

toxins. Drain very well squeezing it by hand and weigh. Use for each kilo 1.3 kg of sugar. In a preserving pot dissolve the sugar in a minimum of water and add lemon peel and a stick of cinnamon. Bring to hard ball temperature (120° C) and then add the threads. Cook until it reaches small crack stage (138° C). Pot in the usual way. A simpler recipe uses 0.9 kg sugar for each kilo of threads and then made just like ordinary jam adding water just a touch of water to cover the bottom of the saucepan.



Fig. 3. Mature fruit of pie melon, Onehunga.

Another celebrated way of using pie melon is in a sweetmeat called Cheveaux d'Ange. There are various recipes around including the one that is more like a flavoured honey and another that uses sugar. To prepare, cut the flesh into small cubes and simmer them in boiling salted water for about an hour. When they are tender, pour off the water and refresh the cubes with plenty of cold water. Drain them when cold, and place in a large bowl. Now stir them about with a fork, separating the flesh into strands rather like spaghetti squash. (This can now be mixed with mashed potato and baked in an oven with egg and cheese topping.) For the flavoured honey, mix the flesh with its own weight in honey and leave for a day. Then simmer gently for about half an hour, until it is golden in colour, and bottle. This is the famous Cheveaux d'Ange, once highly esteemed in Paris.

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BioBlitz and a new exotic grass in Auckland: *Eragrostis amabilis*

Ewen K Cameron

This year BioBlitz was held on 12-13 March, 3pm to 3pm, in the Auckland Domain involving about 40 scientists working from a 300 sq. m. marquee laboratory, fitted out with displays, microscopes, and computers, discovering all different kinds of life within a 24 hour period — from birds to bugs, fish to fungi, plants to parasites — that live throughout the Domain. One of the main purposes of BioBlitz is to promote awareness of biodiversity within our city. The first New Zealand BioBlitz was held at St Heliers in April 2004 in the pouring rain, when scientists located over 900 different organisms in Dingle Dell Reserve and over 600 in the grounds of Meadowbank Primary School, Remuera. Both were coordinated by Landcare Research with input from the Auckland Regional Council, Auckland Museum, Department of Conservation and the University of Auckland. The result of BioBlitz-2005 was over 1,600 life forms were identified in the Domain. Auckland Bot Soc'ers played a major part in recording the various forms of plant

life. The most interesting flowering plant found was the *Eragrostis* recorded here.

Two days before the BioBlitz while doing a reconnoitre with Josh Salter; we collected a small grass (AK 289517) between the flagstones of the Cenotaph area which I was unable to match to any of the known weedy Auckland grasses. Rhys Gardner immediately recognised it as Japanese love grass (*Eragrostis amabilis*). To my knowledge there is only one other collection of this grass from New Zealand: main highway of Ellerslie, Auckland, Mar 2002, *A E Wright 12942*, AK 281028 (dups CHR, L). Like five of the nine previous *Eragrostis* species recorded for New Zealand (Edgar & Connor 2000) this single Ellerslie collection appeared to be another one-off transient record. But this second site where it is locally well-established elevates its status from transient to possibly naturalised (time will tell if it's permanently established).

Eragrostis amabilis (L.) Wight & Arn. ex Nees (= *E. tenella*), subfamily: Chloridoideae – is an annual or perennial grass native to southern tropical Asia, and widely introduced throughout the warmer parts of the world (Smith 1979). It occurs in open waste places, between stones, near beaches, and is locally abundant, 0-550(-1400)m altitude (Veldkamp 2002). Close to New Zealand it occurs in Queensland and on most tropical island groups of the SW Pacific, including New Caledonia. Rather surprisingly it is not recorded for Norfolk Island (Green 1994) or New Zealand's Kermadec Islands.

The Ellerslie record was from a single ground-hugging clump in a crevice between a brick planter box and paving blocks. The seeding culms were 14-43cm long. At the Domain it was occasional as small plants, culms only 10-15cm long (Fig. 1), rooted in the cracks between the Cenotaph flagstones which cover an area c.110m x 30m. The plants survive hundreds of people daily walking over them by being low-lying and rooted down in the cracks. They were associated with other pavement species: spotted spurge (*Euphorbia maculata*) native to North America (AK 289521) which were reddish and prostrate, and the dense, low tufts of the hardy moss, *Bryum argenteum*. The area has recently been water-blasted, but a few tatty plants have managed to survive.

Because Japanese love grass was locally well established in the Domain, it is likely to have been

Acknowledgement

I thank Rhys Gardner for the identification and helpful comments.

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growing there for some years. This is a little concerning because of its proximity to my front door of work I have to assume that I've been walking on it for at least several years before noticing it. The impact of this grass in New Zealand is likely to be low. Because of its rather tropical preferences at the most it is likely to become a minor weed of disturbed northern areas of the North Island. Next summer keep an eye open for a rather stiff little grass appearing from the cracks in the Auckland pavements.



Fig. 1. Japanese love grass (*Eragrostis amabilis*) from by the Cenotaph in the Auckland Domain (part of AK 289517).

Fruiting of a lone kaikomako (*Pennantia corymbosa*)

Rhys Gardner

A planted kaikomako at the ARC Arataki Visitor Centre on the Scenic Drive is currently (April '05) bearing a great amount of ripe fruit — on most inflorescences as much fruit has been set as has failed. This tree can stand as a reminder that a job is seldom finished (properly), because it was just a few years ago that Peter de Lange and I checked out the genus, one of its attractions of course being the world's rarest tree *Pennantia baylisiana*, supposedly a female capable only of illicit liaison with *P. corymbosa* or Norfolk Island's *P. endlicheri* (Gardner & de Lange 2002; Gardner, de Lange & Davidson 2004).

In agreement with Moore & Irwin (1978) we described the male and female flowers of *P. corymbosa* as being much alike, except that the stamens of the latter are somewhat smaller and contain only a little pollen,

whose walls are (mostly) abnormally thickened. As far as we were aware (we did not carry out any experiments) fruit set in females would very largely result from pollination by males.

The Arataki tree is exceptional though: its anthers, quite as large as in any male, were shedding copious pollen when examined in November '04, and these grains were of normal shape and wall thickness and stained well with acetocarmine. There are no other kaikomako trees in the plantings, nor are likely to be any in the bush around. All of the several fruit I have cut open have a seed of viable appearance, and I would expect they will germinate in my potting arrangement in due course (providing two and half year old Theo de Lange can be excluded).