

THE PETER BARR MEMORIAL CUP

2003: AWARDED TO MAX HAMILTON



There is no doubt that Max Hamilton, this year's recipient of the Peter Barr Memorial Cup "has done good work of some kind in connection with daffodils", which is the simple but important qualification upon which the Royal Horticultural Society makes this prestigious international award (Fig. 28).

James Maxwell Hamilton was born in 1928 in Taihape in the heart of North Island, New Zealand. He was fortunate to be brought up in an agricultural environment keenly interested in soil science and, not entirely unusual for farmers in New Zealand, in the growing and hybridizing of daffodils. Max bought his own farm and also worked as a field officer, giving advice on fertiliser requirements. Later he became manager of a factory producing soluble fertilisers and chelates, and through contacts with specialist soil scientists and analysts developed specialist knowledge that he applied to daffodils. Many growers are indebted to him for fertiliser recommendations based on specific analysis of their soil.

Exhibiting locally at the Taihape spring show from 1959, Max joined the New Zealand Daffodil Society (NZDS) in 1966 and since then has forged close relationships with leading growers at home and abroad. With his wife Kath he joined Peter and Lesley Ramsay in founding Koanga Daffodils, a principal supplier of specialist daffodils in New Zealand. Koanga successes at shows in New Zealand are legendary, with many of the winning flowers raised by Max Hamilton. These include the famous doubles 'Kiwi Magic', 'Kiwi Solstice' and 'Kiwi Sunset' flowers that are becoming well known worldwide. Though primarily associated with the development of double daffodils Max has much wider interests, particularly in improving red trumpets, robust white

trumpets and early flowering poeticus cultivars. His breeding programme also includes cyclamineus, jonquils and tazettas and pink daffodils. Whatever the type, he is a believer in line breeding and the use of what he calls superior parents, those which are healthy and vigorous and likely to produce disease free progeny. Many cultivars have been registered which have been successful on show benches in New Zealand and which are undoubtedly due for wider distribution.

Max has served on the executive committee of the National Daffodil Society of New Zealand since 1976. He was President from 1988-1991 and has been Treasurer since 1991. He has been awarded the Society's highest honours - the David Bell Gold Medal in 1993 and Life Membership in 1995. Max has also acted as Registrar of Daffodil Names for New Zealand since 1984, in which capacity his co-operation and wise counsel has been greatly appreciated by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Max shares his abundant knowledge of daffodils with great generosity. He is a wonderful correspondent, sparing no detail in response to questions, and he endears himself to everyone with his quiet, modest and unassuming personality. Widely travelled, Max has been a wonderful ambassador for his country and for daffodils in particular and he is highly regarded as a respected judge and speaker.

Recent health problems have curtailed much active participation in cultivation and planting chores but in a recent letter he mentions his appreciation of help from an impressive list of friends bearing testimony to the esteem in which Max is held by the whole daffodil fraternity. We wish him a full recovery and many years to pursue his love of daffodils.

Brian Duncan