

Charles H. Moir (1871–1944): the “Godfather of Glad-dom”, gladioli specialist of Christchurch

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Charles Henry Moir (Fig. 1) was a champion gladiolus grower and exhibitor active in Christchurch in the 1930s and early 1940s. He was involved closely with the Canterbury Horticultural Society where his gladioli were constant winners or place-getters at exhibits. There he served on the management committee before his death in 1944. He also gave away prize bulbs to Canterbury Horticultural Society members, especially to aspiring young gardeners, at its many meetings and events as gifts, a deed that earned him the moniker “Godfather of Glad-dom” for his much-appreciated generosity as it is a reference to the quality of his gladioli bulbs.



GLADIOLUS SHOW IN CHRISTCHURCH.—Mr C. H. Moir arranging an exhibit of Picardy blooms for the annual gladiolus and dahlia show of the Canterbury Horticultural Society, which will be opened to-day in the Caledonian Hall.

Fig. 1 *Press*, Volume LXXII, Issue 21688, 23 January 1936, Page 16.

He received the Armstrong Cup for most points for gladioli in 1932 at the New Zealand National Flower Show held in Christchurch and in 1933 he won the Banksian Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society (UK) “for outstanding performances at shows held by associated societies” (Fig. 2) and also received the Canterbury Horticultural Society’s Challenge Cup “for the best eighteen spikes of gladioli” (Fig. 3).² Moir also exhibited at Dunedin Horticultural Society shows.



BANKSIAN MEDAL OF THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.—This Banksian Medal was allotted by the Royal Horticultural Society to the Canterbury Horticultural Society for competition at the Christchurch Floral Pageant of 1933. It was presented to the winner, Mr C. H. Moir, at a meeting on Tuesday evening of the management committee of the Canterbury society. The medal was awarded for most points in the gladiolar section.

Fig. 2 *Press*, Volume LXIX, Issue 20883, 16 June 1933, Page 14.

variety. The Horticultural Society’s Challenge Cup for the best eighteen spikes of gladioli was won by Mr C. H. Moir, of Christchurch. The winning exhibit included, among others, outstanding examples of the D. A. Hay, Our Selection, Terra Cotta and Commander Koehl varieties. Altogether it made one of the most colourful corners of the show.

Fig. 3 *Star* (Christchurch), Volume XLIV, Issue 666, 20 January 1933, Page 9.

Moir’s c. 1936 catalogue (Fig. 4) stated he was the only horticulturist devoted solely to gladioli in New Zealand at the time and that he specialised in growing bulblets for overseas customers. He sold gladioli raised by himself as well as by others (Fig. 5) around New Zealand, including the cultivar ‘Miss New Zealand’ (Fig. 6) raised by Mrs W. Julyan of Blenheim (Fig. 7).

Thirteen of Moir’s cultivars were included in the North American Gladiolus Council’s 2020 Parentage List of recently introduced gladiolus.³ These were (with years of origin in brackets):

‘Betty Humphries’ (1936)	‘Ester Lewis’ (1937)
‘Gracie Green’ (1937)	‘Iowa’ (1936)
‘J. Elton Carter’ (1936)	‘La Porte’ (1934)
‘Lady Maple’ (1934)	‘Molly Hilton’ (undated)
‘Mrs C. H. Moir’ (1957)	‘Nutelette’ (1930)
‘Rose Picardy’ (1937)	‘Satin King’ (1937)
‘Sweet Agnes’ (1930)	

The cultivar ‘Betty Humphries’, as the catalogue stated, was not offered for sale to New Zealand growers until 1937.

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² *Star* (Christchurch), Volume LXIV, Issue 788, 14 June 1933, Page 7; *Star* (Christchurch), Volume XLIV, Issue 666, 20 January 1933, Page 9.

³ “Recently” appears to mean in the last century as opposed to, say, the last decade.

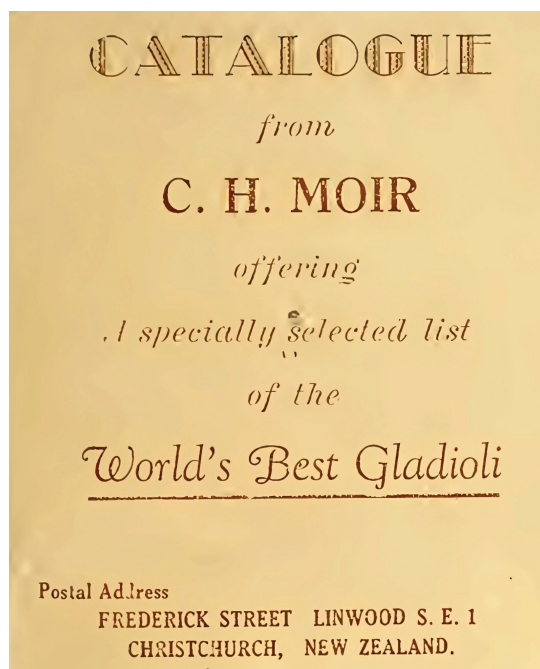


Fig. 4 Part of C. H. Moir's gladioli catalogue, c. 1936.



