

KEEP AN EYE ON WAHLENBERGIA

By L.B. Moore

In Canterbury tussock country one of the commonest flowers is the so-called native hare-bell, Wahlenbergia albomarginata. Ranging from periwinkle blue to almost white, the five-pointed flowers face upwards on their slender stems and always attract at least a passing glance. They are worth looking at more closely, as we found on the excursion to Hood's Bush Reserve at Whitecliffs on 12th March, 1977.

At the mouth of the corolla tube the lobed stigma is obvious but the stamens are tucked down well out of sight and can be seen only by splitting the flower lengthwise. The short filaments are flattened and frilled at the base, and the anthers are brown, twisted and empty. To see whole anthers it is necessary to dissect an unopened bud at about the time it moves from the nodding to the erect position. Normally the pollen is shed inwards long before the stigma is mature and the grains adhere to the style as it elongates as the bud bursts. This is the usual and well-known arrangement.

At Hood's Bush one observant member noticed that some flowers were different. The stamens, instead of being attached by their bases, were fused to the corolla tube and their thin unopened anthers were easily visible in the throat of the tube. These seemed to be effectively female flowers that produced no pollen at all. We did not make an extensive search but about a dozen flowers picked at random on the tussocky hillside included several of this unexpected kind. Next summer it will be worth watching to see just how common these unisexual flowers might be, and whether any single plant bears only one kind.

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THE TUDOR KNOT GARDEN

By Alfred Maddock

The knot garden, which could occupy a bed or a number of beds was most typical of Tudor times. It came in with the first Tudor, Henry VII, and went out with the last Elizabeth I. Knots or clusters of shrubs and flowers made up the design as they did, and still do, in certain types of embroidery.

The outline was made up of close-planted shrubs and the interstices filled with flowers or more usually with different shrubs - Lavender, thrift, dwarf-box, hyssop, germander, savoury and other sweet-scented herbs were favourites. They were kept low, clipped and clippings used for strewing lead, plain or cut out like the battlements of a church, oak boards, tiles, or shank bones of sheep were highly thought of as decorative edgings. Round white or bluish pebble stones were thought more fashionable than shank bones.

The knot gardens at Holyrood were shaped like a fleur-de-lis which must have pleased Mary Queen of Scots. Stars, crescents, concentric circles and favourite strap work provided Motifs for knots. Noble men and gentlemen had their arms laid out in knots, while country housewives