

## SPRING FLOWERS AND FRUIT

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The autumn initiation of flower buds is a well recognised phenomenon and has been described by Alan Mark (1970) for some 100 New Zealand alpine plants examined by him. We are accustomed to seeing Calthas and some Ranunculus flowering in the wake of melting snow. But it was still rather awesome to see, on the Remarkables in October, occasional plants of Chionohebe densifolia in tiny pockets of cleared ground, but closely surrounded by melting snow, sporting a full array of lavender or white flowers. Similarly on Mt Hutt in December, fragile clumps of Chionohebe pulvinaris, beside retreating snow, covered with white flowers. Buds must be ready to open the instant snow melts and they are uncovered.

Being in the mountains rather earlier than usual brought other surprises. On the Remarkables at c 1800m there were large clumps of Nertera balfouriana bright with orange berries, again surrounded with melting snow. These berries must have survived the winter under the snow, unharmed and presumably ripe. The kea population cannot be high. At Arthurs Pass, also in October, there were a surprising number berries still to be found on Coprosma species, *C. serrulata*, *C. propinqua*, *C. depressa*, and others.

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Mark, A.F. 1970: Floral Initiation and development in New Zealand Alpine Plants. New Zealand Journal of botany 8: 67-75.