

Newsletter



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Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.)

Chairman's Report

Our 1999 Conference to be held in Wellington 1 – 3 October is entitled "NZ Plants and their Story". This conference will celebrate Leonard Cockayne who founded the Otari Native Plant Museum which enjoys international fame. We believe that the energy of the conference team led by Mike Oates will provide an outstanding opportunity for members to meet and be stimulated by great speakers on one of our most precious horticultural assets. Your attendance and support will reward the Wellington Branch's great effort to give us an outstanding event prior to the Millennium hype.

The NZ Lottery General Millennium sub-committee, after several postponed meetings, at last considered and rejected our submission for a 'Mayoral Chain of Trees' to be planted throughout New Zealand during 2000AD Arbor Week. Their rejection was based on the fact that we had not contacted the Mayors of all the District Councils of New Zealand. We had included the enthusiastic references of both Nelson and Tasman. We have been applying since November 1997 and responding to each new committee formed by the Department of Internal Affairs who prepare the submissions and dictate policy for the Lotteries sub-committee.

The Department had several changes of management, the last being in late October 1998. The Government Millennium Project has misfired. Repeated submissions and delays were endured patiently by us. On reading where the funds were given it is a sorry indictment of the attitudes of those who should have overseen the submissions with more scrutiny. Free pop group

concerts (paid no doubt from Millennium funds of \$250,000), free ratepayers breakfasts for \$25,000 are only of short duration. Britain wisely set aside Lottery profits into a Heritage Fund. These funds have been used for urban and wasteland renewal. This affirmation of their future is worthwhile. We are all lucky to be alive after the last thousand years and should be thankful and make improvements in our environment 2000AD for those to come in the future. The symbolic planting of trees is just such a public affirmation of our future and heritage. The only bright news out of this debacle was that Christchurch was awarded a considerable sum to establish a second botanic garden.

(These comments are the personal view of the Chairman. I would welcome comments should I be considered misguided. I have copies of all the submissions, changes to the government departmental staff (newspaper cuttings), pamphlets on changes issued after long delays.)

Our new computer is being well managed by Enid Reeves who is enjoying having up-to-date equipment and programmes to match the RNZIH needs. We maintain, for instance, some 3000 Notable Tree registrations and have the database capacity to do a lot more. Our email connection is now completed through a direct line. This will also help with our web site which has been designed and is sitting 'piggy back' on another server temporarily. It has been so since last September.

Ron Flook.

*Don't Miss The Royal New Zealand Institute of
Horticulture Conference*

'New Zealand Plants and Their Story'

1 - 3 October 1999

at the Sharella Motor Inn, Glenmore Street, Wellington

Notice Board

Poisonous Plants

We are most grateful to Bill Sykes, a Landcare Research associate who has kindly followed up on our concern regarding children in pre-school care centres and their possible exposure to poisonous plants. He has prepared Landscape Information Sheets on :

1. Safety in Pre-school Centres
2. Plants in the North Island Poisonous to Children
3. Plants in the South Island poisonous to Children

(see page 7 of this Newsletter)

For more information contact:
The Plant Herbarium, Landcare Research
P.O. Box 40, Lincoln 8152

telephone 03-325 6700

fax 03 325 2127

email chr@landcare.cri.nz

There is also a poster available at \$12 from Manaaki Whenua Press,
P.O. Box 40, Lincoln 8152
telephone 03-325 6700
fax 03-325 2127
email mwpress@landcare.cri.nz
Webb www.mwpress.co.nz

Nursery & Garden Industry Association

Better Performance Key to Success

Do you have problems with increased competition? demanding customers? pressure on prices, then this year's NGIA midyear meeting is where you should be. 19 and 20 July.

at The Airport Hotel, Wellington

For further registration form or further details contact: NGIA, P.O. Box 3443, Wellington

New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science/New Zealand Society for Horticultural Science

The Manawatu Section of the NZIAS and the NZSHS will be hosting the annual NZIAS/NZSHS Convention in the year 2000. It will be held on 27-29 June 2000 at the Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences Lecture Block at Massey University, Palmerston North. The proposed theme is : The Noah Paradigm!

