

10. LANDSCAPE PLANTING

Most members join the Farm Forestry Association, as its name implies, to learn more of the commercial side of tree planting. Almost all develop a knowledge of many interesting trees and shrubs, together with aspects of creating nice homestead gardens and ideas of farm landscaping, from the many field days attended.

The first field day held by the Lower Northland Farm Forestry and Horticultural Association, as it was named in 1950, was held at Frank Bartlett's farm at Silverdale. Frank's father had planted a variety of trees which interested Frank, and he became very knowledgeable on matters botanical, and so the new Association got off to a broad interest base involving native trees as well as exotics.

Niall Alexander wrote in the newly established *Farm Forestry* journal, *FF* 1/3 May 1959, of the almost tragic results that would follow from planting a single genus. He said "They (if widely adopted) will make our countryside look like a parade ground on which formations of troops, all alike in form and colour are drawn up in stiff geometrical arrangement waiting to be inspected. Why cannot we give to our countryside some of the charm for which the English countryside is famous?"

Niall ended this "Trees as Companions" essay by saying, "Let us in New Zealand consciously strive to give our countryside such brightness and variety of form and colour that its charm may evoke in the breasts of our sons travelling abroad that longing to be home again."

The Association tried to get its members off on the right foot by asking nurserymen in particular, to name all their plants correctly using the revised "International Code of Nomenclature for Cultural Plants" published in 1958. A leader in *FF* 2/4 November 1960 quoted a number of trees often wrongly named, which led to confusion, saying that the Association should require the adoption of better standards.



Plantings for production, protection, and pleasure around a dam on the L.A.Alexander Trust farm.

Crash Barriers

R.S.Scott, Superintendent of Parks and Reserves, Timaru, addressed the Farm Forestry Conference in Timaru in 1962. Mr Scott gave some very interesting observations on the benefits of good roadside planting, advocating the planting of trees with light-coloured bark such as silver birch on the outer side of curves as this would improve the degree of safety of night travel.

He said that American experiments had proved that dense plantings of shrubs on particularly bad corners were more effective than guard rails, with test cars having stopped in such brush in their own length at 50 km/hour, or being brought quite gently to a stop at 80 km/hour.

C.H.Cuff of Bulls became upset by the use of the word “amenity” for trees being planted for aesthetic reasons. In a Letter to the Editor in *FF* 6/2 May 1964 he wrote

“Sir, As farm foresters let us carry out our utility planting of our plantations, windbreaks and woodlots.

For beauty let us plant shrubs and ornamental trees around our homes.

Leaving amenities for artificial creations. Please do not plant one on my lawn!”

Individual Efforts

Jolyon Manning and his wife have become well known for their remarkable research into growing trees and shrubs in extremely difficult Central Otago conditions. Jolyon Manning has written of the establishment of the Jolendale Research Parklands and of his philosophy and dedication in *FF* 7/3 August 1965, *FF* 19/1 1977, and *FF* 21/2 1979.

A property of about 6.25 ha on a hill overlooking Alexandra was purchased in 1959. On a rocky weathered schist, where annual rainfall was little more than 300 mm on average, but sometimes only half that amount, the Mannings planted a wide range of tree and shrub species. By the use of good rabbit-proof fencing, and by planting using rocks and black polythene to guide all existing moisture into the

planting hole, trees have become established in almost desert conditions.

The glaucousness of the foliage of some conifers and eucalypts is most noticeable in these conditions, as is the autumn colour. The area is now a real place of beauty and inspiration to others, and a fine example of the pleasure that can be attained from dedication and hard work from a couple's recreational activity.

An overseas visitor remarked "It was encouraging to learn that there still might be a place on this globe where people live rather modestly, but are content, satisfied and happy".

Ian McKean had strong ideas on the different reasons for planting trees. In an article in *FF* 8/3 August 1966, he complained that many farmers seem to have heard only of *P. radiata* and *Cupressus macrocarpa*, and he asked them to put aside the diameter tape and increment borer, and consider trees just for the pleasure they give. On several occasions, Ian took the Association to task for concentrating too much on the commercial aspects of tree growing.

Ian McKean developed a very extensive collection of conifers on his hill-country farm near Apiti, south of Taihape. The 1997 National Conference visited this property, the "Torwood Pinetum", and members were very impressed at the collection of over 300 species from 48 genera, many of them very rare. Possums were unfortunately a real concern, and a constant battle was required to prevent damage to some species.

Ian McKean died early in 1999, and his conifer collection is now under a QE II National Trust Covenant. Don Tantrum, another conifer enthusiast in the district, chairs a management committee for the Pinetum.



