

# ➤ ISHS Awards – recognising excellence and commitment

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## Introduction

In addition to their primary scientific endeavours, a key role of professional scientific societies is to recognise members who are outstanding in their field or have made exceptional contributions to their society. The International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), the premier horticultural society internationally, is no exception. The ISHS has two award options for individual members, **Honorary Member** and **Fellow**. In addition, the Society has the **Horticulture Innovation Award** that is focused on recognising the achievements of individuals, groups and commercial entities.

Discussions with other ISHS members and with staff of the Secretariat have shown that many members are unaware of, or are unfamiliar with, these awards. Significantly, ISHS members may not know that any member is eligible to nominate colleagues to be considered for such recognition. This article has been written to describe these awards and to encourage ISHS members to prepare nominations, as appropriate, for these prestigious awards. The specific procedures, the three types of awards, and the present status of the awards are described. The article concludes with a challenge to all members.

## ISHS Awards

The **Honorary Member Award** is presented to an ISHS member to recognize exceptional service to the ISHS over the course of her/his membership. A certificate is given to the recipients of the award. Honorary Members are appointed for life by the General Assembly and the membership comes with complimentary ISHS membership for life.

The **ISHS Fellow Award** is presented to a member of ISHS, in recognition of her/his highly meritorious achievements in horticultural science. A precious metal pin and a certificate is given to the recipients of this award. Awarded by the Council, the total number of living ISHS Fellows shall not exceed 1% of the total membership, averaged over a period of the previous five years. The **Horticulture Innovation Award** is the highest recognition granted by the ISHS Council to a person, group of people, institution, or commercial company for an exceptional contribution to horticulture innovation. This award is especially addressed to those with innovative ideas that create new

products and services which are regarded as important landmarks in the progress of horticulture at an international level. A trophy and a certificate are given to the recipients of this award.

These awards are important to individual members of the ISHS. They provide recognition to those individuals so that they can demonstrate their recognised value internationally to their employer, to their local industries, and to their peers.

For the ISHS, the awards provide the chance to recognise the outstanding contributions of deserving members and to celebrate the scientific achievements of horticultural scientists worldwide. Such awards also have other wider benefits. They:

- Encourage other members of the ISHS to commit to serving the Society,
- Demonstrate publicly the levels of excellence being achieved by ISHS members,
- Demonstrate to wider humankind the contributions being made by horticultural scientists to sustainable food security, innovation, and fundamental science, and
- Reflect in a positive way the levels of professionalism that are achieved within the membership of the ISHS.

Presently, the number of nominations put forward by members annually for each of the three awards detailed above remains very low.

## Current status – Honorary Members

There have been 52 members recognised as Honorary Members since 1970. However, of that total, only 28 are living. In addition, the vast majority (i.e., nearly all) of those current Honorary Members are over the age of 65 and are retired. Further examination of those current/living Honorary Members indicates that around 40% were previous ISHS Board members, 40% were previous Executive Committee members, with the balance having been involved with Congresses. This record also shows that more recently, from 2002 to 2018 (16 years), only 28 awards were made (little more than one per year). Most awards were made in the year of an ISHS Congress. Furthermore, of the 28 current/living Honorary Members, 16 (57%) are from Europe, 7 (25%) from North America, 3 (11%) from Australia and New Zealand, and 2

(7%) from Asia. Hence there are no Honorary Members currently from either South America or Africa.

Only three Honorary Members (11% of the total) are women.

## Current status – Fellows

Since 2002, only 23 members have been made Fellows. Of those, 20 are living. However, as with the Honorary Members, most of the Fellows are either retired or over 65 years of age. Of the 20 living Fellows, 7 are from Europe (35%), 6 are from the USA (30%), 5 are from Australia/New Zealand (25%) and 2 are from Asia (10%). There are no Fellows from South America or Africa.

Only two of the 20 Fellows (10%) are women.

## Current status – the Horticulture Innovation Award

This is a recent addition to the ISHS Awards, having been introduced in 2014. Three awards have since been made:

- Compac Sorting Equipment Ltd. (New Zealand) 2014
- Suntory Flowers Ltd. (Japan) 2016
- Shaanxi Haisheng Fresh Fruit Juice Co., Ltd. (China) 2018

## The challenge

The ISHS has a large number of individual members who actively serve the Society through:

- Membership of the Board – seven voting members per term,
- Membership of the Executive Committee – chairs and vice-chairs of 14 Divisions and 3 Commissions, and others who are chairs of numerous Working Groups,
- Membership of the Council,
- Conveners and committee members of around 40-50 ISHS symposia per year,
- Editors of around 40-50 *Acta Horticulturae* volumes per annum,
- Editors of *Scripta Horticulturae* volumes, and
- Chairs and committee members of the ISHS International and Regional Congresses that are held every four years.

In aggregate, this represents over 200 members who are contributing in some significant way to the various activities and affairs of the Society annually. The majority of these will be recognised through the award of an ISHS Medal. However, with regard to Honor-

ary Membership, a number of these will be providing **exceptional service** that deserves greater recognition. That number will certainly be more than the current level of recognition of only one per year!

No limit to the number of living Honorary Members is set in the Statutes. However, if 1% of the current membership is considered reasonable, clearly 30-40 members could be awarded with Honorary Membership at this time.