Strategies for Managing Climate Variation in Our Primary Industries.

NOTE: The R.N.Z.I.H. email address : rnzih@xtra.co.nz

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NZ Horticulture Conference Week

26-30 July at the Christchurch Conference Centre. Hosted by New Zealand Fruitgrowers Federation, New Zealand Berryfruit Growers Federation, New Zealand Vegetable & Potato Growers Federation and United Fresh New Zealand.

The theme of the Conference Week is "Knowledge Harvest". Air New Zealand is offering attendees to the Horticulture Industry Conference Week special airfares of; up to 40% discount on standard economy fares for off-peak travel.

For more information contact: Ron Gall, Conference Manager. Phone 04 472 3795, Fax 04 471 2861.

The RNZIH wishes to acknowledge with grateful appreciation recent donations from some of its members. The Institute is encouraged and reassured in the knowledge that it has such a loyal and concerned membership.

New Zealand Alpine Ranunculi

Steve Newall, Dunedin

Paper presented at 'Southern Alpines '96', 5-10 January 1996, Christchurch. Reprinted by kind permission of the New Zealand Alpine Garden Society, Christchurch.

Ranunculus is a cosmopolitan genus with over 300 species around the world, mainly in the temperate regions. New Zealand has about 40 species including 17 which reach the alpine zone. Of these, 11 species, one subspecies and three hybrids will be discussed. They are chosen for their interest to alpine gardeners, both as challenges and plants for their magnificent flowering displays.

Buttercups form an integral part of New Zealand's alpine flora, from the large tracts of *Ranunculus lyallii* in the Hooker Valley with their large lily-like leaves and attractive white flowers, to the seemingly barren scree slopes of the Eyre Mountains where *R. scrithalis* barely raises its foliage and yellow flowers above the surrounding stones.

For those of us who grow New Zealand ranunculus, our association with this genus begins with seed. Ranunculus seed is often difficult to germinate and nearly always erratic, causing problems right from the beginning of collection time. The high alpine species disperse their seed whilst still green, and it is these species which are the hardest to germinate and grow. *Ranunculus scrithalis* goes even further to be obtuse. After the first snows of the winter, the plant dies down leaving the seedhead to fend for itself on the surface. Presumably melting snow and the freeze-thaw cycle distribute the seed down the scree slope in early spring. Collecting ripe seed of this species consists of scouring scree slopes on hands and knees looking for seedheads 1cm³ in size with no foliage attached. Assuming of course that the winter's first or second snowfalls have melted. Not recommended for the impatient or intelligent, but best left for the likes of myself!

There are two easy tests for collecting seed in prime condition :

- (i) some seeds are missing from the seed head
- (ii) lightly brushing the styles releases the seed. Not forgetting of course the necessity of catching it deftly with the other hand.

Having acquired your seed by collection, seed exchange or commercial collector, it must be sown as soon as possible. This does not ensure germination at once or indeed next spring, but it does ensure you are in the running. Most high alpine species will need two winters or the equivalent by stratification. After two winters, seed can germinate for successive springs; a

single batch of *Ranunculus lyallii* seed has been known to germinate each year for five years.

Which seed mix is best?

A mix that works well for me, and indeed most alpine species, is very simple:

70% peat based compost
30% sharp sand
and, for growing on, 9 month 'Osmocote' in spring.

I sow the seed on top of this mix and then place 8-10mm of 5mm chip on top. Then it goes outside where Mother Nature can do her thing. In Fiordland my seed trays experienced temperatures as low as -12°C and extended periods of being frozen. They also received freeze-thaw cycles to a depth of 300mm to help things along. As the days warm, ensure that they receive only morning sun and are well watered.

After germination an individual decision is required by the grower – to shift on before midsummer or after. Personally, I prefer to try before summer. Ranunculus produce strong roots early and 3-4 weeks after germination I prick out seedlings into 7cm pots. These are placed in plunge beds with only 2-3 hours of morning sun and well watered over the summer. In early autumn they are placed in one litre pots to face their next trial, the first winter. You can skip the 7cm pots if you prefer, but I find the most casualties occur in the first shift. All species are treated the same to this point, but from here on some require individual attention and I leave notes of this until individual species are discussed later.

