

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

Alan John Matchett



Alan Matchett, Fellow (FRIH) of the RNZIH for 2022.

A Fellowship is bestowed on members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture.

Alan Matchett began his career in horticulture in 1980 with Dunedin City Council Parks Department and shortly after signing up as a horticultural apprentice. After completing his apprenticeship qualifying with Trades Certificate, Alan took up the position of Leading Hand of the Dunedin Botanic Garden Rhododendron Dell. Also completing his National Certificate in Horticulture, Alan moved on to the position of Upper Botanic Garden Foreman which then led to a more

extensive role as Overseer-Botanic Garden incorporating responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Botanic Garden. Alan remained in this role for 15 years along with changes in job title, Botanic Garden Manager then Collections Manager.

In 2001, with new responsibilities including management of the Dunedin City crematorium and cemeteries the position title changed to Team Leader. Another change in 2011 removed the crematorium and cemeteries from Alan's role and the focus returned to solely manage Dunedin Botanic Garden. In 2020 Alan had another role title change and he is currently Botanic Garden Manager responsible for management and leadership of the NZ Gardens Trust Six-Star Dunedin Botanic Garden.

Over his 42 years with Dunedin City Council and the botanic garden, Alan has had many notable achievements. These include collecting trips to China (1992) and Chatham Islands (1996) bringing seed back to expand the plant collections at Dunedin, re-establishing the pathway of horticulture trade training and youth

engagement in the early 2000s, presenting papers at various Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) Congress's, celebrating Dunedin Botanic Gardens' 150th anniversary in 2013 (and delivering the RNZIH Banks Memorial Lecture – 'The History of Botanic Gardens in New Zealand'), managing the replacement of the Plant Propagation and Nursery Facility 2013–2015, and, most notably, securing the rights and hosting the prestigious 5th BGCI Global Botanic Garden and 6th BGANZ Congress's in 2013.

Alan has served as Chairman of the BGANZ NZ Regional Group (2009–2013), BGANZ Council NZ Vice President (2009–2013), and is currently a BGANZ NZ Executive Committee Member (from 2005) and BGANZ Assistant Editor for the BOTANIC GARDENER publication (from 2013).

Alan and his wife Jane have been joint members of the RNZIH since 2014.

**Citation prepared by
Barbara Wheeler**

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Gordon Frank Bailey



Gordon Bailey, Fellow (FRIH) of the RNZIH for 2022.

Gordon Bailey has had a long and varied career in parks and recreation in the southern regions of the South Island. Born and educated in Waimate, Gordon's career in horticulture was inevitable as his parents and grandparents were keen gardeners and, from an early age, Gordon and his two brothers were press-ganged into mowing and weeding the five-acre block his parents owned near Waimate township. The brothers were keen competitors in everything they did including growing and exhibiting daffodils at the local shows. They all had their own rows of bulbs which were guarded intensely.

Just up the road was the well known garden of Centewood developed by the late Mrs W.J. Hayes and during Gordon's first year at high school his mother was approached to see if he was interested in mowing lawns there after school. Just before Gordon started work there, he was invited to view a new *Rhododendron* that Mrs Hayes had bred, called *R. 'Joybells'*, which was flowering for the first time. Meeting Graham Smith from Pukeiti that day, along with the fact that Mrs Hayes was a good teacher to a young person keen to learn, sparked Gordon's enduring interest in rhododendrons and associated woodland plants.

Following high school, Gordon completed a Diploma in Horticulture, in 1982, followed by a Diploma in Parks and Recreation Administration, in 1985, at the then Lincoln College. As part of these studies two practical years were required. His first was with the Waimate Borough Councils parks department under the late Reni Laplanche and the second with the Timaru City Council parks department under the late Graeme Patterson. Through these placements, Gordon gained a practical understanding of how parks departments operated and the wide range of disciplines their activities covered.

After his Lincoln studies, Gordon worked for the Oamaru Borough Council in the Oamaru gardens under Graeme Hall where he eventually ended up as head gardener. A lot of redevelopment within the Oamaru gardens took place at this time, during which Gordon also achieved an RNZIH Certificate of Horticulture, in 1986.

