

QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

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AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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MAINLY HERBAL

Herbs are rather the order of the day as far as the present News Letter is concerned.

An evening on "Herbs and Herb Gardens" was given by Mrs. A. Coyle and Miss Crookes on Wednesday, 2nd October in the Botany Department, Auckland University College.

Miss Crookes introduced the subject with a brief lecturette, after which the members repaired to the Junior laboratory where a demonstration of herbs was on display. After specimens had been examined the members had a topical supper consisting of various types of sandwiches made of home-made bread and herb butter, varied by cheese biscuits spread with still further samples of herb butter, all accompanied by our usual coffee - not, be it said, herb coffee.

A considerable number of herbs were on display, the greater number grown by Mrs. Coyle in her own garden. These were supplemented by additions mostly consisting of common weeds.

Some members have desired to have a list of plants on display with some account of their uses. Space does not admit of much detail here, but the recommended books will enable enquirers to round off their information.

Herbs of value are found distributed amongst a great many plant families, but three families in particular contribute a generous quota:

The Umbelliferae or Parsley family, the Labiatae or Sage family and the Compositae or daisy family are particularly important for the herbalist.

The Umbelliferae gives us Parsley (Carum petroselinum), Angelica (Archangelica officinalis), valuable in cooking and possessing tonic properties, Dill (Anethum graveolens) seeds can be used as carraway seeds, dill water has been used for digestive troubles, Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare) used for flavouring fish - (Note. I understand that this plant must be collected at a certain time as otherwise the form growing in New Zealand may have unpleasant effects. Members are advised to go cannily with this herb!) Hemlock (Conium maculatum) a deadly poisonous plant,

but it is used medicinally as a narcotic.

Other important members of this family not on display are Sweet Cicly (Myrris odorata), Lovage (Levisticum officinale), Cumin (Cuminum cyminum), Coriander (Coriandrum sativum), Caraway (Carum carvi), Anise (Pimpinella anisum) and others.

The Labiatae is a family rich in fragrant and useful herbs. We had on display:

Common Mint (Mentha viridis)

Apple mint (Mentha rotundifolia)

Bergomot mint, sometimes called eau-de-cologne plant (Mentha citrata)

Pennyroyal (Mentha pulegium)

Catmint (Nepeta cataria)

Garden catmint (Nepeta mussini)

Thyme (Thymus vulgaris)

Lemon thyme (Thymus serpyllum var. citriodes)

Sage (Salvia officinalis)

Apple sage (a variegated form of the above).

Wood sage (Teucrium scorodonia)

Lemon balm (Melissa officinalis) a useful and very readily grown herb - Mrs.

F. Wood tells me it grows as a weed at Hula.

Marjoram (Origanum onites)

Betony (Stachys betonica)

Horehound (Marrubium vulgare)

Borage (Borago officinalis)

Self-heal (Prunella vulgaris)

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis). Both the bushy and climbing species were on display.

Lavender (Lavendula) was on display. There are various species of this charming plant in addition to Lavendula vera the true lavender.

The Daisy Family.

Wormwood (Artemisia absintium)

Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris)

Southernwood (Artemisia abrotanum)

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)

Dandelion (Taraxacum officinalis)

Tansy (Tanacetum vulgare)

Chicory (Cichorium intyhus)

Costmary (Tanacetum basamita)

Lavender cotton (Santolina chamaecyparissus)

In addition to these main groups, herbs were on display from a wide range of families.

Wintercress (Barbarea verna). Cruciferae.

In addition the cabbage family provides us with a number of useful herbs such as Shepherd's purse (Capsella bursa - pastoris).

Sheep's sorrel (Rumex acetolla) Polygonaceae.

Dock (Rumex obtusifolia) Polygonaceae

Corn salad (Valerianella olitoria) Caryophyllaceae.

Rue (Ruta graveolens) Rutaceae.

Wild strawberry (Fragaria vesca) Rosaceae.

Greater celendine (Chelidonium major) Papaveraceae.
Lesser celendine (Picaria verna) Rosaceae.
Soapwort (Saponaria officinalis) Caryophyllaea.

These are, I think, the more important of the herbs on exhibition. Space does not permit the giving of medicinal or culinary details. For these I refer members to the following books:

British Herbs - Florence Ransom - A Pelican Book. English price 2/6. readily available.

Herbs and Herb Gardening - E.H. Rhode (The Medici Society) 7/6.

Herbs Make Food Delicious - A Simple Guide to the Cultivation of Herbs in New Zealand and Their Culinary Uses - by Davina MacQuarrie and Audrey Bellet. (This is an inexpensive little booklet costing I think 1/6.

There is, of course, quite a large literature dealing with herbs and herb gardens, and the above books will give additional references.

We in New Zealand also have plants and trees that are possibly or probably useful in the cure of disease. Recently the Cancer Research Society has asked for the co-operation of the Botanical Society in seeking material for its studies. It would like any or all of the following:

Pimelia longifolia
Pimelia prostrata
Epilobium junceum
Epilobium pubens
Halorrhagis depressa
Halorrhagis incana
Gunnera monoica
Gunnera stigosa

1 lb. each of flowers, fruits, leaves, bark, aerial wood and ground wood or roots of each of species.

In considering the directions of the Cancer Research Society, it must be remembered that they apply more particularly to trees. A very large number of plants and trees are being sought by the researchers, but it was thought best that the Botanical Society should concentrate on a small group. It so happens that most of these are herbs whose bark, roots and leaves can scarcely be dealt with separately by members. Members should simply collect as many whole plants or small shrubs as possible. These should