While discussing general cultivation, one important observation should be noted. For larger plants, and sometimes smaller ones, winter dormant ranunculus will become summer dormant. Never throw out a ranunculus if it appears to die in midsummer. There is every chance it will reappear again in early-mid autumn. This has occurred for me in both pots and in the garden where *Ranunculus haastii* subsp. *piliferus* flowered, died, reappeared in autumn and died down again in midwinter. Whilst this was not helpful for garden collected seed, it still meant it flowered beautifully every spring.

Ranunculus buechananii

The finest of New Zealand alpine buttercups, this

species grows in cool shady areas where there is considerable snow melt during the summer. In Fiordland plants are luxuriant with the larger ones reaching 50cm in diameter and over 30cm in height. To see these in flower is one of the highlights of our alpine summer. The large white flowers and pale grey-green foliage make kiwi plant enthusiasts justifiably proud of our lack of flower colours. Even the Mother-in-law raised one of her eyebrows when she first saw *Ranunculus b Buchananii* in flower. Further east in the Eyre Mountains and Remarkables, plants are usually smaller as a result of a drier climate and predators. Chamois are very fond of *R. b Buchananii* and hares eat the flowers. Hares, in some populations, will account for over 95% of the flowers, significantly affecting seed production.

To emulate the prolific flowering in cultivation is quite a challenge requiring cool summer conditions, water, well drained mix, stone chip mulch and preferably a plunge bed. And an ounce or two of luck. Placing ice around the plant in the morning has been known to help. I tried this one spring morning in Fiordland. I placed a 2 litre block of ice beside the plant and duly went off to work. It was a nice sunny day with a frosty start and my *Ranunculus b Buchananii* lived in a cool shady area. Upon my return from work in the evening, I raced behind the house to see if my cunning plan had worked. I had a look, and there to my surprise was my 2 litre block of ice looking totally unperturbed. back to the drawing board! – but no wonder difficult plants liked that spot! *R. b Buchananii* is winter dormant, and sometimes summer dormant in cultivation.

Ranunculus crithmifolius

On recently formed rock debris sites in the South Island, *Ranunculus crithmifolius* can usually be found. Often hard to see because of its chameleon-like abilities, it is most easily found when in flower in late spring. Occurs in N.E. Nelson and from North Canterbury to North Otago and an odd population in the Eyre Mountains. After flowering, pedicels of the ripening fruits are pushed downwards through the leaf bases. When mature the seeds find themselves in the comparatively cooler, moist areas below the leaves, enhancing their chances of germination. This germination process is the most difficult part of *R. crithmifolius* cultivation. Perhaps the seed collected has to be loose seed beneath the leaves and in the stones, which presents difficulties of their own. I know of no surefire methods here. Mature plants are best treated like other ranunculus with cool, well watered, well drained conditions with a stone chip mulch. Winter dormant. Copes with the summer without too many problems.

Ranunculus enysii

A highly variable species that now includes two former species – *Ranunculus novae-zelandiae* and *R. berggrenii*. Common in the area between snow

tussocks and subalpine scrub in the eastern part of the South Island. In Central Otago it occurs in sheltered snow hollows where it is much reduced in size (formerly *R. novae-zelandiae*). I have grown plants of the former *R. novae-zelandiae* from seed as well as the taller *R. enysii*. Both produced ground hugging plants similar to the Central Otago plants. Easy to cultivate but without any special merits. I find a mass planting most effective as they produce flowers most of the summer.

Ranunculus godleyanus

An interesting rather rare species from the central Southern Alps. An evergreen species with bright green leaves and yellow flowers up to 50cm tall. I have only seen this species at one site in the wild. They were growing in loose rock debris and on steep rock faces in almost total shade with large blocks of snow nearby producing a copious flow of water. It was flowering prolifically in early autumn suggesting a very short growing season indeed. The fact that they are evergreen as well suggests that they are tough customers. In cultivation *Ranunculus godleyanus* is surprisingly easy but not always free flowering, the normal conditions I provide for *Ranunculus* spp being enough for it to cope with the lower altitudes.

