

TREASURES OF A SCHOOL LAWN

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How often have you gone out on a field trip only to have overlooked the treasure trove of plants to be found on your own doorstep? Around the home there is a great diversity of adventives and at school too the grounds often contain many native plants. On the recent summer camp, partly to fill that first afternoon and partly from curiosity, I decided to list the plants occurring in the lawns and edges of the playground of Collingwood School, where we were staying. As an afterthought I realised that it could help form a source of teaching material for the school. What better way to help children become more familiar with the environment around them than to be able to know some of the more common plants and perhaps their uses or what they may tell you of the health of the grounds?

To most people a lawn contains grass and yet the school lawn contains only 11 grass species out of a total of 84 species. Of these probably only 2 were sown, chewings fescue and browntop; the remainder are weeds. There were also three clovers of which only white clover may have been sown. All the rest of the plants arrived themselves and settled in particular niches. The rushes and sedges occupy the wet hollows, and the *Digitaria setigera* the well drained sandy areas. Other plants such as the lawn daisy *Bellis perennis* and dandelion occupy the long established areas. In the shaded damp areas *Hydrocotyle heteromeria* tends to take over and form a scented carpet reminding us of its relationship to the common carrot.

But it is around the edges of the lawns, under the fences and hedges the native plants put in their appearance. Many of these mark out the pakihi origins of the land. These plants include the umbrella fern, *Gleichenia dicarpa* and the two insect catching sundews (*Drosera spatulata*, *D. binata*), and in the drier areas the clubmoss (*Lycopodium fastigiatum*) and the scented fern (*Paesia scaberula*).

Under the fruit bearing trees such as the laurel cherry (*Prunus laurocerasus*) native berry bearing plants have been brought in as seed by birds. These plants include karamu, wineberry, and fivefinger which if left alone would soon return the little patch to forest.

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On the other hand some of the wild places contain gorse hakea and lupin which if left unchecked would soon turn the area into dense unpleasant wasteland.

But even in the well kept parts of the lawn problem plants lurk. The most important perhaps is that scourge of farms, ragwort.

Some of the plants tell us much about the soil. The rushes suggest poor drainage and in particular *Juncus bufonius* suggest compacted soils. Sorrel and buttercup indicate that there the soil is quite acid whereas areas of dense white clover occur where the soils are very fertile and well limed. The cudweeds (*Gnaphalium* species), selfheal, catsear and lawn daisy tend to be found on the steeper slopes where other plants, particularly grasses, cannot stand the increased wear from those hundreds of feet.

Thus the lawn really is an interesting place yielding a diversity of species and telling much about each little area, how much shade there is, how wet it is, how acid or dry the soil is and how much use it is getting.

<i>Agrostis capillaris</i> * (<i>A. tenuis</i>)	browntop
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> *	creeping bent
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i> *	scarlet pimpernal
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> *	sweet vernal
<i>Aristotelia serrata</i>	wineberry, makomako
<i>Baumea tenax</i>	sedge
<i>Bellis perennis</i> *	daisy, marguerite
<i>Blechnum</i> sp. (blackspot)	kiokio
<i>Centella uniflora</i>	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i> * (= <i>C. holosteoides</i> , <i>C. triviale</i>)	
<i>Conyza alba</i> * (= <i>C. floribunda</i> , <i>Erigeron</i>)	fleabane
<i>Coprosma robusta</i>	karamu
<i>Crepis capillaris</i> *	hawksbeard
<i>Crococsmia x crocosmiiflora</i> *	montbretia
<i>Cyperus kyllingia</i> *	
<i>Dianella nigra</i>	blueberry, turutu
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	
<i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>	wheki
<i>Digitaria setigera</i> *	
<i>Drosera binata</i>	scented sundew
<i>Drosera spathulata</i>	sundew
<i>Echinochloa crus-pavonis</i> *	
<i>Epilobium ciliatum</i> * (<i>E. erectum</i>)	
<i>Erica lusitanica</i> *	Spanish heath
<i>Euphorbia peplus</i> *	milkweed
<i>Festuca rubra</i> *	chewings fescue
<i>Fumaria bastardii</i> *	fumitory
<i>Gahnia xanthocarpa</i>	giant sedge
<i>Geranium molle</i> *	dove's foot, crane's bill
<i>Gleichenia dicarpa</i> (<i>G. circinata</i>)	waewaekaka

<i>Gnaphalium audax</i>	cudweed
<i>Gnaphalium gymnocephalum</i>	
<i>Gonocarpus incanus</i>	
<i>Hakea salicifolia</i> (<i>H. saligna</i>)	willow-leaved hakea
<i>Histiopteris incisa</i>	water fern
<i>Holcus lanatus</i> *	yorkshire fog
<i>Hydrocotyle heteromeria</i> (= <i>H. americana</i>)	var)
<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i> *	catsear
<i>Hypolepis ambigua</i>	
<i>Juncus bufonius</i> *	toad rush
<i>Juncus gregiflorus</i>	wiwi
<i>Juncus prismatocarpus</i>	
<i>Kunzea ericoides</i> (= <i>Leptospermum</i>)	
<i>Leptospermum scoparium</i>	manuka, teatree
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> * (= <i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>)	ox-eye daisy
<i>Lolium perenne</i> *	perennial ryegrass
<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> * (<i>L. major</i> , <i>L. uliginosus</i>)	lotus major
<i>Lupinus arboreus</i>	tree lupin
<i>Lycopodium fastigiatum</i>	mountain clubmoss
<i>Matricaria discoidea</i> * (= <i>M. matricarioides</i>)	rayless chamomile
<i>Microtis unifolia</i>	onion orchid
<i>Mimulus moschatus</i> *	musk
<i>Myrsine australis</i>	red matipo, mapou
<i>Nepeta cataria</i> *	catmint
<i>Paesia scaberula</i>	scented fern
<i>Paspalum distichum</i> *	
<i>Picris hieracioides</i> *	
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> *	ribwort, narrow-leaved plantain
<i>Plantago major</i> *	broad-leaved plantain
<i>Poa annua</i> *	
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> *	selfheal
<i>Pseudopanax arboreus</i>	five finger
<i>Ranunculus acris</i> * (<i>R. acer</i>)	giant buttercup
<i>Rumex acetosella</i> *	sorrel
<i>Rumex crispus</i> *	curled dock
<i>Sagina procumbens</i> *	procumbent pearlwort
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i> *	ragwort
<i>Solanum nigrum</i> *	black nightshade
<i>Soliva sessilis</i> *	Onehunga weed
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> *	sow thistle, puha, puka
<i>Sophora microphylla</i>	kowhai
<i>Stellaria decipiens</i> agg (= <i>S. parviflora</i>)	
<i>Stellaria graminea</i> *	stitchwort
<i>Stellaria holostea</i> *	
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> *	dandelion
<i>Trifolium dubium</i> *	suckling clover
<i>Trifolium pratense</i> *	red clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i> *	white clover
<i>Ulex europaeus</i> *	gorse
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i> *	turf speedwell
<i>Veronica verna</i> *	spring speedwell