A CURIOUS PSEUDOPANAX HYBRID

Hybrids between Pseudopanax crassifolium (with single leaves, long and narrow in the juvenile stage) and P. lessonii (compound, usually 5-foliate leaves) are common, and the most frequent form is probably the trifoliate, in which the leaflets frequently resemble those of P. crassifolium, but are sometimes shorter, broader and more or less oval.

A rare hybrid form occurs in which some of the leaves are lobed instead of being fully divided down to the petiole. A curious feature of such trees is the variation of leaf type on any individual tree, some of the leaves being simple, some with two and others with three lobes. In all cases the lobes are unsymmetrical. The divisions between the lobes may be quite short, or may extend nearly down to the leaf-stalk, but I have seen no fully trifoliate leaves associated with this type. The leaves are at right angles to the stem, with a slight upward curl at the outer end (not deflexed as in juvenile P. crassifolium). The types are mixed indiscriminately along the stem.

One tree which I observed carried such a mixture of leaf types that I sketched them approximately to scale, and representative types are shown in the diagram accompanying this note. The tree is six feet high, a single straight stem as in the juvenile lancewood, with the leaves confined to the upper two feet. It carries 26 leaves, of which 13 are simple, 7 have two lobes and 6 three lobes. The outline of the leaves somewhat resembles that of P. lessonii, with a smooth taper to the petiole in the lower third, the upper two-thirds being rounded, with a blunt point, and widely serrated.

A hybrid in the vicinity, about 16 feet high and branched, carries similar leaves but with a larger proportion of simple leaves, has flowered and is setting seed, though recent observation makes it doubtful whether the seed is ripening.

So far I have only found about 8 trees of this type, all on the slopes around Karekare, and I would be pleased to hear of any others.

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Similar hybrids occur at the Old Lookout in Woodhill Forest (Editor).