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We are always particularly glad to receive from any member, articles on notes embodying their own personal observations either on a particular area or about some special plant or group of plants. We welcome then, Mr. Brian Hannken's contribution, and thank him heartily for it.

Waikumete Pine Plantation Community.

Members have often noticed with interest the unusually profuse growth of native shrubs beneath the mature pine trees (Pinus radiata) in the City Council plantation near Waikumete Cemetery. Two members of the Auckland Natural History Club, returning from a club trip recently, spent a short time examining the area.

Throughout the plantation, whether the pines are poorly grown or relatively vigorous, there is a dense growth 8 to 15 feet high of native vegetation. This appears to be mainly of one age and shows little sign of regeneration.

The dominants of this undershrub layer are Hangehange (Geniostoma ligustrifolium) and the two tree ferns, Ponga (Cyathea dealbata) and Mamaku (C. medullaris). Where the pines are well grown and fairly close (20-30 feet apart), as near the main North road, these three plants alone are of any significance. The floor is bare but with no great accumulation of pine needles. There is some young Hangehange and a little young Mahoe (Melicytus ramiflorus).

Where the pines are scattered there is a community of spindly teatree (Leptospernum scoparium) plus the Hangehange, treeferns, gorse, Hakea and bracken (Pteridium esculentum). The gorse is dying and not reproducing and the teatree also is probably dying.

In an area stripped by fire there is a pasture-like growth of young teatree and the round-leaved sedge, (Schoenus tendo) with a number of gum seedlings derived from a shelter belt on the North West side of the plantation. Only one Pinus seedling was seen during the hour or so spent in the area.

Nothing is known of the history of the plantation but it would appear that in the early stages of pine growth the trees were too weak to prevent the growth of scrub. Teatree, perhaps grew first acting as a nurse to the tree ferns and Hangahange. It may have been by chance that Hangehange seeds were abundant. Later the teatree died and with maturing of the pines practically no plants of any species could germinate. Even ground herbs and ferns are practically absent; gorse is dying; there are no forest tree seedlings, except Mahoe; and there is no indication that any other community will develop while the pines remain.

From the point of view of Pinus production the position is satisfactory as even this amount of undergrowth is unusual, but from the point of view of our native forests the warning is plain----pines can kill.

P.B. Hannken.

It is good to hear of old friends at Christmas time. We have much pleasure in printing an extract from a letter from Mrs. Cranwell-Smith, sent to her family when she and her husband had just moved into their new cottage, Mount Desert Island, Maine. The letter was written in July.

"The house is wholly satisfying. Every window has a view, sometimes of sea (and mud, when the tide is very low), sometimes of a group of great spruces, or again--just one large perfect oak and some smaller spruces nearby. Everyone admires the oak: and the architect had wanted to have cupboards all along that wall. To the west there is a vast view of sky, which is a rare one here. There is a rounded granite ledge, covered with coarse grass - and above it only the sky.

We were able to go yesterday to see the library of Mrs. Max Farrand at Reef Point Gardens. It is right against the sea at Bar Harbour and is easily the best private garden I have seen in this country. It is run as a memorial to the late Max Farrand, a professor at Yale. Owing to Mrs Farrand's infirmity it is difficult to get to the library. We went in with our architect, to whom she is a sort of patroness, and found a very superior, if small, library. It had very many old books on gardening, and even one great cupboard full of the garden plans of Gertrude Jekyll, who worked vigorously in England (at Godalming) until she was over 80 years old. A portrait of this woman showed her to be a fine specimen--such a strong and interesting face. There were lots of herbals from the 17th century -- e.g. Gerard's and Parkinson's (the latter all in English)-- and all sorts of gardening books over the years. One outstanding thing was the set of illustrations of Anglo-Chinese gardens by Le Rouge. I hadn't seen them before. Money hadn't been spared on any part of the garden, the library, or the interior of the house, which was 19th century, refurbished and strengthened, and then mercifully smothered with creepers such as Clematis crispa and a number of honeysuckles. There were four gardeners and a head woman outside tending the garden. You may be sure we did not see a single weed! However, there was a good balance between garden flowers and wild flowers, and there was a handsome area set aside for Calluna (the purple heather of Scotland) and various forms of Erica. I saw quite a lot of Erica tetralix (the Cornish one) in bloom. The most striking single show was provided by the giant Cow Parsnip - Heracleum. It wasn't an American one, and unfortunately there was no indication of its source. It stood about 9 ft. high, the flowers in their grand umbels reaching the greatest height. I plan to get photographs of it soon.

We hope to get some of the species established in our new--and almost non-existent garden. At present it is just a smooth patch in a ploughed area, and we have only Shasta daisies, tomatoes and lettuce, with odd masses of seed coming up."