Part of Ian McKean's collection of conifers from all over the world.

Trees for Bees

A number of authors have referred to the maintaining of an adequate supply of nectar and pollen for bees by the planting of suitable species, the preservation of bush remnants, and the restriction of pesticide use.

G.E.Gumbrell of Geraldine addressed the Timaru Conference in 1962 on this subject, even then suggesting the need for biological control of insect pests rather than the use of pesticides. He mentioned some of the tree species that would be beneficial to bees, and called for co-operation between farming, forestry, and bee-keeping interests.

FF 10/1 February 1968 published a comprehensive list of mostly native but also exotic trees and shrubs producing nectar and pollen for different regions of New Zealand.

John Smith, an apiary instructor of Christchurch, spoke to the 1978 Conference. He told members that one healthy honey bee colony would rear 110 000–200 000 bees per year, needing 30–50 kg pollen, which was between two million and four million bee-loads!

He said it had been calculated that it required 144 000 to 160 000 bee-trips to produce 1 kg honey, representing over 1 million blossoms if it was clover honey.

John Smith said *Robinia pseudoacacia* was a very valuable tree, producing surplus honey of 70–90 kg/ha in a good year, at the same time as producing shelter and a timber which will last 30 years in the ground without treatment, and has a very high heat output as a fuel.

R.H.Tane, a bee-farmer and planning consultant of Twizel, wrote a historical record of bee-keeping over the last 2000 years (*TG 3/3* August 1982). He said that at present a New Zealand bee-keeper is just a keeper of bees with no control over the resources that make honey crops possible. He spoke of the potential for bee farming if bush remnants were allowed to regenerate.

He went on to speak of the very high potential for honey production if deliberate bee-farming was carried out where planting of suitable trees and shrubs was widespread, quoting Australian work where grevilleas, coorea bells, willows, eucalypts, banksias, almonds, and acacias had been planted. One farmer had kept 1000 hives on 250 ha for 20 years, and the Hawkesbury Agricultural College west of Sydney carried 4–10 hives/ha.

Mr Tane referred to the future needs of horticultural pollination, and dangers of insecticides, concluding by

observing that among the emerging options, tree farming with bees offered one of the brightest prospects.

Advice from Landscape Architects

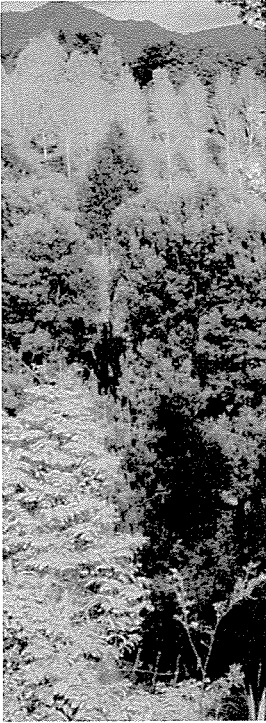
Trained landscape architects in New Zealand have been concerned at the lack of variety and design on New Zealand farms, both in tree planting and in structures.

S.Challenger, Senior Lecturer in Landscape Design at Lincoln College, spoke about the British landscape and New Zealand developments to the Canterbury Central Association in March 1969. He referred to the needs for a variety of species, for conforming with land topography, for considering distant views, and for having due regard to form, colour, and texture, which should be in keeping with the landscape character of the area as a whole.

Tony Jackman, the first President of the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects, wrote some of his ideas in *TG 3/1* February 1982. With the use of black and white sketches he showed how farmers, sometimes with Catchment Authorities' subsidies, planted pines in rows with little thought to contour. He said that the occasional gum, poplar, and cedar shelter lines enlivened the monotony.

By the use of tree groups of lighter and less sombre genera than pines, and planting with the contour or making use of awkward corners not suited to cultivation, a more coherent landscape with which most can identify, would result.

An editorial in *TG 3/2* May 1982 followed Tony Jackman's comments with some enthusiasm and mentioned that the recent NZ Forest Service Policy on Exotic Special Purpose Species showed a range of trees could be planted, still with a commercial end-use. Diane Lucas was brought up in the Central Otago high country and, after studying landscape architecture in New Zealand and overseas, set up practice in Geraldine. Diane produced a booklet in 1980 at the suggestion of the South Canterbury Association which outlined her ideas. These included planting (woodlots and shelter), buildings (siting, design, materials, and colours),



Foliage types and colour provide interesting contrasts in the planting on "Ngarakau", the Davies-Colley property in Northland.

and homestead areas. Although essentially for lower South Island landscapes, it had a message for all New Zealand farmers. Diane conducted a workshop at the 1984 Timaru Conference which many found interesting, but which did arouse some controversy among those with a strictly practical outlook.

