

A golden moment

Anna Pearson • 08:22, Sep 15 2011



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BLOOMING GREAT: John and Marie Hunter of Hope with their field of daffodils and the Gold Medal.

Nelson's John Hunter has been honoured for a lifetime dedicated to breeding daffodils, with a prestigious international award.

Mr Hunter, who is 76 this year, was mowing between his rows of flower beds when the Nelson Mail visited yesterday.

He started breeding daffodils 62 years ago and is only the third New Zealander to receive the American Daffodil Association Gold Award.

"It was a huge surprise. I don't know who nominated me."

He said daffodils took five years to flower, so patience was needed. So why has he stuck with it for so long? "Because I'm totally bloody mad."

Mr Hunter said it was a time-consuming hobby, but exciting at this time of year when new varieties appeared.

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Mr Hunter said the ADS award was "quite an honour", but he said it was "only interesting to daffodil growers".

ADS president Kathy Welsh said in a letter to Mr Hunter that the award was "well deserved".

"When the first letters started coming detailing your many accomplishments, there was little doubt who would be the 2011 Gold Medal winner," she wrote.

Ms Welsh said the award was for his "pre-eminent work for the advancement of daffodils".

Mr Hunter has registered 120 different daffodil varieties with the Royal Horticultural Society over the years – "but could have registered a heck of a lot more".

He is also a life member of the New Zealand National Daffodil Society.

His journey began as a nine-year-old boy in 1945, when he paid sixpence to enter his first daffodil show.

"My family have always grown them ... my uncle started me off – I think it was the worst thing he ever did."

Mr Hunter's daffodils will be on display at the Brightwater Spring Flower Show this weekend, which runs from 1.30pm to 4.30pm on Saturday and 9.30am to 4.30pm on Sunday.

Fairfax Media