In 1986 Gordon became Assistant Superintendent Parks and Recreation, for Gore Borough Council then, in 1989, following local government amalgamation became Parks and Recreation Manager for the newly formed Gore District Council, where he stayed until 2005.

In 1988, Gordon achieved the RNZIH Diploma of Horticulture.

At Gore there was plenty of scope for Gordon to build upon the solid framework developed by his predecessors. Developments carried out during his time there include:

- Removing the centre car parks from Main Street and replacing them with extensive plantings resulting in an enhanced street-scape
- New swimming pool/ice rink
- New artificial hockey turf
- Sand carpet rugby field
- Major cemetery redevelopment
- Major replanting at Bannerman Park
- Rhododendron collection commenced at Dolamore Park.

When Gordon arrived in Gore the council was already a member of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and their annual plant list was eagerly awaited as it provided access to plants not generally available elsewhere.

Gore also gave Gordon the opportunity to be involved in the wider horticultural industry in a professional capacity. He was already a member of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association but was lucky enough to attend conferences to learn more about these plants and planting combinations. He met Denis Hughes of Blue Mountain Nursery (Tapanui) early on in his tenure in Gore and they have remained good friends since, spending many hours talking about one plant or another.

One of Gordon's key involvements is with the International Dendrology Society. He first became aware of its existence when Geoff Genge of Marshwood Gardens (Invercargill), asked if the society could visit the Gore gardens as they had heard it had an interesting collection of plants. Through the society he met a whole host of very knowledgeable horticulturists who over the years have been a great influence on his planting philosophy. Gore has benefited from these connections as Gordon was able to source rare and unique species to plant in public spaces instead of the run-of-the-mill council type plantings typical of the time. Gordon was keen for public plantings to be an education tool to show the public what they could grow in their own area.

In 1990, Gordon was invited by the late Ron Gordon to join a group going to Yunnan in China on a plant hunting trip. This was one of the first foreign groups to be granted permission to undertake such a trip in China since the revolution. The trip was made possible by connections Pukeiti has with the Kunming Institute of Botany. Conditions at that time in China were primitive to say the least but the wealth of plants was fascinating. The trip was successful, many seeds were collected and brought back to New Zealand, luckily prior to the current regulatory restrictions on plant imports. Gordon was invited on the next trip in 1992 to a different

part of Yunnan. Again, much seed was sourced, and connections made that enabled Gordon to visit China on three separate occasions since. Many plants grown from these trips were planted around Gore as well as distributed to keen growers around the country. Apart from the new plants collected, Gordon considers the people he met on these trips with a shared interest in plants, particularly rhododendrons, have had the most influence on him. For Gordon, seeing rhododendrons growing in their native habitat has been an education, helping him understand the growing conditions they require to thrive in. It also highlighted how fragile their habitat is; in China there has been significant habitat loss associated with population and economic growth over the past 25 years.

In 1998, Gordon became the Recreation Aotearoa representative (formally New Zealand Recreation Association) on the NZ Horticulture Industry Training Organisation, and was chair for seven years from 2000. During this time, Gordon attended a Young Farmer of the Year competition and thought, "Why don't we have something similar for horticulture?" He raised this at a board meeting and funding was found, which eventually led to the RNZIH Education Trust being formed to develop and manage the event, and the rest is history.

In 2003, Gordon joined the board of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Board, and became chair of the board in 2012. That year the board handed over the ownership of the garden to the Taranaki Regional Council. Since that time the Council has invested significant amounts of money into upgrading the gardens infrastructure and creating wider public appeal.

Under Gordon's chairmanship, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Board, established the ongoing Pukeiti Ex-Situ Rhododendron Conservation Strategy. The basis of this strategy is to determine what *Rhododendron* species grow or have at one time been grown in New Zealand. Led by Dr Marion McKay of Massey University, this project involves obtaining propagating material, growing it on and distributing it to identified sites to grow.

