

TREE PLANTING IN THE AUCKLAND SCHOOLS

Our October lecture was given by Mr E.F. Jackson, Science Adviser to the Education Board, who very kindly consented at very short notice to talk about "The problems of horticulture in tree planting within the Auckland primary and intermediate schools."

This is something about which many of us are abysmally ignorant. We were most interested to hear of the schemes whereby school children, many of whom have no experience of growing plants, are given seeds to grow and tend and the results of their labours are exhibited at school flower shows. The speaker mentioned the difficulty in obtaining competent volunteers to act as judges for these exhibits and sometimes the children do their own judging. This I think is an excellent idea for it must instill in them a feeling of responsibility and heighten their powers of observation as they examine each flower to find its good points. Vegetables grown in this way are often sold at the shows or to long suffering teachers and parents.

The planting of trees in the school grounds for reasons aesthetic, educational or for shade and shelter presents peculiar problems of its own. The list of problems is formidable for often the trees have to stand up to almost impossible soil conditions, extreme exposure to winds, rough treatment by children, motor mowers, excessive rain or drought. One has to develop extreme cunning to surmount these difficulties, especially those caused by child damage and mowers. Mr Jackson described their system of angle staking to protect the trees as much as possible, also how in heavy clay conditions it is often more successful to plant trees above the ground, covering the roots over with a mound of good soil and mulching well in the summer. The trees most suited for school planting must be very tough and he has found Acmena (Monkey apple), Grevillea robusta, Oleanders, Kowhais, Broad leaf (Griselinia) and Pines most suitable in this respect. Native trees are encouraged to grow in odd corners for study purposes although the labelling of these present many problems owing to their tendency to be shifted about by mischievous children. Some of our members have been and perhaps may continue to be very helpful in supplying seedlings for these plantations. Mr Jackson has quite a problem on his hands but appears to be handling it very competently. Our thanks are due to him for a most interesting and informative lecture.

K. Wood