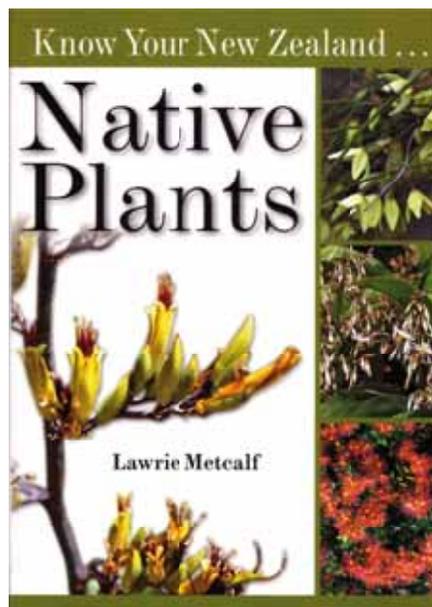


Book Reviews

Know Your New Zealand... Native Plants

By Lawrie Metcalf
Published by New Holland
Paperback, 176 pages, 150 × 210 mm,
New Zealand, 2009
ISBN 978-1-86966-205-9
NZ\$34.99
Reviewed by Murray Dawson



Lawrie Metcalf is well known to members of the RNZIH and the wider horticultural community. He is an Associate of Honour (AHRH), was profiled in an earlier issue of *The New Zealand Garden Journal*, 2006, 9(2): 24–25, and is a recipient of the Royal Horticultural Society's Gold Veitch Memorial Medal.

Lawrie is an accomplished and leading author of books on New Zealand native plants, and has published more than a dozen titles. My firm favourites remain the more authoritative works along the lines of the original *The cultivation of New Zealand trees and shrubs* and the more current *The propagation of New Zealand native plants*. Lawrie's authoritative titles provide comprehensive details of cultivated New Zealand native plants, cultivar names and origins, and plant descriptions.

His latest offering, *Know your New Zealand native plants*, is a comparatively lightweight offering written for a less technical audience and wider readership. It concentrates on herbaceous plants, shrubs, and climbers and follows on from Lawrie's

Know your New Zealand trees also published by New Holland.

Know your New Zealand native plants is an attractive book. Following the usual high standards of the author, I found no typographic errors.

The contents include an introduction, a concise glossary, the main species listings, a short bibliography, and an index. One style issue throughout the book is the lack of italics on the first letter of each botanical name – this does not follow botanical convention and to my eye looks most odd.

The Introduction states that the more common plants were chosen along with rarer species for their 'interest value'. This provides a good representative, although somewhat random, sampling. The Introduction also states that the plants are presented in order according to the families in which they belong. However, these families are almost never named so it is difficult for the non-expert to tell where one family ends and the next begins.

The glossary is only three pages long; it is short because technical terms are deliberately kept to a minimum throughout the book.

The species listings follow a standard format of text and distribution map on the left hand side of each page and plant photographs on the right hand facing page.

More than 80 species are profiled and the text on each includes interesting notes on descriptions, distribution and habitats, derivations of names, and traditional uses.

The main species headings are kept short and simple with a preference for common names for the wide readership. However, in some cases no common name is available, creating an uncomfortable mix of European common names, Maori names, and botanical names. It is good to see that names secondary to the main headings are provided in a colour panel on the left hand side of each page.

The author has followed the most recent treatments and kept all of the botanical names up-to-date. Synonyms (earlier names) are often also given, but absent for a couple of recent names that may still be unfamiliar – *Leptecophylla juniperina*

was previously known as *Cyathodes juniperina*, and *Raukaua anomalus* was *Pseudopanax anomalus*.

To give the reader a better feel for each group, I felt that it may have been helpful to state the number of native species for each genus covered and to mention recent changes. For example, two species of *Earina* are mentioned, but not the third, *E. aestivalis*. Also, as a result of recent taxonomic work, there are now eight native species of the iconic kowhai (*Sophora*), and stating this would have been of interest. Similarly not mentioned are *Arthropodium bifurcatum* and *Pseudowintera insperata*, two newly-recognised rare species from Northland.

However, it must be stressed that these points are largely inconsequential as *Know your New Zealand native plants* was never intended to be a comprehensive resource. For this, some of Lawrie's other works will serve you well (and for much the same price).

What *Know your New Zealand native plants* will deliver is a useful and reasonably detailed sampling for the novice wanting to gain a better appreciation of New Zealand's native flora.

