

APHA Inspector Andrew Gaunt awarded RHS Veitch Memorial Medal

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The prestigious award is presented annually to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of horticultural science and practice.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency is delighted to announce that Plant Health and Seeds Inspector Andrew Gaunt has been awarded the prestigious Veitch Memorial Medal (VMM); an international honour presented annually by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of horticultural science and practice.

APHA's first Plant Health and Seeds Inspector ever to receive this distinction, marking a significant achievement both for him and for the Agency. The RHS awarding committee recognised Andrew's exceptional commitment to industry outreach, stakeholder engagement, and the consistently high standard of his inspection work.

Andrew received the award at a ceremony held at the RHS Linley Hall in London on Tuesday 24 March.

Beyond his APHA role, Andrew is also a National Plant Collection Holder, and his dedication to safeguarding the plant genus *Hedychium* was highlighted. His expertise, passion, and contributions, both professionally and personally, exemplify the very best of the plant health community.

APHA Chief Executive Richard Lewis said:

"This is an outstanding award, and Andrew is truly worthy of its recognition. I am in awe of Andrew's personal contribution and of course, delighted that he represents APHA, for which he works tirelessly in his role as a Plant Health and Seeds Inspector. Many, many congratulations Andrew."

Defra Chief Plant Health Officer Professor Nicola Spence said:

"I am delighted that Andrew has been awarded the Veitch Medal by the RHS in recognition of his outstanding contribution to horticulture both through his exceptional skills and knowledge in his role and as an accomplished horticulturalist whose National Plant Collection at Plant Heritage is a testament to his passion for, and knowledge of the exotic family of plants known as *Hedychium*, or flowering gingers.

"Andrew's collection is a valuable resource for conserving the diversity of cultivated plants and is open to the public for visits and educational purposes."

Andrew Gaunt said:

"It's great to work in the horticultural industry, they are such an enthusiastic, energetic and supportive group; all working to promote the enjoyment of plants wherever they might be growing.

"I was surprised and delighted when I heard I was being awarded this medal. It makes it extra special when it comes from industry, especially from the RHS with its historical importance and continued promotion and engagement of horticulture for all. My thanks to my nominators and to all

those I have worked with for their support in making this happen.”

Andrew studied Agricultural Technology at university before working at the then Ministry of Agriculture until 1997, when he joined the Agency as a PHSI. Andrew has discovered over 65 first ‘new findings’ or findings on a ‘new host’, including a weevil on *Inga edulis*, which was new to science. Andrew also led on the first European outbreak of Thrips palmi and in 2015, dealt with the first interception of *Xylella fastidiosa*.

As part of the Plant Health Inspectorate Delivery Team, he has also provided technical support for wider international plant health, such as the EU Commission Overseas mission and for the European Plant Protection Organisation.

As well as being involved in delivering legislation and statutory work training, Andrew is instrumental in delivering biosecurity training packages. As the number of listed quarantine pests and diseases began to rise in the early 2000s, Andrew started working with the RHS, National Trust, English Heritage and other government departments, before rolling out biosecurity training to the wider industry and the public, often outside of his working hours. This work is still ongoing and last year, he helped introduce biosecurity plans for National Collection Holders.

Public and stakeholder engagement is central to APHA’s mission as it strengthens trust in our expertise and builds understanding and support for the actions that we take to protect plant and animal health.

Andrew’s passion for plants continues outside of work. In 1998, he started collecting Hedychium Ginger Lilies and ten years later, he achieved National Collection Status for Hedychium.

He is a member of the Plant Heritage Conservation Committee and has supplied plants for the Gold Medal stand at Chelsea Flower Show for the Plant Heritage in 2021 and for APHA in 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/apha-inspector-andrew-gaunt-awarded-rhs-veitch-memorial-medal>