Regarding Fellows, the ISHS has a significant number of members who have demonstrated **highly meritorious achievements** in their respective fields in many different countries around the world. That number across the approx. 5500 members will certainly be more than one per year! It is an indictment on the Society that so few active scientists of international acclaim have been recognised through the award of a Fellow, especially when those same members have attained high professional honours in their home countries.

The current number of living Fellows (20) falls well short of the number that is allowed for in the Rules of the Society (1% of total membership averaged over the previous five years). With the current membership number, the ISHS could have around 50-60 Fellows (i.e., three times more than at present).

For both awards, the current age distribution of those holding awards is not representative of the membership. These awards should be career awards and not be awarded only to those who have retired. Similarly, the distribution across geographical regions is not representative of the distribution of the ISHS membership and this imbalance needs to be addressed. Equally, the gender distribution is not representative of the distribution within the ISHS membership and that disparity needs to be addressed urgently.

The Horticulture Innovation Awards that have been made since 2014 are indicative of the exciting developments that occur globally on an annual basis within the wider horticulture sector. This award brings prestige to individuals, groups and commercial organisations who are recipients and can also reflect well on the levels of innovation and excellence that are taking place within horticultural sectors and even countries. It seems reasonable to expect that such an award should be made annually given the diversity of horticulture and the frequent contributions being made on a regular basis within horticultural science.

## The Awards Committee

The **ISHS Awards Committee** is a standing committee that evaluates and recommends to Council the nominations for Honorary Members, ISHS Fellows and Horticulture

Innovation Awards. The committee is composed of six voting members plus the chairperson. The President of the ISHS or nominated Board member chairs the committee. Decisions are taken by majority of all voting members. A recommendation for an award must receive five favourable votes. Voting members within the Awards Committee are appointed by the Council for a 4-year term and can be reappointed; the Awards Committee decides about its internal organization and functioning.

## Standards for the ISHS Awards

The standards for the awards are set by the Awards Committee and are not disclosed. However, the achievements of current recipients provide some indication of what is expected.

For Honorary Member awards, the candidates should demonstrate exceptional service to the Society. Typically, this is demonstrated as being a:

- Board member for at least two 4-year terms, **plus** membership of either the Executive Committee (two 4-year terms) or of the Council (two 4-year terms) – i.e., 12-16 years of commitment to the ISHS at the highest levels, or
- Division (previously Section or Commission) Chair for at least two 4-year terms, **plus** convener/co-convener of at least two ISHS symposia, **plus** editor/co-editor of at least one *Acta Horticulturae*, or
- Convener/co-convener of at least four ISHS symposia **plus** editor/co-editor of at least four *Acta Horticulturae*.

For Fellows, typical achievements are as follows:

- Sustained output of refereed manuscripts over at least 30 years, with more than 100-120 such manuscripts or books/book chapters, is expected – **plus** significant involvement in international conferences including in the role of an invited speaker, **plus** evidence of leadership at an international level in their specific area of horticultural research, or
- Sustained output of extension/advisory publications over an extended period of time **plus** evidence of outstanding performance in areas relating to technology transfer and adoption, or
- Sustained release of new cultivars **plus** a significant number of refereed manuscripts, **plus** evidence of leadership at an international level in their specific area of horticultural science.

## Nominating your colleagues

Each member should consider nominating other ISHS colleagues who can be shown to meet the exemplary standards expected for these prestigious awards. All nominations

are kept confidential throughout the nomination process – including to the nominee.

The key to any nomination is for the proposer to prepare a well-reasoned **nomination statement** showing that the candidate meets the very high standards required for the award. This statement should be supported by a **full curriculum vitae** for a Fellow Award – usually obtainable from the web or on a confidential basis from a colleague of the nominee. For Honorary Member nominations, a **record of the nominee's contributions to the ISHS** can be sought from the ISHS website (ishs.org) using the surname in the search option provided. This is particularly helpful in terms of preparing lists of *Acta Horticulturae* publications, the details of symposia that have been organised and the *Acta Horticulturae* volumes that have been edited. Membership lists detail the roles served on the Board, Executive Committee (including Working Groups) and Council. Some assistance from headquarters staff may be necessary to confirm specific dates of service within these various roles.

Once the nomination is prepared, together with a cover letter, **five letters of support from at least three different countries** are required for each nomination.

The coordinated nomination is submitted to the Executive Director in confidence. Nominations can be prepared and submitted for consideration by the Awards Committee at any time during the year.

## Concluding comments

There are currently few nominations submitted annually for ISHS Awards. In fact, less than a handful of members have taken time to seek recognition of their colleagues over the past 50 years. Individual ISHS members should consider nominating those colleagues who have made exceptional contributions to the ISHS and/or those who have made highly meritorious contributions to international science.

These should be career awards and not be limited to retirement awards for only a few members. In particular, the current imbalance in gender, race, ethnicity, and geographical distribution of these awards must be addressed. ●



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### > About the author

Emeritus Professor Ian Warrington served on the ISHS Council (1990-2002), the Board as Vice-President and Chair of the Executive Committee (2002-2010) and was Congress Co-Chair (2010-2014). He is a Fellow and Honorary Member of ISHS. Before retirement, he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Massey University and, previously, Chief

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