

Gold for Dr Jo Clark: recognising an Herculean task

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Dr Jo Clark, Head of Research at the Future Trees Trust, has become the first person for nearly five years to be awarded the Royal Forestry Society's (RFS) Gold Medal for distinguished services to forestry. She is also the first woman to receive the award.

She received it for: "A Herculean task and one that goes on to a large extent 'under the radar', for it is future generations that will really benefit from Jo's painstaking work. It is her work that will ensure that our woodlands will be capable of producing better timber."

The award was made at a presentation by Royal Forestry Society President Ben Herbert at the [Future Trees Trust](#) Supporters Day at Buscot and Coleshill Estates in Oxfordshire. Future Trees Trust is the only UK charity dedicated to improving broadleaved trees.

Presenting the award he said: "I am delighted to award the Royal Forestry Society's Gold Medal, which is rarely and sparingly given, to Dr Jo Clark. Her contribution and knowledge of the future trees we should plant is immeasurable and without her and her work I think we would be at a loss to find what trees we should be planting for the future."

Future Trees Trust Chair John Leigh Pemberton, said: "I am absolutely delighted Jo has been awarded this medal, She has been working largely on her own for 25 years and it takes a very special kind of person to do this. Her contribution to the UK's forestry is huge. There is probably nobody now who is going to have such a beneficial effect on UK forestry."

Citation

The citation for her award reads: "Jo has been tireless in her work to improve our timber species. Starting with liaison with landowners and foresters to find the very best "plus trees", working with nurserymen, finding sites for progeny trials and working with their owners.

"That is just the beginning. From there grafted material is planted out in carefully laid out and recorded trial plots. Years of data is collected and analysed before sites can be rogued to produce seed orchards of the finest genetics from which the ultimate "Tested" quality seed is eventually produced.

"This is a Herculean task and one that goes on to a large extent "under the radar", for it is future generations that will really benefit from Jo's painstaking work. It is her work that will ensure that our woodlands will be capable of producing better timber."

Career

Jo began her career working for the US Forest Service on the selection of native species, tree breeding and management of seed orchards and progeny trials in the Pacific North West of the USA.

She holds a BSc in Plant Biology, an MSc in Natural Resource Management and a PhD from Bangor University for her work on the adaptation of Ash to climate change.

After eight years working in the USA, Jo joined the Northmoor Trust, (later to become the Earth Trust) as manager of their 40 acre research woodland at Paradise Wood. In 2013 she was recruited by the Future Trees Trust as Research Coordinator. She became Head of Research in 2018.

She joins an exclusive [group of Gold Medal holders](#). Hers was the first Gold Medal to be presented since 2019 when Geraint Richards, Head Forester for the Duchy of Cornwall, received the award from the then Prince Charles.

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Company Contact:

[Royal Forestry Society](#)

T. 01789 841425

E. Communications@rfs.org.uk

W. <https://www.rfs.org.uk>

Additional Contact(s):

07973 523168

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