

placed on top of the flowers. After 24 hours the top tray is used for the bottom and vice-versa with a fresh batch of flowers. This process is repeated 36 times, the fat absorbing more and more of the perfume. The fat is then melted down, the fat extracted with alcohol and the alcohol then distilled off under a vacuum, the result being the basis of French perfumes.

Other points of interest that emerged were, firstly, that the presence or absence of a certain compound has in several cases provided chemical evidence to help the botanist. Such evidence suggested, for example, that Hall's totara was a separate species and not just a variety of Podocarpus totara. Secondly, the smell of a plant can provide a good guide to its identification, thus Asplenium bulbiferum has no distinctive smell whereas the fronds of Asplenium lamprophyllum smell of oil of wintergreen when crushed.

This was a lecture full of interesting facts and amusing anecdotes and was greatly enjoyed by all present.

A.D.P.

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Those who curse some plant names and their authors, may be interested in the following quote from "The Plant Hunters" by Whittle, which shows just how much soul-searching goes into the naming process on occasions!

" No greater or more bizarre affair has ever occurred than in the struggle between the supporters of Victoria regia and the supporters of Victoria regina in the naming of the Amazon water lily, which took place over a hundred years ago. It involved eminent botanists of all nations, two learned societies, half the drawing rooms of Potsdam, Paris and London, a collection of explorers, two dukes and Queen Victoria herself."

Our own local specimen of this remarkable lily grows in the tropical house at the Auckland Domain Winter Gardens and contrary to popular belief, bears flowers fairly regularly throughout the summer. The floating leaves, which can reach a diameter of up to 6 feet, usually have upturned edges revealing the extremely spiny under surface.

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Did you know that the All Russian Society for the Conservation of Nature has a staggering 16 million members and is probably the largest voluntary organization of its kind in the world?

It may also come as something of a surprise that in a totalitarian state there are, in the various republics, conservation boards and councils with powers equal to ministries or even higher. These are not merely consultative but have the right to veto badly designed projects and to force the reconsideration of development projects at an early stage. (From an article in New Scientist, April 1970.)

Why do we have to lag behind in tackling so vital a problem?