

Book review

Growing New Zealand Alpine Plants. Joe Cartman 1985.
Reed methuen, Auckland. 106 pp. (Colour plates & B/W Photos)

Line drawings by Hugh Wilson.

This relatively small booklet is packed with useful information for the alpine gardener, and also, must be of interest to both the professional and amateur botanist. Joe is to be congratulated that in the short time he has been here, eleven years, he has been able to accumulate such a wealth of knowledge about our native plants both in the wild and in cultivation.

The first four chapters, 'the natural habitat', 'Cultivation', 'Propagation', and 'Pests and diseases' are short, well-written accounts, full of good information, and containing all the details needed for the successful growing of alpine plants.

The longest chapter, 'New Zealand alpine plants for cultivation', 66 pages, lists the selected alpine plants, arranged alphabetically by genus, and each genus is set out systematically as follows.

Name of Genus. Family. Notes on genus including distribution, endemism, characteristic, etc. Individual species also arranged alphabetically. Brief description. Habitat. Note on cultivation/propagation. Somehow in these formal notes the author has managed to give each plant its own personality, helped of course by well selected illustrations. With some genera there have been included ways of identifying some of the species, such as the tables, on p.47, Coprosma atropurpurea and C. petriei, and on p.48, Cotula atrata, C. a. ssp. luteola, and C. dendyi. A very large amount of information in a small space, well set out for easy reference.

The selection of dicot shrubs and herbs is a fair cover of our native genera with two exceptions, Nertera and Colobanthus. However, in the event of a revision, the additions of a selection of ferns, three are included, from the nine genera that grow in the alpine region, and sedges, rushes, and grasses, where again only three grasses are included. To complete the picture, information on some of the native orchids would be an extra bonus.

The illustration. Hugh Wilson's line drawings would add grace to any publication. The colour plates are of a high standard and the b/w photographs do what they were intended to do, help, but only help, to identify the plant.

The two habitat photographs on pp. 14 and 17 would be more useful if a key of some sort had been devised to identify the individual plants. Though some similar publications do not bother listing line drawings, at least a list of the colour plates and photographs appearing in the first four chapters would have been worthwhile, and we could have confirmed that the cover photograph was Myosotis arnoldii and the b/w on page 2 Parahebe decora.

Neglecting the minor typographical and spelling errors, which seem inevitable with modern printing methods and for which the author has our sympathy, there is one error that should be drawn

X should have given references for these

to the reader's notice. The taxon previously named Pygmea tetragona is now called Chionohebe densifolia not C. densiflora as shown on page 45. This same error was made in Nomina Nova II 1970-76, p.114. New Zealand journal of botany 16; 103-18. It is possible that the incorrect name was obtained from this publication. It is unfortunate that the error was not corrected in Nomina Nova III, 1977-82. New Zealand journal of botany 21:421-41. Ed.

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