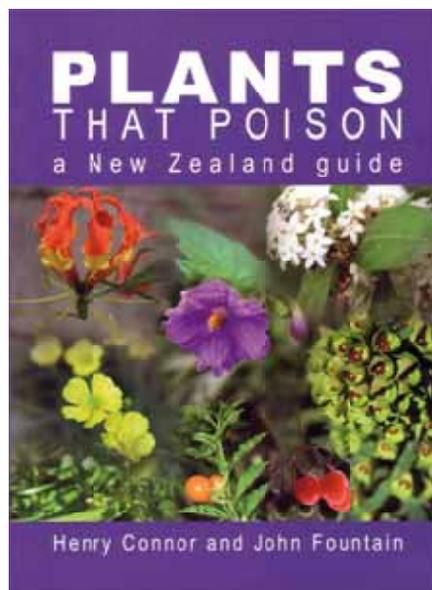
Available from Touchwood Books

Other titles by Lawrie Metcalf:

- *A photographic guide to trees of New Zealand* (2002)
- *A photographic guide to ferns of New Zealand* (2003)
- *A photographic guide to alpine plants of New Zealand* (2009, first published 2006)
- *Alpine plants of New Zealand: Mobil New Zealand nature series* (1996)
- *Hebes – a guide to species, hybrids and allied genera* (2006)
- *International register of hebe cultivars* (2001)
- *Know your New Zealand trees* (2006)
- *The cultivation of New Zealand trees and shrubs* (1991, first published 1972)
- *The cultivation of New Zealand plants* (1993)
- *The cultivation of New Zealand native grasses* (2008, first published 1998)
- *The propagation of New Zealand native plants* (2007, first published 1995)
- *New Zealand native rock garden and alpine plants* (2000)
- *New Zealand trees and shrubs* (2000).

Plants That Poison: A New Zealand guide

By Henry Connor and John Fountain
Published by Manaaki Whenua Press
ISBN 978-0-478-09398-8
Paperback, 112 pages, 190 x 260 mm,
New Zealand, 2008
NZ\$29.99
Reviewed by Murray Dawson and
Andrew Maloy



The first author, Dr Henry Connor, is an ex-Director of the then Botany Division DSIR. As a Research Associate at Landcare Research, Lincoln, he has continued working well into his official 'retirement' in 1982 and is a co-author of the major grass flora of New Zealand (Edgar and Connor, 2000).

Although Dr Connor first published *The Poisonous Plants in New Zealand* in 1951 (with a much-revised edition in 1977, reprinted in 1992), this new title bears little resemblance to those earlier works. The earlier titles are scholarly publications with comprehensive text and numerous references. The format of *Plants that Poison* is modern, with less text and larger photographs aimed at a wider audience.

The second author, John Fountain, is a medical toxicologist at the National Poisons Centre, University of Otago, Dunedin. The complementary taxonomic and toxicological skills of each author are brought together in this book.

The text in a book like this needs to strike a balance between presenting the information clearly, concisely, yet also accurately. The authors do achieve this well with a generally easy-to-read writing style, though a

short glossary would have helped with some of the more technical terms.

Plants that Poison highlights plants that are of concern for children and gives advice on what to do if poisoning does occur. Descriptions of poisonous plants are grouped into chapters according to what people see of the plants – Berries and Fruits, Pods and their Seeds, Herbaceous Plants, and Trees and Shrubs. Each of the plants listed is accompanied by a full colour photograph and description of where and how the plant grows and which parts are poisonous. Each description includes a 'ToxBox', providing important practical information in case of emergency. For example, included in the ToxBox for black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum* and allies) is:

Toxic part

The unripe berries are the most toxic, and other parts less so.

Signs and symptoms

Onset delayed by 6–12 hours, of fever, sweating, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, confusion, hallucinations, stupor.

Intervention

Contact the National Poisons Centre if more than 3 unripe or 6 ripe berries are eaten, or any symptoms occur.

Should the need ever arise, page 14 provides the emergency phone number for the National Poisons Centre, in bold red print.

In addition to the more than 50 native and exotic plants described there are separate chapters on Mushrooms, Plant Stings and Dermatitis. There is also a chapter on Toxic Mechanisms in which the poisonous elements in plants are dealt with according to their action on the human body and treatments for poisoning with such plants described in more detail.

