

## NEW ZEALAND PLANT PROTECTION MEDAL



This medal is awarded by the New Zealand Plant Protection Society to honour those who have made exceptional contributions to plant protection in New Zealand in the widest sense. The medal is awarded for outstanding services to plant protection, whether through research, education, implementation or leadership.

In 2013 the New Zealand Plant Protection Medal was awarded to Andrew Hodson for his outstanding achievements as a horticulturalist, scientist and computer systems developer. Andrew's vision and practical determination over more than 20 years have enabled development and implementation of specialist software products and services that allow New Zealand's horticultural producers and researchers to predict and manage seasonal risks

from plant diseases, insect pests and pesticide use.

Andrew believes that New Zealand horticulture will increasingly depend on computer information systems for managing seasonal risks and market compliance requirements if it is to perform in increasingly complex world markets. One of the greatest challenges for horticulture is management of pesticide risks that arise from the need to control diseases and insect pests. This crop protection challenge has been at the centre of Andrew's interests and aligns directly with a key purpose of the New Zealand Plant Protection Society. Andrew has delivered positive and practical solutions for crop protection and pesticide risk management by developing a wide range of software systems for horticultural industries and research scientists.

Andrew's vision originated as a shared idea with colleagues in MAFTech and DSIR in the late 1980s. When HortResearch was formed in 1992, instead of continuing in research, Andrew took the risk of establishing a decision support company, HortPlus™ (N.Z.) Ltd, with his partner Lesley Hodson-Kersey and the late Dr Trevor Atkins. The company produces a diverse range of sophisticated yet practical computer applications for many horticultural sectors. It has at its core a national weather data network, allowing delivery of services including seasonal disease risk, insect activity, spray diary reports, spray drift management, heat and chill index calculations and irrigation management.

Andrew's unique ability is to visualise complex biological systems and industry information requirements as computer models and database applications. He has delivered practical and effective systems, often against the inertia of existing ways of doing things. Andrew's information systems have achieved a level of sophistication and utility at least equal to those overseas, where such services are provided through state funding. Andrew also contributes greatly to plant protection science in New Zealand through collaboration and generous development of specific computer applications for analysis of weather and other data required for scientific projects.

In 1995 Andrew was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. It is testimony to his determination and strength of character that he has, with the help of those close to him, continued to develop a hugely successful business and has been able to continue to realise his vision. Andrew's software and database systems are targeted to help horticultural growers, industry sector managers, horticultural support businesses, regional councils, regulators and scientists. As a result of Andrew's vision, computer information systems are indeed available to predict and manage disease, insect and pesticide risks for the future success of New Zealand horticulture.