

## *Ixerba brexiodes* and Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi (AMF) Chuck Landis

This note is a follow-up on Geoff Baylis' comments in *BSO Newsletter* 33 (2002). I saw a tawari -- *Ixerba brexioides* -- in bloom at Waikaremoana many years ago. It was a handsome tree beneath a dark bush canopy and the flowers were breathtaking. I subsequently obtained 3 seedlings from Ribbonwood Nursery in 1997. They were rather sad little things (8 cm) and, like Geoff, I recall Phillip Dunn apologising for their condition, stating that they'd shown very little vigour or growth while in the nursery. I planted them at Warrington in a fenced-off paddock containing scattered remnant native trees in a sea of grass. All were planted in partial shade and all experience frosts. For the first two years, growth was extremely slow. I was careful to keep them weeded, removing mainly grasses and seedlings of *Coprosma*, *Kunzea* and *Griselinia*.

After two years, none had grown more than a few centimetres and the plants still looked pretty sad. In 1999, while weeding, I thought of Geoff Baylis' work on AMF and deliberately left a few papauma -- *Griselinia littoralis* - - seedlings which had appeared beside one of the *Ixerba*. The next year that plant looked decidedly better than the other two. So I allowed some *Griselinia* seedlings to remain around the second *Ixerba*. Weeding the third plant continued as before. Today, 2 November 2003, the two plants with *Griselinia* companions have both grown to 50 cm. One is really thriving, the other is being hassled by an insect and is somewhat ragged-looking. The third plant, with no companion, has also grown, but only to 30 cm. It has a rather pale and spindly appearance.

This suggests that, as Geoff Baylis' note concludes, a companion plant containing arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi may be the secret to success in cultivating *Ixerba*. Unfortunately, this is just a "garden experiment" (the garden being more important than the experiment) and the three plants are insufficient for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn. Other variables which I have not mentioned: The most successful plant is also in the most shady position and it is located 5m from two mature *Griselinia* trees. The shortest distance from both other tawari to mature papauma is at least 15 m.

*Ixerba brexiodes*  
Audrey Eagle  
*Eagle's Trees and  
Shrubs of NZ  
in Colour*  
1975

