18 August. ***Growing New Zealand Alpine Plants*** **- Dr David Lyttle,**
Otago Alpine Garden Group. Reviewed by *Allison Knight*

Alpine enthusiast David Lyttle informed and entertained an appreciative audience on the finer points of growing alpine plants. Here is my version of some of his tips, which were superbly illustrated by dazzling images of New Zealand alpine plants in the wild.
Seed should be dry and clean and is best sown fresh. Otherwise store in the fridge in a paper envelope or bag. Sow into commercial seed-raising mix, on the top of potting mix containing fertilizer. Cover with seed-raising mix and top off with a layer of fine chip of the size used as grit on icy roads. This is available from Blackhead Quarry. Be aware that some seeds take up to 2 years to germinate. *Clematis* can take at least a year.
Cuttings. Semi-hardwood cuttings are best taken late summer – early autumn. Cut below a node, remove flowers and pinch out the growing tip. Make scrapes along the base, moisten, dip into hormone rooting powder, then place firmly in horticultural sand or sharp sand. Keep moist and be patient – rooting may take over a year.
Celmisia. These striking mountain daisies do best on a windy, south-facing slope. They are prone to water stress and fungal attack. Don't let the ground get too dry, nor water overhead on a sunny day, and use Trichopel fungicide. *Celmisia* can be grown from rosettes or seed, but most of the seed is not viable – just pick out the healthiest ones.
Pots. Growing in pots allows the plants to be moved to suit conditions. Mulch with gravel to suppress weeds and top dress with bonedust and Hypertufa pots made of sand, cement and peat are good.
Labels. A 6B pencil, pressed hard on plastic gives a lasting label.
Cats. Cultivating *Acaena* is not very compatible with Persian cats. (Sorry, Kelvin)
Dogs. *Aciphylla* on the front verge is a good dog repellent that doesn't need mowing.
Slugs and Liverworts. Question time brought forth some interesting remedies from the audience as well as from Dave. A thick mulch of stone chip helps repel liverworts, as does painting them with vinegar. For slugs Belinda suggested a saucer of fresh beer – not flat, and Robyn offered circles of ash or crushed eggshell.

The advice was admirable, but the photography was breathtaking.The challenging monocarpic (flowers once then dies) penwiper, *Notothlaspi rosulatum,* growing amidst the scree on Mt St Patrick, was one a sight to remember. Thank you, David, for a many-splendoured evening.

Tavora Reserve (Bobby's Head), 25 July 2004 *Theresa Downs*

Another Otago Botanical Society trip graced with stunning weather; if not a tad crisp, with frost on the sand dunes and ice in the stream! A group of about twenty headed to Tavora Reserve, purchased in 1993 by the Yellow-Eyed Penguin Trust. While some of the area is still grazed, the Trust has made excellent progress over the past decade in restoration plantings. To date these are concentrated along the stream and on the sand dunes and hill slopes. Plants characteristic of the area have been carefully selected, locally sourced and propagated at the Trust's nursery.

We were fortunate in being guided by members of the Trust's staff and committee, giving us a personal insight into the project. The reserve is open to the public, and a walk around the track takes around an hour (at non-botanist pace!). We were provided with a draft information sheet for self-guided walkers, highlighting flora and fauna in the reserve. The Trust will have laminated copies for use available at the gate; a great idea enabling people to get the most from their visit.

The walk follows the stream to the sandy beach; one of few along this stretch of coastline. It is a stunning location, especially with the morning light on the low dunes, resplendent with their restored cover of golden pikao (pingao, *Desmoschoenus spiralis*) and flourishing shore spurge (*Euphorbia glauca*). Other dune plantings include *Coprosma acerosa*, *Austrofestuca littoralis*, and Cook's scurvy grass (*Lepidium oleraceum*). Successful use of threatened native plants makes Tavora important both as a restoration model and future seed source.

From the beach the walk zig-zags up a hill slope, affording excellent views of the beach and cliff-dominated coastline beyond. The influence of vegetation type on the dune morphology is apparent, with a lower, gently-sloping profile in the areas restored so far. In contrast, the adjacent dune scarp is densely covered with invasive marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), which will be progressively replaced.

While we did not spy any penguins on the day, fresh tracks were present in the moist sand. The reserve supports nesting yellow-eyed penguins (*Megadyptes antipodes*) and blue penguins (*Eudyptula minor*). We did spot New Zealand fur seals (*Arctocephalus forsteri)* on rocks at the base of the steep cliffs to the north.

Earlier native plantings are doing well in the hilltop paddock, accompanied by scattered remnant trees which survived grazing. These include kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*), ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*), cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*), and lowland ribbonwood (*Plagianthus regius*). The deciduous ribbonwood trees were virtually leafless, revealing the hemi-parasitic *Tupea antartica*. These threatened native plants are protected from possum browse by metal bands encircling the ribbonwood trunks.

Sunshine brought out the group's usual friendly banter and clever wit and the two (much) younger members of the party were most compliant, being carried around by dad Ian and Norm. The walk emerges at the roadside opposite the forested Goodwood Reserve, to which the Trust's plantings will one day be linked. Many thanks to the Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust for this inspiring visit and all the best with your ongoing restoration work.

Photos from the Botanical Society of Otago field trip to Tavora Reserve.

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Top. BSO members in the July sunshine at Tavora.

Bottom. Coastal plantings of native *Euphorbia glauca* and *Austrofestuca littoralis*

P 30. View south from Tavora. *Theresa Downs*