

ON THE TRAIL OF *PITTIOSPORUM VIRGATUM*.

My interest in *Pittosporum virgatum* was aroused in the first place by Dr Cockayne's note in his "Trees of New Zealand", and by the fact that Dr L.H. Whetter of Matakana had made a special trip north for it some twelve years ago and had succeeded in finding only one lone plant with no flowers no seed, and no young plants.

So far as I know no one had this species growing, so nearly three years ago I made a trip north to Kaitiaki for the one purpose of finding *Pittosporum virgatum* and growing it in my garden in Warkworth. I went armed with a photo of an uncomman hill, and *P. virgatum* was two or three miles away from there. Unfortunately most of the bush had been cut out, and I failed to find *P. virgatum*, though I did come back with *P. boerhaadatum* from an old garden.

Since then I have hunted the country from Whangarei Harbour to the Waitemata, without success, so, rather reluctantly, I had to go back to Kaitiaki. Cheeseman gives the locality as Tematahoo Range. My Kaitiaki friends correct me and say Taumata Mahoo. Please alter in your Manual!

Soon after reaching Kaitiaki on the first Saturday in September I learned of a gentleman of 83 summers who, in days gone by, had hunted for plants along with the late H.B. Matthew, who was the last to report *P. virgatum* about 30 years ago. This gentleman informed me that at one time he had *P. virgatum* growing in his garden, but it had long since died. Yes, he remembered H.B.M. finding *P. virgatum*, he and Mr E.G. Matthews were with him at the time. Yes, he would point out the place, but doubted whether the plant could be found as it was some miles back in the bush. It was arranged that he show us the place on Monday.

Saturday evening was spent in persuading a daffodil enthusiast to take an interest in the rare native plants of the district, to such good effect that he spent all day Sunday, in the rain, hunting with me, but we failed to find *P. virgatum*.

On Monday morning I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Ross Michie, who threw up everything to take me anywhere I wished to go - but he would like to show me a patch of Makamaka (*Ackama rosaeifolia*). First we had to see a garden with various *Pittosporums*, including the original plant of *P. boerhaadatum* that was transplanted from the Swamp (this plant, by the way, is 15 feet high, and has no sign of adult leaves as yet). Then as it was getting late to tackle a really big day, we went to the "old gentleman" and decided to leave going after the *P. virgatum* till Tuesday morning.

So off Mr Michie and I went to see the makamaka in bloom.

We climbed some 300 yards up a rather steep ridge with bush on the right and grassland on the left, and there about 2 chains off was a tree some 20 feet high, that at that distance could be a kehuha (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*); but on getting nearer it was unknown to either of us - could it be *virgatum*? Eagerly and most excitedly we hunted for young plants to prove it, and as we approached the tree, right at our feet was one about 4 feet high with the unmistakable pinnatifid leaf of *P. virgatum*. Were we excited? Yes, seed on it too, and young plants galore! But we couldn't stop to congratulate ourselves. By climbing a nearby tree we could get seed and specimens, and on the top, a few of the obovate leaves of the adult stage that so very little had been heard about. My only regret was that my new recruit of the day before was not in at the kill with us.

He was with us when we set off on Tuesday, armed with sugar bags and a digger to ensure that another of our N.Z. plants shall not be exterminated by the axe and fire. How we enjoyed it! Only those who have experienced the thrill can appreciate it.

And now for some facts and figures.

Adult plants seen	-----	about 12
Young plants	-----	hundreds
Half-grown plants	-----	about 6

In seed ----- yes, but most had shed
 In bloom ----- no, but flower buds
 Height of adult ----- 12 to 27 feet
 Trunk diameter of adult --- 2½ to 5½ inches.

All adult trees had some pinnatifid leaves. A few trees had a few obovate leaves. The most interesting point of all was that there were two types of juvenile plants, and it would seem that they retain their two separate forms right through their various changes and stages, but I will let the specimens speak for themselves.

The plants were growing on good soil, with nikau and puriri, both lover. of good soil, on the same ridge. Height above sea-level was about 400 to 500 feet, and the situation warm, on the north-eastern side of the ridge.

In my quest for *P. virgatum* I also rescued from a derelict garden a large plant of *P. dallii*, got some of what I take to be *P. buchanani*, got further evidence of a new Hebe, and last, but by no means least, was directed where to find *Pittosporum matthewsii*, which I have since located and distributed. But that is another story!

M. Cameron Finlayson, Warkworth.

EXCURSION TO OTARI PLANT MUSEUM.

Saturday 9th October was grey and rain threatened, but eight faithful members met at the Otari Plant Museum, and some did some weeding on the rockery while awaiting late arrivals.

On the hillside facing the main gate there was a good collection of conifers, seventeen of the twenty indigenous species being seen. There were *Libocedrus plumosa* (*doniana*), and *P. bidwillii*; the three species

seven species of *Podocarpus*, including the comparatively rare *Podocarpus acutifolius* (needle-leaved totara) and *P. hallii* (thin-barked totara) which were growing beside the common *P. totara* and the subalpine *P. nivalis*. Of the four species of *Pacrydium* seen *D. kirkii* was very interesting - one tree was all juvenile except for a few leaves of adult growth growing from the branches of juvenile foliage. *Agathis australis* (kauri) was also there.

The different maies, *Olea montana*, *O. cunninghamii*, and *O. lanceolata* were growing beside one another, making comparison easy, and the different species of *Corokia* and *Hymenanthera* were also growing in close proximity.

We were all interested in the different stages of growth of *Pseudopanax crassifolium* var. *trifoliolatum*. There were examples of the young trees with single deflexed leaves and then trees with their leaves in threes instead of the customary single ones of that stage. It was noticed that the leaves were not all in threes, though they were the most common, some being in twos and fours, while at the end of each year's growth a whorl of single leaves was produced.

Some of us were puzzled by *Myrtus ralphii*, a series of hybrids between *M. bullata* and *M. obcordata*, and also by some stunted dense bushes of *Coprosma* species.

Among the herbs seen the most notable was *gustalina novae-zelandiae*, which was growing on the banks near the stream.

Hilary Wilton.

*of *Phyllocladus*, *P. alpinus*, *P. glaucus*, and *P. trichomanoides*;