

'the gum which exudes vigorously from this tree is the same as that which is chewed by the barbarous people of New Zealand, as is made clear by the journal of the French navigator Crozet. (Voyage de M. Marion du Fresne p.67)

He then gives (in French which Mr Jim Beever has translated for me) the extract from Crozet -

'I have seen them eating a sort of green-coloured gum, which they appear to hold in great esteem, but I cannot discover from which tree they get it ...

You will again note the reasonable doubt of the original and the definite but erroneous conclusion. On the strength of this assumption George included the Auckland mangrove in his list of edible plants of the south Pacific!

EARLY BOTANICAL NOTES FROM NORTHLAND

Katie Reynolds

Here are two snippets from letters written by my grandfather Ralph Pickmere in 1860 from his land on the main road between Ahipara and Kaitaia. As an immigrant he had 40 acres for his land claim and an additional 10 acres for which he paid £5.

"In the sides and bottoms of the two gullies from which I get my water supply, a fine sandy loam full of decayed leaves, rotten sticks, &c., predominates. The land is covered with TUPAKA (tupakihi - Coriaria) bushes and large fern. The former is very like the Elder tree in general appearance and nature of the wood, having pith inside. The berries, however, which make excellent wine or vinegar, without the aid of sugar, hang on the stalks like ropes of onions."

Lucy Cranwell writing years ago for Auckland Star Native Wildflower Circle told the children "strain and drink the juice if you will. Be very careful not to swallow seeds, nor any other part of the plant which is very poisonous." I am quoting Lucy from memory. I think that she also said that the pre-European Maori would use the plumes of toetoe to strain the juice.

From Ralph Pickmere:

"There is a remarkable shrub here like the Coffee plant, has scarlet berries with two seeds in, exactly the shape of the Coffee berry. I have only seen one yet on my property."

The fern, Lunathyrium japonicum is quite rare in the Auckland region, so it was gratifying to see a large amount growing beside the Kaurimu Stream in the valley east of Shaw Road, Oratia. It was seen on private property, but as it was not far from the road bridge, further inspection may be rewarding.

Katie Mays