

NEWS LETTER

AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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It has been decided by the Committee of the Botanical Society that the News Letter shall in future be published three times a year instead of quarterly, consequently it was not published in June as in previous years. It is hoped that this retrenchment will help to nourish the Society's finances.

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The Society has had many pleasant excursions this year and it is unfortunate that space does not allow us to give an account of them all. A word might however be said about the Clevedon trip since this brought us into contact with one or two things we do not usually see. Of particular interest were some hybrid coprosmas. These consisted of crosses between C. propinqua and C. robusta. Members were able to examine for themselves both parents and intermediate forms. We were also able to see C. propinqua in berry. We are used to the orange and crimson berries of this genus; indeed it seems impossible to take an excursion about Auckland without seeing them, but the berries of propinqua are a translucent blue, somewhat resembling those of the sand coprosma of our local West Coast, though the berries of propinqua have dark blue flecks.

The hybrid between propinqua and robusta was originally thought to be an independent species and was known as C. cunninghamii and described as having linear leaves  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 2" long. But its hybrid origin became suspected, since as Oliver remarks, "Almost every shape of leaf between C. propinqua and C. robusta may be found in any locality where the two species meet." Any lingering doubts about the matter however were settled by H.H. Allan who crossed the two species and obtained plants similar to the wild

cunninghamii. Subsequently he crossed the progeny and found the F2 (second filial) generation even more varied than the F1 (first filial) generation. Propinqua also crosses with C. repens and C. obconica. The common form var. propinqua (var. typica in Oliver) is widespread, but there are two other varieties, var. martinii a Chatham Island variety and var. latiuscula which is found between lat. 40° 30' and 43°.

Another plant we found in the swampy area, Plagianthus divaricatus is superficially like propinqua but lacks stipules and also the little pits at the back of the leaf so characteristic of coprosma spp. Its fruit is not a berry, but is dry and splits and its stamens, as is characteristic of the marrow family to which it belongs, have their stems joined to form a little column (the large flowers of hibiscus, its showy flowered relative, show this characteristic clearly). Apparently it hybridizes with its large leaved relative the ribbonwood, P. betulinus (from the Latin betula, a birch) and the name P. cymosus was applied by Kirk to plants about midway between the two species. Allan comments that "the polymorphic series along the Pelorus River leaves no doubt that P. betulinus and P. divaricatus there hybridize." Both species have juvenile forms. P. divaricatus we saw at Clevedon was erect, but some forms are prone. Allan describes it as "A somewhat polymorphic species not yet adequately studied."

We also saw many specimens of the ribbonwood (P. betulinus) which is rare on the Waitakeres. Members will recollect we saw plenty of it during our pleasant Onewhero excursion led by Miss M. Barr. At Clevedon we also met kaikomako (Pennantia corymbosa) used by the old time Maori for producing fire by friction. It has a very well marked juvenile form of the divaricating shrub type.

As regard ferns both Athyrium australe and A. japonicum used to be common by the lowland streams in that area. Owing however to the assiduity of local farmers in clearing creek banks we saw only a few small specimens of A. japonicum.

One of the highlights of the trip was the finding by Mr Butler of that rare orchid Bulbophyllum tuberculatum. We had a note on this orchid illustrated by line drawing in the News Letter of March 1962 when it was noted as discovered by Messrs. Kitchen and Warren in the vicinity of Pukematekeo. Later it was again found by Mr Butler on our excursion to small areas of bush in the vicinity of Waimaku. The Clevedon specimen was found growing on a tree a few feet from the ground.

Our thanks to Mr. Butler and Mr Warren who so ably led this excursion and also to our good friend Mr. Ross McKenzie who met us at Clevedon and kindly piloted us to various places of botanical interest.