Other authors, including Clive Anstey of NZ Forest Service and Sue Mort of J.E. Watson and Co., together with John and Bunny Mortimer (in their book "Trees for the New Zealand Countryside"), have all contributed to the debate on good landscape design which would benefit all those looking at the rural scene.

George Stockley, a well-known forest nurseryman in charge of the Forest Service nursery at Milton in Southland, had considerable influence on farm foresters. His book "Trees, Farms and the New Zealand Landscape" was published by the Northern Southland branch, and sold well for many years.

One property where some landscape work was allowed as development proceeded was the Woodstock farm forestry project in Hawke's Bay. Simon Smale, a student of landscape architecture at Lincoln College, was employed in his summer vacation to help plan such developments as roading, housing and farm buildings, woodlot and shelter planting, and protection of important native vegetation particularly in gullies.

This work was described in *TG 5/1* February 1984 in which a recent booklet on "Rural Landscape Guidelines" was also featured. This was produced by the Lands and Survey Department in response to criticism that not enough tree planting was carried out on their blocks before settlement.

Forest Service Roadside Planting

Changes in forestry management in the large forest estates of New Zealand have had, or are likely to have, a negative effect on beautification. Whether by luck or design, some of the species trials carried out by the Forest Service resulted in some beautiful vistas seen by travellers, such as

through the Golden Downs Forest on State Highway 6 in Nelson where larch, poplars, and sweetgum are always attractive but are magnificent in autumn.

The very high-pruned old *P. radiata* together with blackwood and eucalypts in the Athenree Gorge make for another lovely drive. The redwoods at Whakarewarewa Forest Long Mile Drive, with other remnants of early planting, are a great scenic attraction.

In Berwick Forest south of Dunedin, Clive Anstey helped design some of the plantings around Lake Mahinerangi.

The multiple use of forests introduced in the late 1970s gave Forest Service personnel the opportunity of making the most of some of these attractive forests by providing tracks for recreational use, as well as using some resources for cosmetic purposes.

Some of the large companies also planted ornamental trees on the fringes of their production forests, such as the blackwood and *Cryptomeria japonica* in the Dome Valley of Northland planted by NZ Forest Products Ltd. It is hard to see that this sort of expenditure will continue with the present minimal staff employed by mainly overseas corporations, and with no State input.

Farm Landscaping—or the Lack of it

While some farmers have made an effort, with many beautiful properties throughout the country, in general the New Zealand farmer has not had the luxury of continued surplus finance to allow the widespread adoption of landscaping.

We are still a young country, with a recent history of wresting good pasture from bush and scrub. In recent years the loss of all Government assistance has made survival difficult enough, without any frills. The thought of attractive stone barns replacing basic corrugated iron structures, or of widespread ornamental tree planting replacing at least some *P. radiata* plantations, would have entered many farmers' minds. Their ability to put something into practice is limited.

Farm foresters have at times expressed frustration at the lack of understanding by landscape architects about the practical reality of carrying out their ideas.

Peter Smail, after the 1984 Conference, had a special message for Di Lucas and those involved in the landscape workshop. He apologised for the straight lines of his fences, but promised, in future, to use lots of curved posts!

Many Association members have contributed valuable information on different species of trees they have experimented with, or just the reasons for planting them.

James W. Harris of Waikanae wrote a number of amusing articles describing unusual trees. He wrote in *FF 19/2 1977* that Marco Polo recorded two excellent reasons that we might not have thought of (for planting trees): to show travellers where the road lies when the ground is covered with snow, and “from the circumstances of his diviners and astrologers having declared that those who plant trees are rewarded with long life”.

To be practical about this, James Harris asked “Is it not time that FFA members were granted concession rates for life insurance?”

Bob Berry of Tiniroto near Gisborne has made a hobby of growing oak trees on his farm. He wrote two articles on the genus outlining his experience, one in *FF 20/1* February 1978, and the other in *TG 9/4* November 1988 prior to the visit by conference delegates attending the 1989 Gisborne Conference. Oak trees have popped up in many places around New Zealand following the collection of acorns that day.

Bob Berry is a practical botanist, with a deep and extensive knowledge of *Quercus* and allied genera, having collected seed in various parts of the world for growing first under quarantine, and then establishing on his property.

Bruce Treeby wrote of a visit to Panikau Station in Poverty Bay where Peter Murphy had grown and planted out thousands of oaks and other hardwoods in the 1980s. Many larger seeds were direct-sown in sprayed sites, while others

were grown in root trainers first. Many of these interesting trees were planted in a 20-ha block that the local Catchment Board wanted him to plant in *P. radiata*. It is now a very different concept of conservation planting, and it could be a very valuable source of special-purpose timbers in the future.