FINE BLOOMS.—Three beautiful gladioli spikes, "D. A. Hay," which were grown by Mr C. H. Moir, of Frederick Street, Linwood, on behalf of Miss E. Whiteley, of Auckland, who originated the variety.

Fig. 5 *Star* (Christchurch), Volume XLIV, Issue 665, 19 January 1933, Page 5.

The gladioli section is contributed to by Mr G. Millan and a number of other local growers, and strengthened by the arrival of two collections from Christchurch, one being from Mr Charles Moir, who has staged 500 blooms, amongst them an example of Miss New Zealand, probably one of the finest of the gladioli. New Zealand hybridisers of the gladiola have achieved wonderful results of late, and visitors to this show will find evidence in support of the assertion that some of the varieties raised in our little country are equal to any the world can produce.

Fig. 6 *Evening Star*, Issue 21657, 28 February 1934, Page 11.

Mr C. H. Moir, of Christchurch, filled a table, 25 feet long, with gladioli, comprising some of the newer and better-known varieties, about 150 in number. "Miss New Zealand," a beautiful salmon pink with a plump throat, and a width of floret of eight inches, was a feature of the collection. It was raised by Mrs W. Julyan, of Blenheim.

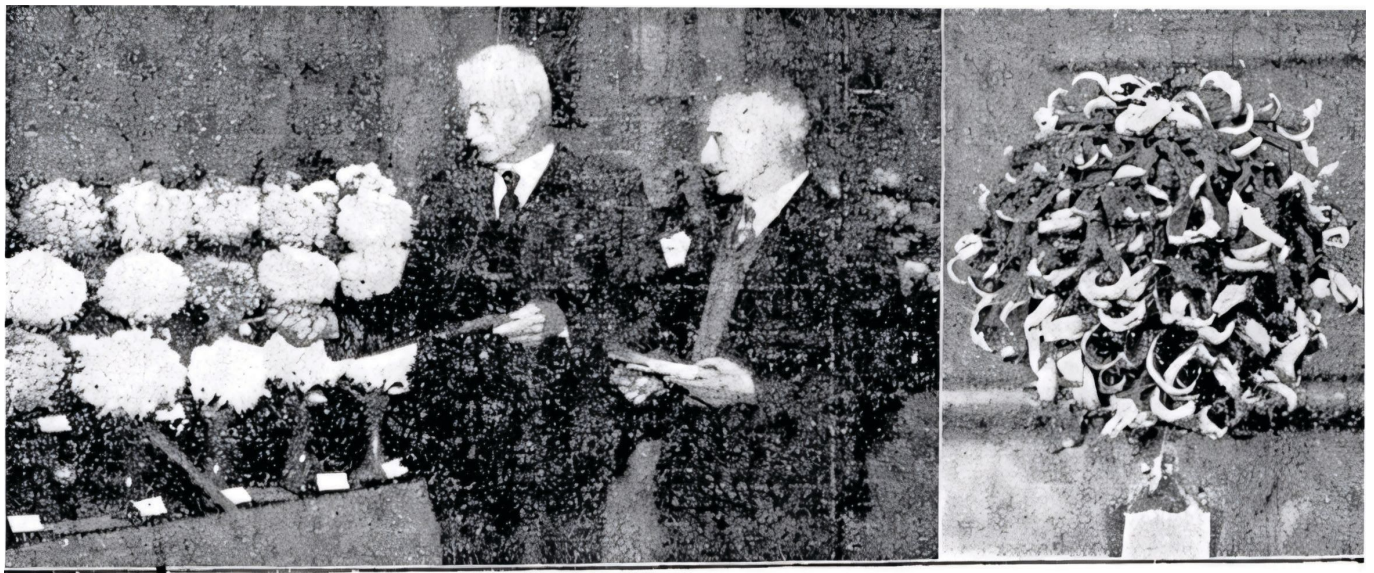
Fig. 7 *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 22200, 1 March 1934, Page 3.

Charles Moir was born in Invercargill in 1871 to Harry and Cecelia Moir and married Catherine McKersey in 1897 in Dunedin and had four children together. The couple are listed as living at 29 Frederick Street, Linwood (now in Waltham) in 1929, then in 1935 at 40 Leicester Street (now Lismore Street in Waltham). Specimens were grown at his home and not from any commercial premises. Moir's occupation was as a builder, but it was clearly the culture and raising of gladioli that was his passion (Fig. 8–9).



PREMIER BLOOM.—A fine specimen of *Picardy*, exhibited by C. H. Moir, was adjudged the best spike of gladiolus at the annual show on Saturday of the Woolston Horticultural Society.

Fig. 8 *Press*, Volume LXXI, Issue 21371, 14 January 1935, Page 16.



CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOW.—*Described as the best for many years, the Canterbury Horticultural Society's annual chrysanthemum show in the Caledonian Hall attracted some remarkably good entries. LEFT: Mr H. Cropp (judge) and Mr C. H. Moir (a steward) inspecting the blooms. RIGHT: "Hugh Mitchell," champion bloom of the show, shown by Mr R. Jagger.*

Fig. 9 Press, Volume LXXVI, Issue 23010, 3 May 1940, Page 14.

Acknowledgements

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