Ranunculus haastii

On the extensive mobile scree slopes of the high country live a community of plants especially adapted to the hostile environment. *Ranunculus haastii* is one of these plants. Its extensive root system probes deep under the surface of loose stones to tap nourishment and moisture. A large rhizome just below the surface stores this nourishment to enable the fleshy leaves and bright yellow flowers to protrude from loose rock in the late spring. The rhizome also ensures survival should the scree move and dislodge the leaves.

Subspecies *haastii*

Ranunculus haastii subsp. *haastii* makes its home on the greywacke scree of the central and eastern parts of the South Island. In its natural environment, the copious water below the surface and the high evaporation rate above the surface ensure conditions difficult to replicate in cultivation. Seed germination is slow and erratic and pricking out seedlings is often the most difficult phase. Plungebeds at all stages of growth would be beneficial. In midsummer, my plants die back and return in autumn. In the wild, plant growth is conditioned by soil temperature. Spring and autumn growth in the garden is seemingly attuned to soil temperatures as well. Perhaps soil temperatures in summer are too much, and I should try to find cooler sites. Apart from the summer recess, my plants do reasonably well in the 70/30 mix I use for everything.

Subspecies *piliferus*

Ranunculus haastii subsp. *piliferus* occurs in the Eyre

Mountains southwest of Queenstown. Its chosen habitat is similar, but leaf shape, flower number, plant size and cultivation requirements are different from subspecies *haastii*. At the head of the Lochy River in the Eyre Mountains, large colonies of *R. haastii* subsp. *piliferus* inhabit scree slopes similar to those of subspecies *haastii* in Canterbury, but it is on a large stable debris slope that this subspecies is most prolific. The slope is more gentle and the stones vary in size from 20cm to sand. Individual plants are up to 50cm in diameter with 30 flowers on some. The number of plants in a given area is far greater than shown by subspecies *haastii* and they even grow in association with *Celmisia hectorii* on the perimeter. *Ranunculus haastii* subsp. *piliferus* is a lot easier to keep in cultivation than *R. haastii* subsp. *haastii*. These spectacular plants will grow well in the garden if they are given a deep, well drained mix, shade from the afternoon sun, a stone chip mulch and frequent watering. The first signs of life are yellow petals working their way up through the stones in late spring. It makes interesting viewing watching the whole plant emerge over 3-4 weeks. A period of summer dormancy occurred with my plants after flowering, but once again it returned in the autumn, without flowers.

Ranunculus insignis

In its best form, *Ranunculus insignis* is a rival for *R. Lyallii* (Mt. Cook lily – Great Mountain Buttercup) as the best of the subalpine buttercups. Rainbow Skifield in Nelson offers choice plants and easy access. A trip here in early December will see them flowering profusely beside streams and cascading down permanently moist slopes. Plants with over 100 flowers are not uncommon. *R. insignis* now includes *R. lobulatus* and *R. monroi*. The first two are large choice plants for the garden, but the *R. monroi* is a much smaller species from Canterbury with small hairy leaves that barely raise themselves above ground level and produce only two or three flowers. Seed sown of *R. insignis* from the Rainbow Skifield produced large plants similar to the parent plants. Seed from *R. insignis* (= *R. monroi*) produced the small ground hugging plants similar to their parents. While I hold no grudge against taxonomists placing *R. monroi* in *R. insignis*, I feel that those interested in growing *Ranunculus* should be aware of the differences. For best seed, sources of *R. insignis* in the wetter regions of Nelson and Marlborough and in areas between 1200 and 1500m altitude are to be preferred. Seed germinates relatively readily and growing conditions similar to other *Ranunculus* spp suit. Given room in a cooler part of the garden with a touch of fertiliser it will make a fine addition.