Beautiful New Zealand Scheme

In 1981 the Government introduced the “Beautiful New Zealand Scheme”, with the intention of planting trees along highways for beautification, particularly along the verges of tourist routes. An objective was to create employment and provide job skills.

Some of this sort of work had been done by local people many years earlier, as evidenced by the plantings of cedars near Ashburton and of deciduous hardwoods near Ngatea on the Hauraki Plains.

The Association was in favour of the “Beautiful New Zealand Scheme”, with a submission to the Advisory Committee being prepared by John Mortimer and Bruce Treeby suggesting that the most appropriate plant for a particular location be used, either exotic or native, but that it should not be too ornate as what were accepted as garden plants were misplaced beyond the city limits. The submission also advocated the extension of planting beyond the road boundary to connect up with bush remnants on farms, thus giving a continuity to the landscape rather than just roadway corridors.

Unfortunately, the Government had in place regulations which prevented public money being spent on private land, and so this logical extension did not proceed.

Government decided to phase out the scheme in March 1987 unless other monetary support could be found. One committee member of the Scheme noted, “Everyone loves us, but no one wants to marry us.”

However, some 200 projects were started throughout New Zealand under the Beautiful New Zealand Scheme, mostly using low-growing native trees, and the skills learned in establishing trees on roadside verges have been continued

on large embankments on motorways such as on the Bombay Hills south of Auckland.

Some Special Properties

John and Bunny Mortimer bought “Taitua”, a 20-ha property near Hamilton, in 1975 and set about developing an arboretum. In between a huge contribution by both to the Mystery Creek Fieldays, forestry development, a 10-year term on the Waipa County Council by Bunny, and a period on Executive and as President of the Association by John, they have developed “Taitua” into a beautiful park. It contains something over 1000 species including at least 60 varieties of magnolias and pines, a redwood stand, a grove of poplars, and areas of native plants. It contains four ponds complete with waterfowl.

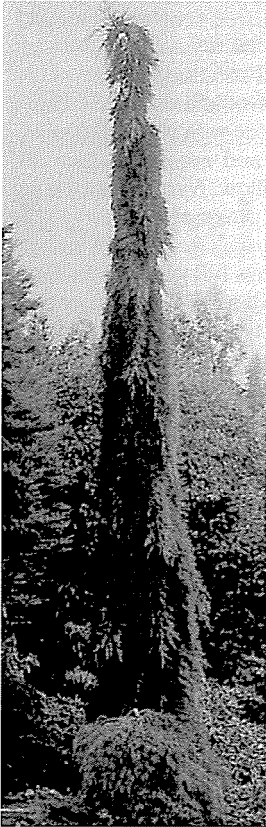
In 1996, John and Bunny gifted this park to Hamilton City, retaining the right to carry on living there. In 1999 they are busy building a new home nearby of compressed mud bricks and a variety of interesting timber, much of which has been rescued from demolition.

Both are Life Members of the Association, and no one has contributed more to the development of diversity of tree planting in the countryside.

Many other members have developed outstanding properties and provided inspiration to many. Jeremy



In the homestead plantings at “Avenel” Station the background of conifers and eucalypts gives a sheltered environment for a wide range of ornamental conifer cultivars and deciduous plants that give seasonal colour changes.



Sequoiadendron giganteum 'Pendulum' forms a striking focal point at "Avenel".

Thomson's "Makara" in Taranaki, Kipper and Esther Holt's "Maraetara" in Hawke's Bay, and John and Anne Mackay's "Montana" in Otago are just three examples.

Tree Grower has in recent issues published articles on homestead gardens and specific ornamental trees.

Noeline Garden, who with Eoin has developed a splendid homestead garden at their "Avenel Station" Otago property, wrote two articles in *TG 17/3* August 1996 and *TG 18/2* May 1997. Noeline described many of the species grown successfully in their cold climate, but also gave good advice on the planning and shelter needed before a good garden can be created.

Rosemary Barrett, from J.R.Barrett Nursery and Garden in Stratford, has written three articles in recent issues of *Tree Grower* on magnolias, Cornus, tulip tree, sweetgum, maple, and other species. With the excellent colour photography now used on high-quality paper, these ideas will inspire many others to improve their properties.

With the proliferation of lifestyle blocks throughout the country, there is tremendous potential for large numbers of park-like properties to be developed. There is probably no more rewarding recreation than the growing of ornamental trees, and few better ways of adding value to the land.