

Kitchener Park Then and Now

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An interest in lichens that grow on the leaves of other plants led us to visit Kitchener Park near Feilding in 1994. Epiphyllous lichens, or foliicolous lichens as they are now called, grow in many parts of New Zealand, but Kitchener Park plays an important historical role in the early study of these plants thanks to Dr H. H. Allan. In the 1920s Allan collected many foliicolous lichens from Kitchener Park and enlisted the aid of a renowned European lichenologist, Dr A. Zahlbruckner, to identify them. Although many species of foliicolous lichens have been collected in other places now, Allan's contribution was pivotal. In fact, as late as 1985 when the *Flora of New Zealand Lichens* (Galloway 1985) was published, Kitchener Park was still the only known site for some species of these interesting little plants.

Allan had long recognised the importance of the forest remnants in Manawatu. In 1923 he presented a paper in Wellington to the 16th meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science stressing the importance of study in these areas before "the forest is still further diminished ..." (Allan 1923). In that paper he presents a survey of flowering plants and ferns in the forest remnants around Feilding.

The survey was continued in a different vein when he collected foliicolous lichens. In the paper *Epiphyllous lichens of Kitchener Park* not only were the lichens described but Allan listed the flowering plants and ferns on which lichens grew (Zahlbruckner *et al.* 1928). The list is impressive. He found foliicolous lichens on the fronds of 19 species of ferns, eight tree species, three shrubs, three climbers, four epiphytic and parasitic species, and one herb – 38 species altogether (Table 1). He also discussed the fact that some plants in the list bore lichens in abundance while others had only a few on their leaves.

But, alas, Kitchener Park in 1994 was a very different place from what Allan described in the 1920s. The ground cover of ferns, shrubs and young trees was gone as well as some of the tree species he listed. We did collect foliicolous lichens but found them on only one fern species (an epiphytic fern – Fig. 1), on four tree species, and on one climber – a total of six species (Table 2).

The recent culprit, following browsing in earlier times, is the weed *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering Jew). This pest has been knee-deep in some parts of the park smothering all the ground plants and seedlings (Fig. 2). It is a sad story shared to one degree or another by many bush areas in the Manawatu (Esler 1978) and Wellington. But, luckily, that is not the end of the story of Kitchener Park.

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Fig. 1. Foliicolous lichens on a frond of *Asplenium polyodon* are visible as small whitish patches, Kitchener Park, 1994.

While in the Park we met some hard working and enthusiastic young people employed to rid the park of this weed, which means pulling up the *Tradescantia* by hand and going over and over every inch of the ground to pull out new growth. A totally bare forest floor is the temporary result (Fig. 3). These young people were not just “doing a job” but were excited about the fact that young, native ferns and seedlings were coming up in the section of the Park that had been first weeded. They took us to show us this area and expressed their determination to restore the Park. Their supervisor was proud of the effort and explained that Kitchener Park would be re-dedicated in February 1996, 80 years after it originally opened as a Public Reserve in 1916.

We felt it necessary to express our concern to the Manawatu District Council that this work be continued and received assurance from them (in writing) that the restoration work on Kitchener Park would continue. Let’s hope so!

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Fig. 2. Dense *Tradescantia fluminensis* on the banks of a small stream in Kitchener Park, 1994.



Fig. 3. The interior of Kitchener Park immediately after the removal of *Tradescantia fluminensis*, 1994.

Ferns		
<i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i>	<i>Hymenophyllum demissum</i>	<i>Polystichum richardii</i>
<i>Asplenium flaccidum</i>	<i>Hymenophyllum scabrum</i>	<i>Polystichum vestitum</i>
<i>Asplenium oblongifolium</i>	<i>Lastreopsis microsora</i>	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>
<i>Blechnum procerum</i>	<i>Pellaea rotundifolia</i>	<i>Pyrrisia eleagnifolia</i>
<i>Cyathea dealbata</i>	<i>Phymatosorus pustulatus</i>	<i>Rumohra adiantiformis</i>
<i>Dicksonia fibrosa</i>	<i>Phymatosorus scandens</i>	
<i>Histiopteris incisa</i>	<i>Pneumatopteris pennigera</i>	
Trees		
<i>Alectryon excelsus</i>	<i>Lophomyrtus bullata</i>	<i>Prumnopitys taxifolia</i>
<i>Beilschmiedia tawa</i>	<i>Nestegis cunninghamii</i>	<i>Pseudopanax crassifolius</i>
<i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>	<i>Podocarpus totara</i>	
Shrubs		
<i>Melicope simplex</i>	<i>Melicytus micranthus</i>	<i>Pseudopanax anomalus</i>
Climbers		
<i>Metrosideros colensoi</i>	<i>Metrosideros diffusa</i>	<i>Metrosideros perforata</i>
Epiphytes and mistletoes		
<i>Astelia solandri</i>	<i>Earina mucronata</i>	<i>Loranthus micranthus</i>
<i>Dendrobium cunninghamii</i>		
Herbs		
<i>Astelia nervosa</i>		

Table 1. Plant species on which foliicolous lichens were found by Allan at Kitchener Park in the 1920s.

Ferns*Asplenium polyodon***Trees***Alectryon excelsus**Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* *Podocarpus totara**Beilschmiedia tawa***Climbers***Metrosideros colensoi*

Table 2. Plant species on which foliicolous lichens were found by us at Kitchener Park in 1994.

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