

SOME NEGLECTED NEW ZEALAND TREES

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(Continued from November, 1937, issue.)

HOHERIA.

THE family of plants known as Malvaceae is important in containing the genus *Gossypium*, producing the cotton of commerce, and the genus *Hibiscus*, containing the Indian hemp plant and many highly decorative tropical and sub-tropical shrubby species. The family is known to gardeners as supplying the mallows (hollyhocks). The New Zealand representatives of Malvaceae are the ribbonwoods and lace-barks. Several of these are esteemed as among the most beautiful of New Zealand flowering shrubs, for the large white flowers, often massed together, and the handsome foliage. The best of them, the South Island ribbonwood (*Gaya lyalli*, now *Hoheria glabrata*), and the Marlborough ribbonwood (*H. ribifolia*) are completely deciduous in nature. The latter is greedily eaten by the New Zealand wood pigeon and by wild sheep. The neglected plant of this group is *Plagianthus betulinus*, which Cheeseman describes as a "handsome leafy tree, 30/60 ft. high, with a trunk sometimes 3 ft. in diameter." In the young state it forms an unattractive straggling bush with interlaced tortuous branches, and is another example of the desirability of propagating by cuttings from the mature trees, a method already advocated for other plants passing through an unattractive juvenile state. The flowers are greenish and massed together in dense panicles, but the whole tree is most attractive in the adult state, and well worthy of extensive planting in open spaces and large

gardens on account of the beautiful foliage and symmetrical outline. In nature it is found on river terraces, growing well as isolated individuals in exposed positions, and it is apparently very hardy. All the New Zealand trees of the family are easily raised from seed, and sometimes from cuttings. The seed must be gathered as soon as ripe, as it is attacked by some grub.

PUKANUI.

VERY little use has been made in New Zealand, except in the north, of the fact that the giant-leaved Pukanui (*Meryta Sinclairii*), a small tree with the largest leaves of any New Zealand tree, can be successfully grown in more southern localities where the conditions are favourable. Several are growing in private gardens in Wellington, but it has not as yet been used in street planting. It is slightly affected by light frosts, but is eminently suitable for planting in situations near the sea or in breezy and frost-free pockets in the hills. The leaves are often 30 inches long and up to 10 inches broad. The tree is from 12 feet to 20 feet high, and the mass of leaves forms a dense canopy which excludes every ray of direct sunlight. In Auckland City it is largely used in parks and reserves. The plants are easily raised from seed or cuttings. The tree belongs to the family "Araliaceae"—the ivy-worts—and hence the flowers are greenish and inconspicuous. The fruit is, however, a succulent black berry, and is no doubt distributed by birds.

