

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Earlier this year I acquired a plant of Parahebe canescens for our rock garden and am pleased to say that it is now spreading, almost unnoticed, far and wide. I was therefore particularly interested when I came across the following description of it (under the old name of Veronica canescens) in ' The English Rock Garden ' by Reginald Farrer, written in 1913 - " so minute and so dim that you never notice that your piece of broken ground or your sandy bed has been overrun by tiny pervasive shoots, set with pairs of microscopic glandular oval leaves of a blunt invisible green, running flat across the surface here and there; until in July you come round one day and find that whole space peppered with single speedwell stars of delicate clear china blue, that have all the look of having been scattered there from some overhanging spray of Veronica chamaedrys. But this is V. canescens, suddenly sprung to light again, as is its pleasant way, when you are quite sure you lost it in the winter, and know too well that its own place knows it no more. For this lovely little New Zealander - which now never lets you again forget its presence till autumn has long been dank on the garden - turns out not only an easy and a hardy plant, but has the happiest way of seeding itself about in the most unexpected places here and there, where you would never yourself have dreamed of putting it, nor of hoping to see it thrive in a carpet. It lives at home in the dried margins of lakes and pools in both the Islands, and up to 3000' in the mountains; its perfect adaptability to our country is such a pleasant miracle that pieces of the mat should always be secured and potted up in autumn, lest trust in the miracle should betray you, as trust in miracles invariably does, if carried too far."

As I've indicated it seems to grow well enough in Auckland conditions - mine is partially overhung by a Hebe diosmaefolia

A recent visitor to New Zealand was Dr F.H. Perring of the Biological Records Centre at the Monks Wood Experimental Station in England. Dr Perring's first project in the biological recording field was begun twenty years ago when he was based at Cambridge - the production of the Atlas of the British Flora for the Botanical Society of the British Isles. This atlas contains distribution maps for each species of plant occurring in the wild (native, naturalized, garden escape) based on the 10 km square grid system. The plants presence in or absence from each of these squares is recorded, different symbols being used for doubtful old records, old records and new records. I hope to write an article soon giving a detailed description of the methods used for collecting and recording the mass of necessary data.

The methods have since been applied to produce maps for other groups and also to such things as Reserve Recording, where records are made of plants and animals occurring in a particular nature reserve, and of any events within that reserve which may have a lasting biological importance. More detailed studies of the rarer plant species are also being carried out. In this way species threatened with possible extinction can be identified and positive steps taken to prevent this occurrence - it is proposed for instance that seed banks be set up using collections

of rare native plants to be grown specially in Botanic Gardens.

Dr Ferring was invited to come to New Zealand to outline the workings of the British system to both scientific and amateur groups, to assess local conditions and sound out local opinion and advise on possible ways of setting up a scheme which would be suitable for New Zealand. He gave two seminars at the D.S.I.R. at Mt. Albert but was unfortunately not able to address interested amateurs in Auckland, as I understand he did in Wellington and Christchurch, because details of his visit were not known soon enough to arrange a suitable meeting.

If a plant mapping scheme of any kind is started in New Zealand then societies such as the Auckland Botanical Society may well be called on to assist in collecting data. Having been involved myself in a small way in the British scheme I know from personal experience that it can provide a great incentive to amateur botanists to learn to recognize their plants well, to keep accurate records themselves and generally to increase their knowledge of the flora rapidly. In addition to this when the maps are finally published they provide them with an instant reference to tell them which plants they can expect to find in a particular locality they wish to visit - no more searching the scattered literature, no more relying on the chance that some keen botanist has taken the trouble to produce his own species list for an area.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have contributed articles to the Newsletter over the past year. Unfortunately it is being left to our old regular authors to keep us going - no offence to them but in a society with some 260 members it seems a great pity that it is left to so few to write articles, especially when we have a good number of highly competent amateur and professional botanists in our membership. It was said in the October 1966 issue by the then editor that we should regard the Newsletter as the main publication for botany in the Auckland province - this remains just as true today, so please could we see more involvement by members in future. I would particularly welcome articles under the following broad headings:-

1. Accounts of private field trips, particularly if you have visited an area which is not likely to have been seen by many other Society members. Interesting plants can be mentioned in the text but it would also be valuable to attach as full a species list as possible.
2. Notes on unusual plants, or even usual plants doing unusual things.
3. Notes on interesting places to visit.
4. News of conservation efforts you may know all about but not everyone else does. If you see bush being needlessly destroyed or evidence of unnecessary pollution, let us know.
5. News of members of general interest.

And remember - you don't have to have a degree in either Botany or English Literature to write something of use and interest. If the map scheme mentioned above does get off the ground, then accurate records of plants published in our Newsletter will be of immense value. We can start now!