In 2005, Gordon accepted the position of Parks Manager for Queenstown Lakes District Council. This was a new position with new challenges. The Queenstown Gardens had become somewhat run down over the years through lack of financial and horticultural investment. Gordon helped ensure additional resources were allocated, and was able to convince the council of the day to bring the horticultural maintenance component, that was contracted out, in house and to directly report to him. The improvement in service and presentation throughout the district in gardens was almost immediate. Gordon believes that contract staff do not have the same passion that directly employed council staff have.

Gordon joined the Otago Conservation Board in 2011 and was chair during 2013–14. He found the role interesting and it enabled him to see from a Department of Conservation (DOC) perspective how and why areas were assessed for their conservation values. His time there coincided with significant restructuring within DOC and a re-write of the Otago Conservation Management Strategy. It also provided him with a good understanding of the uniqueness of Otago's native flora and fauna and the risks they face.

In 2014, following a restructure in the Queenstown Council, Gordon landed a role with the Waikato District Council. During his two-year stay there he managed to convince the council that the well-known Woodland Estate gardens would be better maintained and resourced within council rather than by the existing trust.

Gordon is currently living in Wanaka and working as Parks and Recreation Manager for the Central Otago District Council. Peonies do particularly well there and additions to the existing plantings are programmed over the next few years along with revegetation plantings and improved tree husbandry. The distinct climate of Central Otago is both a challenge and an opportunity for Gordon Bailey and his team, so watch this space.

**Citation prepared by
Andrew Maloy and
Murray Dawson**

Positions held

- 2018– *Parks and Recreation Manager*
Central Otago District Council
- 2017–2018 *Parks Officer*
Waitaki District Council
- 2016–2017 *Contracts Manager*
Queenstown Lakes
Asplundh
- 2014–2016 *Open Spaces Operations Team Leader/Principal Rural Fire Officer*
Waikato District Council
- 2005–2014 *Parks Manager/Principal Rural Fire Officer*
Queenstown Lakes District Council
- 1989–2005 *Parks and Recreation Manager/Principal Rural Fire Officer*
Gore District Council
- 1986–1989 *Assistant Superintendent Parks and Recreation*
Gore Borough Council
- 1985–1986 *Head Gardener*
Oamaru Borough Council

Education

Lincoln University:

- 1988 National Diploma in Amenity Horticulture (RNZIH)
- 1986 National Certificate in Amenity Horticulture (RNZIH)
- 1985 Diploma Parks and Recreation Administration (Lincoln)
- 1982 Diploma Horticulture (Lincoln)

Involvement with Professional Organisations

- Recreation Aotearoa
 - Regional Advisory Group Representative 2018–2020
 - Board Appointments Panel 2011–2015; 2020–2021
- Active member of the International Dendrology Society since 1988
- Member of the RNZIH since 1985
- Founding member of 'Yardstick', a national benchmarking project covering parks assets, parks user surveys, service level comparisons and swimming pool operations.

- Currently on the Technical Advisory Group, since 2002
- International Parks and Recreation Association
 - Asia/Pacific region world commissioner 2005–2008
 - Asia Pacific Secretary 2008–2012
 - Attended International Parks Congresses. All focused on Amenity horticulture and open space planning in urban areas.
 - 2004: Japan
 - 2008: France
 - 2009: Finland
- NZ Horticultural Industry Training Organisation
 - Chairman 2000–2007
 - Board member 1998–2000

Awards Received

- 2012 New Zealand Recreation Association Fellow Award
- 2000 New Zealand Recreation Association Ian Galloway Award
- 2005 Gore Garden Club Life Membership

Recent Volunteer and Community Involvement

- New Zealand Rhododendron Association
 - President 2009–2012
 - Member 1984–2020
- Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.
 - President 2012 – ongoing
 - Board member since 2003
- Wanaka Garden Clubs 2016 – present
- Wakatipu Garden Club 2005–2014
 - President 2010–2012
- Otago Conservation Board 2011–2014
 - Chairman 2013–14
- Waikato Conservation Board 2015–2016
 - Deputy Chair
- Fairfield Rotary Club Hamilton 2014–2016
 - Director Public Image 2016
- Queenstown Rotary Club 2005–2014
- Wanaka Rotary Club 2016–2020