Historical background and snippets of interesting folklore relating to some of the plants makes for a more interesting read.

The full colour photographs are generally good throughout, and every listing is illustrated.

Plants That Poison should prove a valuable guide to anyone interested in the toxic properties of plants; from keen gardeners to professional horticulturists as well as any person caring for children in situations where close contact with plants is likely.

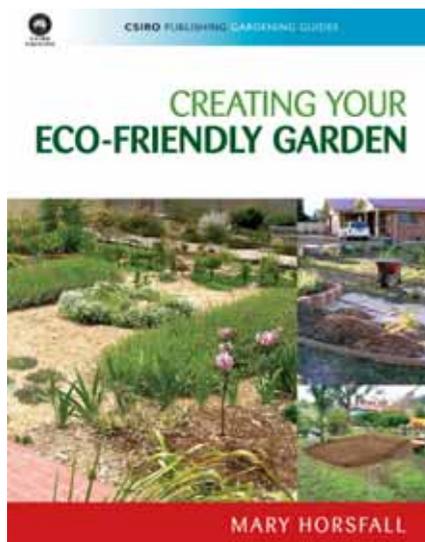
Connor, H. E. (1977). The poisonous plants in New Zealand. E. C. Keating, Government Printer, 247 p. (reprinted 1992).

Edgar, E. and Connor, H. E. (2000). Flora of New Zealand Volume V: Grasses. Manaaki Whenua Press, 744 p.

Available from Manaaki Whenua Press and Touchwood Books

Creating Your Eco-friendly Garden

By Mary Horsfall
Published by CSIRO Publishing
Paperback, 168 pages, 240 x 190 mm,
Australia, 2008
ISBN 978-0-64309-494-9
NZ\$44.95
Reviewed by Andrew Maloy



Another in the CSIRO gardening guide series, *Creating Your Eco-Friendly Garden* is written for Australian gardeners but like many of their other publications (e.g., *Good Gardens with Less Water*¹, *Sustainable Gardens*) this title contains much that is equally relevant and useful this side of the Tasman. The author, Mary Horsfall, had previously spent 24 years on a 40 acre country block converting "waist high bracken and rocky infertile soil into a productive, high-biodiversity oasis". *Creating Your Eco-Friendly Garden* is the story of the next stage in her life, moving to a much smaller suburban block of 1600 square metres in north-central Victoria, Australia and the challenges of starting a garden from scratch on a more-or-less bare block of land.

Water efficiency, biodiversity, soil conservation, use of native (Australian) and bio-diversity friendly plants, organic methods, use of recycled materials, keeping costs to a minimum and avoidance of

¹ Previously reviewed in *NZ Garden Journal*, Vol. 11(2), Dec 2008.

environmental weeds are strongly featured in this book.

From previous experience, the author learned that having a plan is vital. Not necessarily a detailed landscape plan but the need to have decided what it is you want from your garden. The author's aims for her new garden sum up what this book is about. She wants:

- Beauty – an aesthetically pleasing environment to live in.
- Biodiversity – a variety of indigenous native (Australian) and exotic plants to attract native bird and other fauna.
- Bounty – a productive food garden within the space constraints of the block.

Most of the plants mentioned throughout the book and in the appendix are selected for their

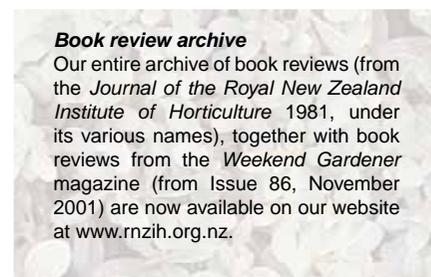
suitability to north-central Victoria, Australia and in most cases would be inappropriate for similar use in New Zealand, or for that matter in warm, northern parts of Australia. Likewise some of the soil related problems are much less likely to occur here. Nevertheless the greater part of this book is an easy to follow step-by-step guide, valuable and extremely helpful to anyone starting a new garden from scratch. Each chapter, whether it be on planning your garden, learning about the soil or preparing and constructing garden beds has an action plan at the end, which in a few words summarises the major points to take into account before embarking on the task in hand.

Typical of CSIRO publications this book contains a wealth of background information combined with practical detail and full colour

photos describing how to carry out many of the projects described. The author's writing style combine technical detail, personal opinions and experiences in an easy to read, yet comprehensive, book.

