

MARVELLOUS MISTLETOE

Elizabeth Miller

When Chris Ecroyd (RBS Life Member) was curator at the National Forestry Herbarium at FRI, now Scion, he became interested in mistletoes. He experimented with attaching seed to suitable host trees, including in the FRI Grounds.

It was the observant Angela Simpson who recently alerted me to the presence of mistletoe within 100 m of the Herbarium. Sure enough, two sizeable plants of *Tupeia antarctica* are growing just above head height on adjacent branches of a five finger (*Pseudopanax arboreus*) in some understorey regeneration beneath larch (*Larix decidua*). The plants both have stout main branches that divide into progressively smaller branches, and some small twiggy stems nearby, up to 140 mm away along the host stem. They form an impressive clump more than 1 m deep and 1.9 m x 2.2 m in diameter, with branches from the two plants overlapping. The eastern plant has a diameter of 1.5 m, with branches to c. 850 mm long but arching downwards; the western plant has a diameter of 1.8 m with branches extending to c. 900 mm in all directions, also arching down. The plants are estimated to be close to 20 years old. The foliage is very healthy and some flower buds were present at the end of November.



Tupeia antarctica, Scion Grounds, western plant from beneath

A single cluster of purplish fruit was spotted. *Tupeia antarctica* is very attractive to possums and is usually browsed in areas without possum control. A keen former Scion staff member has carried out pest control (night shooting) in the Scion Grounds and surrounding area for several years, and is delighted to know of positive benefits to the vegetation from his actions. The size and health of the plant is a tribute to the benefits of pest control.



Tupeia antarctica, Scion Grounds, two plants from beneath



Tupeia antarctica, Scion Grounds, eastern plant from beneath