

On the other hand, when for reasons good or bad, an old tree goes, it is sometimes possible to perpetuate it. For instance, when the magnificent cabbage tree, Te Ti-tutahi, near the old Newmarket school was cut down, Colonel Morrow, infuriated at its destruction planted a branch in his garden at 28 Almorah Rd. Epsom, where it has thriven mightily. There is a possibility the Historic Places Society may be able to establish a third generation Ti-tutahi on the original site.

But what of trees that were here prior to the establishment of settlement (before 1840)?

There are the Domain Kanakas previously mentioned. There are two magnificent pohutukawas at the eastern end of Cockle Bay, some at Sulphur Beach, Northcote and few others scattered round the harbour. There is also a fine old Pohutukawa on the original Garlick property at Mt. Albert opposite the Methodist Church. This originally had twenty trunks and even now has sixteen.

We trust that any members who have any further information about our historic trees, either living or dead, will communicate with Dr. Millener. It is hoped that one day the Institute of Horticulture will publish an article by Dr. Millener which will furnish a permanent record of what it has been possible to unearth on the subject of our precious, but diminishing store of historic trees.

SOME WEEDS IN MY GARDEN.

Part I.

M. Crookes.

As my readers will be only too well aware, New Zealand has a remarkably rich and varied weed flora. Immigrants from many diverse parts of the world crowd to our hospitable soils and nestle comfortably in, to add variety and interest to the home garden. So perhaps if we give a little attention to a few of the commonest we may come to view them, if not with respect, at least with respectful hatred.

Many weeds belong to families which include our choicest garden flowers, but require none of the care bestowed upon their more pampered relatives.

Who does not love carnations? These are aristocrats of the pink family (Caryophyllaceae) which also provides us with a good harvest of persistent weeds.

The Common Chickweed (Stellaria media Vill.) is a little spreading annual plant with smooth (hairless) opposite leaves. The succulent stems are bare except for--mark well--a single row of reflexed hairs that runs down only one side and is to be found on the edges of the small leaf stalks. As Hutchinson points out, these hairs, "are readily wetted by rain or dew and retain a considerable amount of water. This is conducted down the leaf stalks where some is absorbed by the lower cells of the hairs and any surplus is passed on to the next pair of leaves, and so on."

The flowers are small, regular and white and the five little petals are deeply cleft. The little stamens are usually opposite the five green sepals. When young the anthers are a deep pink and when seen under the lens at this stage, the little flower is a thing of very real beauty. The name "chickweed" refers to the fact that the plant is readily devoured by birds including cage birds. But not only birds can enjoy it. It can furnish a pleasant little addition to the spring salad, and if boiled or steamed-in sufficient quantity-can be used as a green vegetable. It has demulcent properties, and is sometimes used in the making of ointments for chilblains, skin diseases, etc. Altogether the old herbalist might well describe it as "a fine soft pleasing herb".

Stellaria from Latin *stella*, a star, referring to the star-shaped flowers of the genus, and media Latin, intermediate.

Another common Chickweed in my garden is the Mouse-eared Chickweed. Ah, you say another Stellaria! But no. It belongs to the genus Cerastium. Cerastium glomeratum Thuill. Is the annual or biennial mouse-eared chickweed. It has branched ascending stems and stalkless opposite leaves, with unbroken margins and blunt tips. Both leaves and stems are hairy, some of the hairs being glandular. The flowers form little clusters at the end of the flower stalk. The five little sepals are hairy and pointed and about the same length as the petals which are divided to about a quarter of their length. There are ten stamens and the pistil has five styles which are opposite the sepals. (Stellaria media has three styles). The fruit, unlike that of Stellaria which was a somewhat ovoid capsule opening by 6 valves, is a curved capsule (a dry fruit which splits) opening by ten small teeth. Cerastium from the Greek, Keras a horn, from the fruit which is usually curved rather like a horn, and glomeratum, a cluster alluding to the clustered flowers.

I have not experimented with this weed as a table delicacy. Some members might like to try it.

A somewhat more spectacular though by no means more popular weed is the attractive Burmese Buttercup, Oxalis cernua Thunb. It is readily recognised, as its large bright yellow flowers do not grow singly but form umbels at the end of the flower stalks. Apart from its nice appearance it is a thoroughly nasty piece of work, leaving quantities of hardy little bulbs behind when uprooted. It is too familiar to require further description. Oxalis from Greek oxys acid, refers to the presence of Oxalic acid especially in the leaves, and Latin cernus, drooping.

A family that contributes its full quota of unwanted immigrants is the Thyme family, Labiateae, so called because in the more advanced members of the family the flowers are asymmetrical and one of the petals forms a lip which usually forms a landing place for pollinating insects. Two species are growing side by side in my garden just now. The Red Dead Nettle Lamium purpureum L. The hairy stems, square in section are spreading and ascending. The stalked opposite leaves are rather heart-shaped and coarsely toothed. The flowers are a sort of magenta red. The sepals form a tube to about half way then separate into five pointed lobes. The petals are united and later widen to form a flower with the upper petal hooded and a lower lip divided into two parts and mottled with crimson. Inspected under a lens the little ring of flowers terminating the stem is charming, moreover the lens shows the hairiness of the

the outside of the hood and also the stamens with their deep orange pollen and hairy anthers. The Labiate fruit is highly characteristic. The ovary is deeply divided into four parts with the pistil rising from the midst of them. Later these parts become four little single seeded nuts. In the Red Dead Nettle, however, the nut tops are flattened as if cut off. This "cut off" appearance distinguishes them from those of the weed next discussed.

In Sweden both the White and the Red Dead Nettle are boiled as a vegetable. The Red Dead Nettle is quite pleasant, but like the chickweed would need to be gathered in quantity to feed a family.

The weed I collected alongside the Dead Nettle was the Field Woundwort, Stachys arvensis L. It is a rather similar annual plant but stiffer and with smaller, less brightly coloured flowers circling the stem. The united petals scarcely exceed the sepals and the flower is less widely opened. Unlike the Red Dead Nettle it is self-pollinated. It also lacks the hairiness of the hood and anthers. Its nutlets are rounded not truncated. It is a somewhat spreading plant sometimes about a foot high. I have not tried eating it, but this and other Stachys species served our forefathers in the staunching of wounds, hence the popular names.

Stachys, from the Greek stachys, a spike referring to the flowers and avensis, of cultivated fields.

The five species discussed above do not, of course, begin to exhaust the weeds of my garden, but further discussion must be left for a later News Letter.

M. Crookes.