

THE ROLE OF THE AMATEUR BOTANIST

Members are often diffident about expressing their botanical ideas, and are quick to retort that they have no formal training. I maintain this should not deter them from speaking or writing thereon. Some of our most eminent botanists have been self-trained, and with a keen eye and intense interest have contributed great funds of botanical knowledge - and their role continues to be important, as any thinking professional will realise.

Those who spend much time in the field making accurate observations are the ones best equipped to test the validity of species and add to the known distribution, since they study the living communities which give the real clue to many problems. Careful examination of specimens, reference to available literature and authentic specimens, together with full notes can go far to solving the many problems in our flora, and it is this individual effort which is so necessary if we are to become competent, and not have to rely on others continually.

We are fortunate now in having plentiful botanical literature to form a basis for our studies, and fuller use of this is needed. We also have here in Auckland the excellent collections of Cheese-man and other botanists to refer to - and what would these have been without the painstaking collections of a few keen amateurs throughout the country? It is perhaps not admitted by many professional botanists the debt they owe to the competent amateur, and I would stress the valuable work that can be done by them.

THE YOUNG BOTANIST

It is noticeable in the Society how the younger generation of botanists is lacking. With so many other things to interest young people, this is perhaps not surprising. If botanical study is to continue therefore we have a responsibility to encourage young people, and the formation of three Junior Naturalists Clubs in Auckland suburbs is highly commendable and worthy of our support - as indeed our President has given to them. They should serve as a recruiting ground for societies such as ours, and so further the study of the New Zealand Flora, particularly in the Auckland Province.

Their minds, being the most active, and with suitable tuition, be invaluable assets, and should not be allowed to become despondent through lack of attention, which their teachers may not always be in a position to give. We must therefore make sure that any young people coming forward are given the help and encouragement they are looking for. Our junior members number only 16 and I feel this number could be much increased with a little more attention.