Ranunculus lyallii

The most well known species of New Zealand ranunculus and more commonly known as the Mt. Cook lily (= Great Mountain Buttercup). So well known in fact that, here in New Zealand, the flowers have the

dubious honour of gracing the rear end of buses and planes. This species is found along and close to the main divide of the Southern Alps. It prefers peat overlying moist stony soils and in such conditions forms extensive colonies. Just as important is the lack of browsing animals (deer, chamois). So, by good fortune, the most impressive sites are near to human activity such as the Hooker Valley, near Mt. Cook, and near the Homer Tunnel on the Milford Sound Highway. The Homer Tunnel area is where I worked for ten years, and such was the display of *Ranunculus lyallii* each year, that I took it for granted and never photographed it until I left the area. Best displays are spring/early summer, but on the avalanche debris sites in the Gertrude Valley, flowers can be seen as late as May (late autumn). This is one of the easier species for the garden. Seed germinates readily and plants grow rapidly, especially in pots. It seems to help if transferral to garden is left until you cannot find pots big enough to contain it.

Ranunculus pachyrrhizus

This species is confined to hollows in the high alpine zone of Central Otago where snow accumulates over the winter. From summer onwards plants emerge from under the snow cover and flower soon after the leaves appear. Plants normally form colonies from thick half-buried rhizomes that spread through the gravel. At all the sites where I have seen it, the soil appears to be predominantly gravel kept moist by meltwater. Very cold tolerant and needing a cool site in cultivation, it has proved a shy flowerer for me so far.

Ranunculus scrithalis

This is the smallest species of *Ranunculus* discussed here. This plant eluded me for a year or two as I was searching for it in the normal areas one would expect to find an alpine ranunculus. Not so for this enigmatic little treasure which, in the Eyre Mountains, grow on inhospitable, hard screes facing the sun with only *Stellaria roughii* for company. For those of you who have experienced the New Zealand mountain sport of 'scree running', you will understand the need to look for the hard smoother areas with fine debris. It is these hard smoother areas the *R. scrithalis* prefers. In summer the first 5cm of the surface material is rock hard but underneath the material is loose and moist and this is where the extensive root system of *R. scrithalis* hides. *R. scrithalis* is winter dormant with the seedhead being the last part of the plant to go before the winter sets in. It is still in the trial and error phase with me for cultivation. Treating it like other *Ranunculus* spp does not appear to work. Plants survive until midsummer then die down and never return. Perhaps a plunge-bed with more sun and water from below.

Ranunculus sericophyllus

Ranunculus sericophyllus is a close relative of *R.*

pachyrrhizus. It grows further to the west, along and close to the main divide of the South Island. It is more common to the south of its range where it colonises snow banks and sheltered high alpine areas. Often found in saturated meltwater runoff areas and during stormy periods in Fiordland may be completely under water for many days (*R. sericophyllus* var. 'submergediana'). They even flower with water flowing over the plants, their flowers perhaps being pollinated by one of our native fish species of Galaxiads. For those visiting New Zealand, the Gertrude Valley offers the easiest access to this fine alpine species. If the track to the saddle is impassable due to avalanche debris, plants can be seen at the head of the valley just one hour's easy walk from the Milford Sound highway. Despite the cool damp sites it prefers in the wild, it is relatively easy in cultivation. Coaxing seed to germinate is the most difficult problem with erratic germination occurring over two years. *R. sericophyllus* releases its seed whilst still green and the best collections seem to be from seedheads with half the seeds already dispersed.

Ranunculus verticillatus

A highly variable species found on both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. I prefer the plants with thin, highly dissected leaves found in close association with *Chionochloa* spp. It sometimes appears that *Ranunculus verticillatus* seed has been dispersed among the *Chionochloa* tillers where it germinates and then branches out from the middle of the tussock in search of light. It prefers damp, shady areas and plants in these conditions are up to three times the size of those growing in more exposed areas. I have found this winter dormant species a little difficult to keep for long. A lot of shade is beneficial and indeed the more shade the larger the plant. Lack of moisture is probably where I have let myself down and a pot in the plunge-bed is where I should try next.

