

THISMIA RODWAYI AT PUHIPUHIKatie Reynolds

Towards the end of November 1980 I had a 'phone call from a friend asking me to identify a plant for friend's schoolgirl daughter. "I can but try", I replied, and armed with an address began what proved to be a most interesting and delightful exercise.

Tina and her sister Trixie were boarding privately in Tikipunga in order to attend high school there. By 'phone she told me that the plant was small and saprophytic having no colour in thread-like stems and scale-like leaves. Flowers were transparent and pink to red, and she had found the plant in remnant taraire forest, in litter on the forest floor. "Ha! yoania!" I thought, for this is a plant I long to see. Armed with books and lens I proceeded up to Tikipunga to see the "find". No orchid this! It was as she had described. The fascinating little flower was like a small bright lantern with mitred top and windows. Under a lens the texture was translucent and crystalline. Inside and above the ovary, three large stigmas, pale pale green, positively glowed. They had the appearance of one marvellous three lobed stigma. My memory took me back to a morning in Dr Lucy Moore's office several years before, at Botany Division. There preserved in a bottle she had a Bagnisia flower. With this clue we checked with the description in Flora of New Zealand, Vol. II and found Thismia rodwayi and from there to confirmation in The Oxford Book of New Zealand Plants and Bruce Irwin's fine illustration.

Next I arranged to go up to Puhipuhi to see the growing plant. Tina was at school but had left clear directions for us. The bush, which is damaged taraire remnant, is now shut off from cattle but still shows possum damage. The altitude is 1400 ft. In quite a large area Thismia was growing in one place only, the small patch being not more than half a metre square. We searched throughout and Tina's mother said that the girls had spent considerable time looking for more, but in vain. Other plants of interest there were Pseudopanax edgerleyi and Lophomyrtus bullata.

My warmest thanks go to Tina Hills and her parents. She is to be congratulated too for being so observant. C.W. Devonshire, Mrs Hills and I all thought that even a keen person could be excused for overlooking a few small red flowers almost covered in litter, mistaking them perhaps for fruiting bodies of a small fungus. In searching for such a plant one should proceed on hands and knees. An added advantage would be to be, as Tina was then, fifteen years of age! Here I quote J. Beever on the finding of Yuania. This "find" made my 1980!

MAZUS PUMILIOKatie Reynolds

During October 1981 I was taken up to the Mangonui County to identify a rare fern Christella dentata. The plant I interviewed up there had all the relevant characteristics and I pronounced it to be genuine. Happily, here in my garden Dr John Braggins confirmed my diagnosis so all is well. Mr Bill Sykes also greeted my plant as a well known friend.

As we walked through the damp bush with its rather boggy floor, I found a charming little ground cover plant which in some parts made extensive mats. The leaves, a dull brownish green, were crowded, sometimes overlapping on the creeping stems which rooted as they went along.

Above the leaves, on very slender peduncles of about 10 cm, were one or two to three very dainty flowers, and as many buds again on longish very slender pedicels. Fortunately back in the car I had a lens and some books. Working with the family which was obviously Scrophulariaceae Flora of New Zealand, Vol. I, soon told me that I had Mazus pumilio. On 20 Dec I revisited the area, mainly to collect pollen of Mazus pumilio for Dr Lucy Cranwell. At this time Mazus was in full bloom and in the dappled light of the bush was an enchanting sight. The flowers were mainly pure white with a gold throat. I also had a flush of mauve. Back at home on my first visit I consulted "The Field Book of New Zealand Plants" wherein is a fine coloured sketch of the larger flowered Mazus radicans, with detail of the flower clearly showing the positions of the points of my identification - two long, two short stamens.

The botanists tell me that Mazus pumilio is not uncommon from Cape Horn via van Diemen to Canterbury. I have botanised in many places, and have a good record for the small plants of the forest floor as well as for the forest ferns and their companions, yet this was my first encounter with this delightful little plant and I found the experience to be a memorable one - a highlight in 1981!

A SPECIES OF HYPOLEPIS NEW TO AUCKLAND

R.O. Gardner

In December last year a friend Dr Brent Maxwell showed me a fern he had taken into cultivation from a small but rapidly expanding colony in nearby Lynn Park. Growing on the damp sides of a clay drainage ditch, against a nondescript piece of tea tree scrub, the colony resembled at first sight a patch of sturdy bracken. It proved however to be the first Auckland record of Hypolepis "giant" (only this MS. name of Bob Chinnock can be used here as the genus in N.Z. is under revision; it is Carse's "very robust form" of tenuifolia).

Its northern distribution (from at least the Kermadecs and Norfolk Is. north to Nelson) and its abundance and vigour on the thermally-heated soil at the Waikanae Valley indicate its tropical affinities, and like other Hypolepis species it seems to be somewhat "weedy", i.e., it likes open places and disturbed ground. However, even in northern New Zealand it has been seen only infrequently. It is an attractive plant easy of cultivation; perhaps gardening experience will tell us why such a "healthy" plant should be so sparsely distributed.

Thanks to Patrick Brownsey for information.
A specimen is deposited at AK.