Perhaps priced a little on the high side for today's market *Creating Your Eco-Friendly Garden* is a valuable addition to the literature encouraging and assisting home garden sustainability and food production.

Available from Manaaki Whenua Press



Notes for contributors to *The New Zealand Garden Journal*

- The *New Zealand Garden Journal* is a professional journal aimed at those with an in-depth interest in plants, and an enthusiasm for sharing ideas and knowledge of their origins, conservation, cultivation and use in gardens, parks and open spaces.
- The journal is published twice a year in June and December. Copy dates are 1 April and 1 October, respectively.
- Articles should be informative, accurate and well-founded. They are not treated to a formal refereeing process, but we encourage the more technical papers to be peer reviewed before submission. For more technical articles, we may seek independent advice and feedback.
- References should follow the convention adopted in recent issues.
- Articles can be up to a maximum of 4000 words, preferably submitted electronically in Microsoft Word or RTF format, either on disk or as an email attachment.
- Articles will be returned to authors only if major editorial changes are required, or on request.
- Authors will not receive proofs for checking unless they specify this when submitting the article. Proofs are checked carefully by several people before printing.
- Photographs and/or illustrations should be included with captions typed at the end of the article. Images must be copyright free and if not the authors work, be fully credited to the original photographer or source. Images should be supplied ideally as high definition electronic copies, or as good quality photographs and slides. All original photographs and slides will be returned.
- Authors will receive two complimentary copies of the relevant journal issue on publication. Additional copies will be available at cost.

Erratum

Ferguson, A. R. (2008). The 2008 Banks Memorial Lecture: Sir Joseph Banks and the transfer of crop plants. *New Zealand Garden Journal* 11(2): 9–15.

The caption for Fig. 6 (p. 14) states that the copper engraving of harakeke/flax is *Phormium tenax*. However, with drooping leaves and yellow flowers it is most likely to be *P. cookianum* subsp. *hookeri*. This is also the subspecies illustrated on the cover of Lawrie Metcalf's new book *Know Your New Zealand... Native Plants* and differences between *Phormium* taxa were mentioned in a previous article by Rob Smissen and Peter Heenan (*New Zealand Garden Journal* 11(1): 24-26, 2008). Our thanks to Lawrie and Peter for correctly identifying the flax illustrated.

This article relates to the flora of New Zealand, especially indigenous strains. New Zealand's geographical isolation has meant the country has developed a unique variety of native flora. However, human migration has led to the importation of many other plants (generally referred to as 'exotics' in New Zealand) as well as widespread damage to the indigenous flora, especially after the advent of European colonisation, due to the combined efforts of farmers and specialised societies dedicated to The level of endemism among New Zealand plants and animals is one of the highest in the world. The tuatara, moa, kiwi, kākako, saddleback, huia, kākōpā, native frogs and giant carnivorous land snails are just some of the species that are unique to New Zealand. Credit: David Brooks. This isolation in the absence of mammalian predators for millions of years also meant that many of our native species were virtually defenceless against attack – for example, many of our native birds like the kiwi are flightless and nest on the ground. The threats they face – most importantly the threat of introduced pest species – must be better managed if our native plants and animals are to continue to survive. Some of the threatened species we are working to help save include: Kākōpā. New Zealand plants & animals. Kaikoura , Christchurch - Canterbury. By Kyle Mulinder. Before humans settled in New Zealand, it would have been an extremely noisy place! Large tracts of lush native bush supported an incredible variety of bird life. As they evolved, wings became unnecessary for some birds, as they had no natural predators to fly away from. As a result, several of New Zealand's native birds became flightless, including the kakapo parrot, the kiwi, the takahe, and the world's largest bird, the (now extinct) moa. As Maori and Europeans settled New Zealand, they hunted birds and brought predators including rats and stoats. This, and loss of habitat, led to New Zealand native plants can be found in gardens throughout the world and it's not hard to see why. Many are blessed with unique forms and distinctive leaf shapes that make them stand out from the crowd, particularly cabbage trees, flaxes, Astelia and puka. Then there's the graceful nikau, the world's southern-most palm, prized for its beautiful trunk and stunning fronds. Other natives such as Hebe, Coprosma and Corokia species are less dramatic but extremely versatile, hard-working and reliable shrubs with a huge number of varieties to choose from. You can't talk about New Zealand natives wi