

HAMILTON GARDENS WINS INTERNATIONAL GARDEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

1 OCTOBER 2014

Hamilton Gardens has received the prestigious International Garden of the Year award.

The win was announced today [1 October 2014] as part of the 2014 Garden Tourism Awards held at the International Conference Gardens Without Limits conference in Metz, France.

The annual award is presented to gardens which distinguish themselves in the development and promotion of the garden experience as a tourism attraction.

Previous winners have included the Singapore Botanic Garden - which is currently applying for UNESCO World Heritage Status - and the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle in Merano, Italy.

Mayor Julie Hardaker says "This is fantastic news. It puts Hamilton on the world gardens stage and I am sure the whole of Hamilton will be celebrating. It comes just as we start a major development programme at the Gardens which will increase the tourism options."

Hamilton Gardens Director Dr Peter Sergel says: "Many local individuals and organisations have contributed to the creation of Hamilton Gardens, and this is some well-deserved recognition for what they have achieved. There is a lot more garden development still to occur and we're constantly improving the way we do things. However this international award confirms we're on the right track."

Hamilton Gardens' concept of tracing The Story of Gardens through different civilisations and time is considered internationally unique. This concept was recognised by award juror Michel Gauthier, who said the award from industry peers indicated Hamilton Gardens was "a leading example of integrating quality garden experiences to the tourism industry".

Four gardens from around the world were considered for this unique award, with garden tourism expert Dr Richard Benfield nominating Hamilton Gardens. Following his visit in 2013 the American scholar said Hamilton Gardens' concept of telling The Story of Gardens is unique in the world and visually spectacular. "The concept is, by far, the most exciting I have seen in my 20-year career as a researcher in the field of garden tourism."

Hamilton Gardens' development has been fast-tracked after Hamilton City Council approved a targeted rate for five more gardens within four years adopted in Council's 2014/15 Annual Plan. The proposed gardens, and associated visitor facilities, will cost \$7 million, however

consultancy firm Horwath HTL estimates this investment will be recouped within three years through increased economic benefits to the region. Additional funding for the Gardens is being sought from grants and sponsorship.

Note: Choosing the International Garden of the Year award recipient was initially scheduled for March 2015. However, the announcement was brought forward to coincide with the International Conference Gardens Without Limits conference this month.

Images of Hamilton Gardens

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/oudn9o2vcsrut95/AACcvh25ZByBRs1gDp-kv6Kla?dl=0>

Additional information:

- Hamilton Gardens: www.hamiltongardens.co.nz
- Proposed gardens: www.hamiltongardens.co.nz/144/events-news/proposed-gardens
- Richard Benfield: <http://web.ccsu.edu/faculty/benfield/default.htm>

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