Hybrids

Ranunculus buchananii x *lyallii*
 x *sericophyllus*
 x *haastii* subsp. *piliferus*

These are three of the ranunculus hybrids that I have in cultivation. They are also spectacular plants when seen in the wild.

Ranunculus buchananii x *lyallii* has large white flowers and intermediate foliage from the parents. Seed is fertile with F2 hybrids having varying foliage form, but a uniform dark green colour more reminiscent of *R. lyallii*.

Ranunculus buchananii x *sericophyllus*. The best forms have the foliage of *R. sericophyllus* and lemon coloured flowers with more petals from its *R. buchananii* parent. Seed has recently germinated in England and I await reports on its progress.

Ranunculus buchananii x *haastii* subsp. *piliferus*. My personal favourite from the Eyre Mountains where I know of a plant 50cm in diameter with 30 plus flowers. If I ever get there before the chamois eat the plant and flowers it will make a magnificent photograph. Once again intermediate in form with the best ones leaning towards *R. buchananii* and magnificent lemon/cream flowers. Common in some areas of the Eyre Mountains usually on scree slopes within 20 metres of the cliffs above the scree where *buchananii* grows. Some seed is in England awaiting (hopefully) germination.

These are just a few of the hybrids in the mountains, and when the species have all been seen (except for *Ranunculus grahamii* – never fear I have a cunning plan for this one), hybrids make plant hunting fascinating. This year in the Eyre Mountains I found *R. crithmifolius* x *serithalis* which is the strangest one I have set eyes upon, and it is finds like this that will always drag me back (fighting against it all the way of course!) to where I like to be.

RNZIH Royal Charter 60 years old

The RNZIH was granted its Royal Charter in March 1939, 60 years ago. The following is an extract from a letter to the Governor-General dated 15 December 1938 from F.S. Pope, then President of the NZIH :

"Your Excellency,

For more than a decade past, the New Zealand Institute of Horticulture has been desirous of obtaining permission to include the word Royal in its name, but has abstained from preferring any request in that direction until it felt that there could be no doubt whatever of its ability to fulfil what were understood to be the conditions necessarily precedent to the presentation of a petition for the granting of that privilege.

Now, however, the Institute is confident that the information given hereinafter will show that it has attained a position of considerable eminence amongst the semi-public institutions of this country, and of pre-eminence amongst its fellow horticultural bodies; that is, relatively to the length of period since the proclamation of New Zealand as a British colony, of quite respectable long standing; that its finances, though on a modest scale befitting the nature of its activities, are sound and secure; and that its objects are entirely national in scope....."

The letter from Government House finally advising that "His Excellency has just received advice from the Private Secretary to the King to the effect that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve of the granting to the New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.) of permission to make use of the prefix "Royal" in its title." Was dated 8 March, 1939.

Safety in Pre-school Centres

Plants which existing literature suggests should not be grown or tolerated in pre-school centres

This information was provided by Landcare Research New Zealand Ltd and was prepared by W. R. Sykes, Research Associate

Internal Poisons – (Harmful if swallowed)

- Angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia candida*) – North Island and warmest parts of South Island
- Arums and arum lily (*Arum* species and *Zantedeschia aethiopica*)
- Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*) – mainly South Island and lower North Island
- Castor oil (*Ricinus communis*)
- Death cap and fly agaric fungi (*Agaricus phalloides* and *A. muscaria*)
- Fox glove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
- Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)
- Jerusalem cherry (*Solanum diflorum* and *S. pseudocapsicum*)
- Laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*) – mainly South Island and southern half of North Island
- Lantana (*Lantana camara*) – warmer parts of North Island and northern areas of South Island
- Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) – mainly South Island
- Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*) – mainly South Island and colder parts of North Island
- Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
- Persian lilac or white cedar (*Melia azederach*) – mainly North Island
- Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) – all green parts
- Privet species (*Ligustrum* species)
- Queen of the night (*Cestrum nocturnum*) – mainly northern North Island
- Spindle tree and Japanese spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus* and *E. japonicus*) – latter mainly fruiting in North Island
- Stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*)
- Tutu (*Coriaria* species) – nearly always *C. arborea*
- Yew (*Taxus baccata*) – although nearly all parts of both sexes are poisonous, only the berry of the female tree, with its poisonous seed, is likely to be eaten

