

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

I would like to suggest that we form a growing or gardening circle, to operate through the Bulletin. Count members or members who have gardens and yet are unable to attend meetings may be kept in practical touch in this way. Help could be given on how to grow some of our native herbaceous plants, especially *Celmisias* and the daisy family generally. Cheseeman, in the Manual of the New Zealand Flora writes "The genus *Celmisia* which is confined to New Zealand with the exception of one species, forms one of the chief ornaments of the montane and alpine flora of the Dominion, where the mountain slopes and valleys are often whitened for miles from the abundance of their large daisy-like flowers." That these daisies are worth growing is indisputable and that they are easier to grow than has generally been thought can be proved. *C. mackaui* and *C. lindsayi* I find grow quite readily from seed in out-door boxes or indoors in pots before a window in lieu of a glass-house.

Mr Hope Gibbons successfully grows *C. coriacea* in pot in his glasshouse, from seed from a plant established in his garden. Mr Simpson of Dunedin, another member of our Society and famous for his growing of herbaceous plants, has *Celmisias* coming up in his garden and lawns like weeds. Mr Stirling, I know could give most valuable information regarding the growing of *Pachystegia insignis*. Mr McKay, in charge of Otari Open-air Native Plant Museum I am sure would be glad to supply seed of *C. mackaui* and *Pachystegia* for distribution to members. These plants flower profusely at Otari, the dead flower heads being cut off in dozens.

Many *Celmisias* increase by means of underground root forming large patches which can be separated. Mr Beattie is well-known for his growing of *Celmisias* in pots and in the garden and Mr Duncan of Linden had a plant of *C. major* which bore up to 50 blooms. As cut flowers these last in water for a fortnight or over. Mrs Martin had *C. mackaui* seedling in the garden at Ngaiā also.

Other native herbaceous plants especially the forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*), buttercups (*Ranunculus*), and bluebells (*Wahlenbergias*) are beautiful and many are easily grown, not forgetting some of our very interesting grasses.

Surely it would be good to have an enthusiastic growing circle attached to or as part of our Society. Many of our more active members botanize all over the country and could be persuaded to collect seed for an earnest and hard

working gardening group. I would be willing to take an active part in this section of the Society were it to materialize.

Mrs W.W.Samson, 54, Dundas St., Seatoun.
(Members are invited to send comments or to communicate directly with Mrs Samson.)

VISIT TO BUCHANAN'S BUSH. 6:6:42.

In the depths of winter, six ardent members of the Society paid a visit to Mr Buchanan's bush at Haywards.

As we walked through the sunny valley, we were thrilled to pick out some early scarlet rata in bloom. Just nearby was a patch of swamp which formed an excellent habitat for a stand of pale-barked pukateas, (Laurelia novae-zealandiae) We collected some of their feathery seeds with the idea of attempting to grow them.

Typical rain forest grew all along the sides of the stream we followed as far as the waterfall. One of the commonest shrubs along the path was Melicope simplex, while it was interesting to notice the drooping half-withered appearance of the rata, Petrosideros colensoi, as compared with its fresher and more erect relation, M. hypericifolia.

An unusual sight was that of a strong plant of Hebe salicifolia growing as an epiphyte on a tree-fern.

It was damp underfoot, and mosses, liverworts and fungi were abundant. As much of the Jew's ear fungus was collected as possible, so that it could be tried out as a delicacy in soup. (Found to be harmless and almost tasteless.--Ed.) One of the most attractive lichens was Peltigera dolichorhiza, grey in colour with black, finger-nail-like fertile heads.

J.Hillary.

PLANT DYING.

A second and enlarged and illustrated edition of Mrs Hutchinson's pamphlet on "Plant Dyeing" is now available. A booklet by "London Pride" deals also with home dyeing with plant materials, and an article in the September number of the Journal of Agriculture offers advice on the same topic. Many would-be dyers are not able to collect their own plant materials. Would any members offer to make bulk collections of such things as Coprosma twigs or lichens (certain species of each only) for distribution to deserving cases?