STREBLUS (PARATROPHIS) SMITHII -AN ASSISTED IMMIGRANT

Victor May

Family Moraceae. A large family which includes, for example, mulberry, fig, banyan, breadfruit and jack fruit.

Common name. Informally, Geoff Baylis uses "The Three Kings Fig" and "Smith's Streblus". The only published name I have found is " Smith's Milkwood" recorded by Salmon, J.T. "The Native Trees of New Zealand" 1980 p.219. Discovered by T.F. Cheeseman in 1887 this tree is one of a group of uniquely interesting New Zealand endemic plants growing on the Three Kings Islands.

Live material brought back by earlier visitors resulted in the establishment of a small nucleus of S. smithii in cultivation. Following is a summary of these introductions and their progeny, as known to me, at November 1987.

Growing at	Owner	M/F	Cutting, seed or plant	Date	Source
Remuera Ak See note at end	C. Oremland	F(2)	?	?1887/90	3 Kings Is Cheeseman
Campbells Bay	G.T.S. Baylis	M	plant	c. 1945	3 Kings Is Baylis
Mount Albert Research Centre	DSIR	F	cutting?	c. 1945	3 Kings Is Baylis
Dunedin	G.T.S. Baylis	F	plant	1963	3 Kings Is Baylis
University of Auckland	Botany Dept	F(M*)			
Huia	V.A.L. & B.M. May	F	cutting	1978	MARC (BMM)

This remained the position until very recently.

Now, having brought male and female together in cultivation, a good seed crop has been produced for the first time on the mainland. Seed was widely distributed and many people are now in possession of seedling plants.

It happened this way - in two locations:

(1) University of Auckland

Material brought back by A.E. Wright (1982) produced two seedlings. One of these was planted in the courtyard at the Auckland Museum and the other (1984) alongside the well-established female S. smithii in the University grounds. The University 'seedling' had its first flowers October 1986 revealing itself as male (see summary (M*)); in grateful

response the female set a 'massive' crop of fruit. Reference Cameron, E.K., 1987, Botany Division (DSIR) Newsletter 115:16.

(2) Huia

Artificial pollination of the female S. smithii at 6 Ocean View Road (V.A.L. & B.M. May) was done as follows:

- Oct/Nov 1985 (cross) using male of S. banksii at same address.
- Oct/Nov 1986 and again 1987 (purebred) using male of S. smithii at Campbells Bay (G.T.S. Baylis).

On the last occasion (1987) the tree at MARC and one of the two trees at the late Cheeseman Remuera property were pollinated also. (Permission, respectively, Ross Beever DSIR; Charles Oremland, present owner.)

In all cases fertilisation has been successful. The female spike remains dormant over the summer months. Come March/April there is a flush of fruit forming growth; fruits ripen mid winter. At Huia sivereyes (Zosterops lateralis) eat the flesh of the red, ripe, fruit and the bare, whole, seed falls to the ground. At MARC the fruits were attacked when green - one half of the seed cell being chewed away and the seed taken.

It was at the Auckland Botanical Society's 50th Anniversary Symposium, in conversation with Audrey Eagle, I learnt that the male flower and the fruit of S. smithii were on her 'Wanted' short list. Audrey was given the spike of fruits on display at the Symposium and male catkins were sent to her from Geoff Baylis's tree at Campbells Bay - a completed composite painting has resulted. It is expected the painting will be reproduced in the 1988 Forest & Bird journal together with a short article on Smith's milkwood. Members who would like to see the fruit are welcome to visit us at Huia. The fruit is green at present (7/4/88) colouring from June onwards. I have to admit however the University grounds will be more convenient for most members. We are fortunate in that the University of Auckland continues to invite the public to share in the enjoyment of their excellent Botanical Gardens. Dr Millener tells me that he himself made many hundreds of plantings during the years 1953-72. There is always something to be grateful for. Feedback to this article in the form of additional information would be appreciated.

NOTE. The following is offered as a footnote on (what was) part of the Cheeseman Remuera property. Geoff Baylis had encouraged me to find the S. smithii which he knew from his student days were planted by Cheeseman. Anthony Wright had kindly pointed me in the right direction and so it was that Geoff, Brenda and myself headed up Upland Road. A corner section with tall, old trees looked promising and after a brief walk up the road Geoff looked over a rock wall and there was S. smithii. The search was over. Luckily the owner of 49 Benson Road (Charles Oremland) was at home and we were able to tell him of the purpose of our visist. He seemed to be genuinely interested in preserving his two S. smithii trees. One of the trees, which is much larger than the other, has a 7-8 ft high trunk from the top of which branches spread out and around a full circumference, weeping down to the ground. From the outside one can part the branches, enter the 'umbrella' and walk around inside.

An explanatory label has been attached to the canopy of this tree. On a subsequent visit I removed an offending Arauja (moth plant) which had climbed extensively throughout and above the Streblus canopy and was in danger of smothering it. On this visit I took the opportunity to speak to the owner of No. 45. Apparently 'old man' Fletcher bought the property for subdivision ?1951-53. What is now Nos. 41-49 was part of it. The owners of No. 45 have lived there since 1953. They have a huge Phytolacca dioica (Argentine 'ombu')

which dominates the area at the back of the house. There is an article on this tree in NZ Gardener April 1974. No. 47 has the original Cheeseman house on it - a quite lovely looking place. I met the owner and she confirmed the house is "over a hundred years old". There are 3 very tall Washingtonia palms on this section.

It has been said Cheeseman introduced many exotic trees. There is record of a North American black walnut (Juglans regia) 60-70 ft high when J. Lovell-Smith had 49 Benson Road in 1971 and a tulip tree (Liriodendron tulipifera) at 41 Benson Road reputedly 90 ft tall. Both these trees must have been felled in the last 10-15 years.

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MIMULUS REPENS

R.O. Gardner

This uncommon salt-marsh herb has been found on the Waitemata shores for the first time, discovered by Mike Larcombe of Bioresearches Ltd in January '87 during his investigation of what is now the chosen route for the Huntly-Marsden Point gas pipeline.

It grows by the Northwestern Motorway at Traherne Island, not in a refuge kind of habitat but in a brackish muddy depression among open Juncus maritimus, Cotula coronopifolia, Samolus repens and motorway jetsam. Plants are healthiest at the drain's lower (blocked) end, where fresh run-off gathers; their total cover is a square metre or so.

Mike Larcombe saw many flowers but there seem to be no other colonies in any of the equally unsavoury wet places along the motorway embankment here. We might guess then that it will not be possible to reconstruct the habitat once the pipeline is laid.

M. repens would seem to be a genuinely rare plant at least in northern New Zealand. Kirk found it at Onehunga; there is one collection in AK from the south side of the Manukau Harbour (Joan Dingley Karaka Point, Waiuku) and one of mine from Miranda.

Kirk observed the scrobiculate (finely-pitted) nature of the leaves, a character omitted from Allan's "Flora I" description apparently by accident.

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