

Allan Mere Award to Neill Simpson

Congratulations to Neill Simpson of Queenstown, who was presented with the Allan Mere Award for 2001 at the naming of the Allan Herbarium at Lincoln in November last year. This award is administered by the New Zealand Botanical society and is made annually to a person or persons who have made outstanding contributions to botany in New Zealand, either in a professional or an amateur capacity.

BSO was proud to be one of the botanical societies nominating Neill, who is a most deserving recipient of this award. The text of our nomination follows:

Neill Simpson's outstanding contribution, to botany in general, and to botanical societies in particular, in both an amateur and a professional capacity, has stretched across the years and across the country, and continues to grow even in his 'retirement'.

Neill's contribution to botanical societies began in 1966 when he joined the Wellington Botanical Society. Not only did he learn from Tony Druce, but he assisted him as well, particularly later on in recognising disjunct plant distributions. Then, as now, Neill was always willing to share his knowledge and growing experience with all others, be they professional or amateur, local or international.

Audrey Eagle writes "An ideal teacher and companion on field trips is Neill, both for his quiet enthusiasm and for his sharing of his wide knowledge of the native vegetation. Over a period of many years Neill has supplied me with plant specimens for my illustrations in 'Eagle's Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand'. Neill made a great contribution towards Tony Druce's research through his local knowledge of the plants, their habitats and the geology and geography of these areas. Added to this, Tony told me, was his excellent companionship through thick and thin vegetation, up and down mountains and in and out of streams".

Moving to Wanganui, Neill founded and led the Wanganui Museum Botanical Group and it is a measure of his contribution that he has been made a life member of this group. Moving on, Neill established and enhanced plantings of diverse native species everywhere he went, bringing to each place a showcase of our botanical heritage. This winter alone he is planting out, into public and private places, over three thousand native plants, which he has raised from seed.

Brian Rance writes from Southland. "Since his 'retirement' Neill has formed a botanical consultancy and in this capacity worked for DOC on tenure review and on threatened plant surveys. His sharp eye and ecological knowledge have resulted in many important botanical 'finds', including the first records of *Coprosma wallii*, and *C. pedicillata* in Southland, and the rediscovery of *C. obconica*".

Neill's productive association with botanical societies continues unabated. He has been the expert and untiring local organiser for many memorable WBS summer trips, and is the founder and driving force behind the Wakatipu Botanical Society. Last summer it was Neill's outstanding knowledge, freely given, of the rare and threatened plants of Southland that helped make the combined WBS/BSO trip so successful. His report, with Brian Rance, on these plants is a valuable addition to the Botany Department Library at Otago University.

Next summer's botanical society trip will also benefit from Neill's extensive knowledge of rare plants in the Twizel area. The Wakatipu, Otago and Wellington Botanical Societies and