

Flower stem to 5 m. cvg. 'Marginata' has yellow leaf margins (Robin Booth, Kerikeri; Western Springs, Auckland Zoo). Leaves lanceolate, to 1.2 m × 10–15 cm, firm, roughened abaxially by small points, margins white with hard, curved teeth ca. 6 mm. Flowers ca. 4 cm; tepals white, 2.5–2.7 cm; ovary 1.4–1.8 cm. 2n =

60. Flowering mid fall-mid winter. This is the spiny-leaved *Furcraea* at Kawau and also at Scandrett Regional Park, Martins Bay, Beehive Island, and at Leigh (Omaha Cove). Cultivated examples at 67 Point Chevalier Road, and in the succulent garden by the Duck Pond in the Auckland Domain (fl. 21 July 2005).

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The asphalt lichen, *Xanthoparmelia scabrosa*

Mike Wilcox

It is not hard to find the asphalt lichen, *Xanthoparmelia scabrosa* (Taylor) Hale [Lecanorales:Parmeliaceae]. It grows abundantly on the edges of tar seal roads, on PVC guttering, on corrugated iron roofs, on tombstones, on steel grates, old car bodies, and on glasshouses. This foliose lichen has the thallus closely attached to the substrate, and has a yellowish-green upper surface with frequent isidia and a lower surface coloured pale tan, pinkish, or creamish-white. The margins are black, shining, entire or variously incised, and the rhizines sparse, simple, and pale brown.



Figure 2. *Xanthoparmelia scabrosa* on a road in Mangere Bridge



Figure 1. *Xanthoparmelia scabrosa* on a glasshouse in Mangere



Figure 3. *Xanthoparmelia scabrosa* on a painted corrugated iron roof, Mangere Bridge. Note the abundant, granular isidia

It is said to be Auckland's most abundant lichen (Hayward & Hayward 1983). The isidia come off readily, forming propagules, which allows it to readily disperse. Bennett and Wright (2004) mention that it grows very rapidly for a lichen (1 cm/year) and that it tolerates high exposure to heavy metals (Zn, Cu, Pb)

and sulphur, which it accumulates in the thallus. Presumably this is why it can thrive on such a hostile-looking site as a tar-sealed road. As well as New Zealand (Galloway 1981; 1985), it is abundant in Australia (Elix 1994), and throughout the world.

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Schefflera actinophylla naturalised in Cornwall Park, Auckland

Mike Wilcox

For several years I have been keeping a record of the trees and shrubs found in Cornwall Park. On 13 November 2005 I came across an old olive tree in the Olive Grove which had some epiphytes on it. One of these was Port Jackson fig (*Ficus rubiginosa*), which is fairly commonly seen in the park getting established on pine and macrocarpa trees. Another epiphyte was a cherry of some sort, possibly *Prunus serrulata*. The third epiphyte was a surprise – the umbrella tree or octopus tree, *Schefflera actinophylla* (Endl.) Harms, which is commonly cultivated in Auckland, but as far as I know not previously recorded as growing wild in New Zealand (voucher: AK 294698).



In August this year I saw this tree commonly in northern Queensland. It grows around the fringes of rain forest and *Melaleuca* swamp forests at Cairns and Port Douglas, sometimes as an epiphyte. Seed of *Schefflera actinophylla* is known to be dispersed by birds, and may germinate epiphytically, as has the example Cornwall Park.

Thomas Ball, botanist (1809-1897)

Rebecca Stanley

If you spend time at the Auckland Museum Herbarium (AK) it won't be long before the name "Ball" comes up on the database or on the herbarium sheets. I have often wondered who "Ball" was, and when I casually enquired at the herbarium, discovered that his identity was unknown. "Ball" is listed as the collector for 505 plant specimens in the Auckland Herbarium, including some specimens of (now) threatened plants.

An internet search (for anyone named "Ball" who lived in New Zealand around the times "Ball" collected i.e. 1884-1896) revealed a NZ Dictionary of Biography entry for a "Thomas Ball 1809 – 1897 Coloniser, landowner, politician" (McKenna, 2003). This man had lived in Mangonui from 1859 until he moved to

Auckland in 1880. This matched the collection dates and locations of our unknown "Ball" which start in Auckland in 1884, with a few specimens collected at Mangonui in 1887-8, as well as numerous trips around the North and South Islands.

Who was Thomas Ball?

Thomas Ball was from Lincolnshire in England (born 28 February 1809) and had trained as a chemist. At age 50, eleven years after his wife and three children had died, he arranged for a group of around 80 people to immigrate to New Zealand with him and his 3 remaining children. They arrived in Wellington June 1859 on the ship Matoaka, and traveled on to Auckland, then finally Mangonui to take up their land