External Poisons – (Harmful if touched)

- Stinging nettles (*Urticate* species)
- Wax tree or Japanese wax tree (*Rhus succedanea*) – mainly North Island and northern South Island

Notes

Certain very poisonous plants are excluded from the above list because of their rarity in New Zealand, e.g. deadly nightshade❖ (*Atropa bella-donna*), bushman's poison (*Acokanthera oppositifolia*), henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), and poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*). Also excluded are poisonous plants which, although common, have no parts likely to attract young children, e.g. hellebores (*Helleborus* species), box (*Buxus sempervirens*), and thornapple or datura (*Datura stramonium*), the last having very poisonous seeds enclosed in spiny capsules.

Many plants have spiny or prickly vegetative parts but these are not considered to be reason enough to exclude such plants from pre-school education centres. Most of these plants are either not poisonous or not very poisonous; e.g. roses (*Rosa* species and hybrids), firethorns (*Pyracantha* species), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*), and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

- ❖ True deadly nightshade is extremely rare in New Zealand. Unfortunately, this name is mistakenly applied to black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), the latter having somewhat poisonous green parts and harmless berries. The two are easily distinguished: deadly nightshade is a large plant over a metre high when mature, and has large, bell-shaped, brownish-purple flowers followed by large, egg-shaped black berries. Black nightshade is a much smaller plant (about half the height of deadly nightshade when mature), and has small white star-shaped flowers followed by little black berries, similar to black currants.

For more information contact : The Plant Herbarium, Landcare Research, P.O. Box 40, Lincoln 8152, Tel 03-325 6700, Fax 03-325 2127, Email chr@landcare.cri.nz

This information is available from the Landcare Research Website: www.landcare.cri.nz

Notable Trees New Zealand

Thomas Looij, a dedicated Notable Tree Registrar with over 600 registrations for Hawkes Bay, has sent a recent and well documented registration for a *Quercus robur* at 51 Duart Road, Havelock North. The tree's dimensions are – height 24.70m – average width 25.60m – girth at 1.40m is 13.85m. It has an age of approximately 97 years. The tree is described by Thomas Looij as “having a very great stature. Beautifully shaped and a good crown form. It is known as the ‘Coronation Oak’. The Oak was planted in approximately 1902 to mark the accession to the throne of King Edward the Seventh. The tree stands in the grounds of Duart House which is owned by the Hastings District Council. It was an old homestead and is now preserved by the NZ Historic Places Trust and it is used as a venue for clubs, weddings, etc.”

STEM Points awarded are – 180

Valuation - \$80,462.00

Beautiful photographs are included in the registration.

Many thanks to Thomas Looij and the Hastings District Council.

There are some beautiful autumn walks around this time of the year and perhaps your enjoyment of the trees might suggest registering some of them for posterity. It takes a little time and a small donation for processing the registration. You will receive an RNZIH Notable Tree Certificate of Registration and the tree's name as well as the name of the initiating registrar on an enamel plaque to identify the tree.

Tree registration forms are available from either

Enid Reeves, RNZIH Administration Officer, P.O. Box 12, Lincoln University Canterbury, email rnzih@xtra.co.nz

Or Ron Flook 539 Rocks Road, Tahunanui, Nelson, telephone/fax 03 548 6539, email flook@netaccess.co.nz

Frank C. Buddingh' recently sent best wishes from New York to the RNZIH. He works near New York in a company called Savatree and his address is :

Frank C. Buddingh', 915 Hall Street Apartment 2, Mamaroneck, NY. 10543, USA. Telephone 001-914-7771569, email intertree@compuserve.com

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE : Unfortunately the dates for the RNZIH Annual Conference 'New Zealand Plants and their Story had to be amended, they are therefore incorrectly printed in Newsletter No. 3 December 1998. The correct dates are as given on the front of this Newsletter, namely **1 - 3 October 1999**. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Newsletter



Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.)

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