5.
		<i>Dahlia</i> 'Elizabeth Hammett'	"
		<i>Dahlia</i> 'Pineholt Princess'	"
1990	Mr J.G. Hobbs	<i>Hebe</i> 'Wiri Splash'	<i>Horticulture in NZ - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (New Series) (1990) 1(2): 12.
		<i>Hebe</i> 'Wiri Image'	"
		<i>Leptospermum</i> 'Wiri Joan'	"
		<i>Leptospermum</i> 'Wiri Joy'	"
1991	Mr N. Haydon	<i>Camellia</i> 'Baby Bear'	<i>Horticulture in NZ - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1991) 2(2): 33.
		<i>Camellia</i> 'Baby Willow'	"
		<i>Camellia</i> 'Sun Song'	"
		<i>Camellia</i> 'Takanini'	"
1992	Mr T.C. Hatch	<i>Alstroemeria</i> 'Pink Joy'	<i>Horticulture in NZ - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1992) 3(2): 14.
		<i>Cheiranthus</i> ¹ 'Joy Gold'	"
		<i>Cheiranthus</i> 'Winter Joy'	"
		<i>Osteospermum</i> 'Whirlygig'	"
		<i>Osteospermum</i> 'Whirly Pink'	"
1993	Mr A. Easton	<i>Cymbidium</i> 'Tracy Reddaway'	<i>Horticulture in NZ - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1994) 4(1): 25.
		<i>Odontoglossum</i> 'Geyser Gold'	"
1994	Riwaka Research Station	<i>Humulus lupulus</i> varieties	<i>Horticulture in NZ - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1994) 4(2): 7.
1996	Mr T.J. Mechen	<i>Chrysanthemum</i> ² 'Dorothy Mechen'	<i>NZ Garden Journal - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (New Series) (1996) 1(4): 11.
		<i>Chrysanthemum</i> 'Edith Mechen'	"
		<i>Chrysanthemum</i> 'Pop Hollows'	"
1997	Mr F. Schuurman	<i>Rosa</i> 'Little Opal'	<i>NZ Garden Journal - Journal of the RNZIH</i> (1997) 2(2): 24.
		<i>Rosa</i> 'Scentasia'	"
1999	Mr N. McMillan	<i>Polyanthus</i> "Waikato Series"	<i>Newsletter of the RNZIH</i> (1999) 4: 7.
		<i>Polyanthus</i> 'Pink Ruffle'	"
2000	Mr D. Brown	<i>Rhododendron</i> (<i>Vireya</i>) 'Solar Flare'	<i>Newsletter of the RNZIH</i> (2000) 4: 6.

¹ now *Erysimum*

² now *Dendranthema*