

A MIGHTY SILVER BEECH

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During the New Zealand Fungal Foray to the Catlins district in May 1995, Warren, while searching for fungi, came across a large silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*). A subsequent visit measured the girth (at 1.5 metres above ground level) as 4.83 metres, equal to a diameter of 1.54 metres. Height was estimated at 50 metres, by measuring the horizontal distance away from the tree, to a position where sighting on a 45° angle brought the top of the tree in view. This tree is in the Catlins Forest Park, about 40 metres west of Aurora Creek Road, grid reference NZMS 260 G47/383077.

By any standards this tree is large. But how large is large, and are there any others for comparison? Fortunately there are two useful books, Burstall & Sale (1984) and Flook (1994).

The beauty, size and history of the most notable trees, native and introduced, are recorded in Burstall & Sale (1984), a book which records a magnificent national heritage. One hundred great trees are described in detail, but no silver beech is among them. Brief details of other notable trees throughout New Zealand are included, district by district, from Northland to Otago-Southland. In this section, there are two silver beeches, one planted circa 1892 at Rotorua, and one at Stratford, planted in 1918.

In Flook (1994) there are over 2000 trees recorded, either singly or in groups, 320 registrations in total. There has been a deliberate attempt to describe each tree or trees according to a set procedure. The first tree registered (1978) was the ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) on the corner of Dunsandel Road and Main South Road at Dunsandel. It was planted in 1873 by William Walker, blacksmith and farmer, and later was used for hitching horses. In total, there are 55 native trees recorded, mostly conifers, but there are 10 pohutukawas (*Metrosideros excelsa*), northern and southern ratas (*M. robusta*, *M. umbellata*), four puriris (*Vitex lucens*), and single trees of 11 other species. There is one silver beech, a specimen planted in Dunedin in 1910. The recorded girth was 3.25 m (measured at 1.40 m) with a height of 15 m, and a canopy width of 15 m. Some of the recorded natives are present in scenic reserves, and their ages are not known. Two examples are of interest: a totara (*Podocarpus totara*) in Kilmock Bush, near Invercargill with a girth of 4 m at 1.4 m height; and a southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*) in Forest Hill scenic reserve near Invercargill, with a girth of 7.4 m at 1.4 m.

There are many large, 'notable' native trees in scenic reserves, forest parks and national parks throughout New Zealand. In many cases their location, size, etc. should be documented. Changes can be recorded and efforts made to ensure their adequate protection under the Resource Management Act. If this work is to be expanded then it should be consistent with the approach adopted by Flook (1994) from whom full details are available. (Mr R. Flook, 539 Rocks Road, Tahunanui, Nelson.)

REFERENCES

Burstall, S.W., Sale, E.V. 1984. *Great Trees of New Zealand*. A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd, 288 pp

Flook, R. 1994. *An introduction to the Notable Trees of New Zealand*. Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.), PO Box 12, Lincoln University, Canterbury, 207 pp

This book resulted from many contributions, efforts by the RNZIH Notable Trees Committee, and editing by Ron Flook. Copies are still available from the RNZIH at \$38.00 (includes GST and p.&p.).