

## PUAAU EXPERIMENTAL NURSERY.

The whole area of 12 acres has been cleared and stumped and drained, and is now practically under cultivation, and a large collection of citrus and other useful fruit-trees has been obtained from other tropical countries. This collection would have been much larger, but unfortunately, owing to the war, we have not been able to increase our varieties as we had expected, many orders not coming to hand. However, we should during the planting season, receive a good collection of different varieties of citrus trees from California, Florida, and Queensland.

An exhaustive test was carried out of a number of varieties of tomato, to ascertain which varieties could be most profitably cultivated in this climate for export to New Zealand. A detailed report of the tests is given in Mr. Reid's report attached hereto.

Two acres of old exhausted plantation land is being experimented on with manurial tests for banana-growing, a detailed account of all expenses being kept. Should this prove successful it will enable planters to utilize land now considered worn out and useless, and at present covered with undergrowth and rubbish.

An Agricultural Committee is being formed to visit the experimental areas periodically, to view the progress and results, and to assist Mr. Reid in his experiments with suggestions from practical experience gained here and in other tropical countries.

The Natives permanently employed on the experimental grounds are receiving a training in the art of cultivation, propagation, and pruning, which we hope to extend to the other islands as the opportunity offers for taking on promising youths. Any planter, Maori or European, wishing to have his trees pruned receives prompt attention on application to Mr. Reid, and demonstrations are given to him and his employees. This should prove of great benefit to all growers, and greatly increase all exports.

I am sorry to say that, as reported by Mr. Reid, noxious weeds are getting a footing in these Islands, and in the present state of our laws we are powerless to prevent their introduction or to insist on their eradication. On the 3rd September, 1913, I introduced an Ordinance for the consideration of the Island Council, dealing with the question. At the first meeting of the Council the members were favourable to the measure, but wished for an adjournment to consider it more fully. At the third meeting they threw it out without discussion, outside influence having been at work. Not one of the leases in this island has the usual provisions that "the lessee will at all times during the said term of the lease use his best endeavour to keep the said land free and clear from noxious weeds and vegetation." If some legislation is not passed without delay these weeds will obtain such a hold in the Islands that their eradication will be a matter of great difficulty and expense, if not an impossibility.

We are very greatly indebted to the generosity of kindred institutions in various parts of the world for valuable gifts of plants, seeds, and pamphlets to the Experimental Nursery.

## LAND TITLES COURT.

No Judge has been appointed to the Land Titles Court this year; consequently no sittings have been held, and everything that depends on land titles is at a standstill. For example, it is impossible to go on with the landing at Atiu until the ownership of the land involved is ascertained. Mr. Large, when he was Resident Agent at Atiu, got some of the Natives to agree to hand over the land required to His Majesty the King; but, as he says in his report, some of the claimants to this land did not agree to the transfer and refused to sign, wishing the titles to be first investigated by the Land Titles Court. Mr. Large was satisfied that the objectors had no title to the land, but that question can only be finally settled by a properly constituted Court, and until then the landing must wait.

As I pointed out in my report of the 27th May, 1914, it is absolutely essential for the development and prosperity of these Islands that the whole of the land should be allotted to its rightful owners. The Natives themselves are most anxious that this should be done, and have asked for it repeatedly, and they were definitely promised in June last that a Court should sit this present year.

## HURRICANE.

It was deemed advisable to despatch a schooner to visit the northern islands as soon as one was available, so on the 4th April last the schooner "Huanui" left Rarotonga to call at all the northern islands, taking Mr. Connal and Dr. Maclurkin—the former to report on the damage done generally to the islands and on the food-supply, and, where required, to leave an ample food-supply, and to carry out certain public works immediately required, taking the necessary material with him. Dr. Maclurkin was to render any medical attention and assistance necessary, as it was considered that after what the Natives had gone through many would be in a condition needing medical attention. I append the reports of both these gentlemen.

The hurricane cost the Administration £791 18s. 11d., besides many incidental expenses not included in the before-mentioned sum.

## OUTLYING ISLANDS.

During the year I have on two occasions visited the lower group. They are fast recovering from the effects of the hurricane, and the Natives are, on the whole, doing their best to restore their islands to the old state.

Mauke did not suffer from the hurricane to any great extent, and hardly a trace of its effect is now visible.

At Atiu Mr. D. B. Russell is now the Resident Agent, *vice* Mr. J. T. Large; and on arrival there he wrote, "I beg leave to report . . . on landing I was met by the three Arikis and the people,