

significant role of native grasses in the landscape made up for that. Non-flowering native plants such as the seaweeds (particularly kelp) and liverworts were mentioned by just a few. As one person said in justification for liverworts: 'I adore them.'

Comments and explanations for individual choices were many and varied; some poetic, some moving. With many thanks to all those who contributed, we would like to share these examples:

Akeake: 'Under-rated — has amazing flower bracts'. 'Beautiful foliage, colour both vibrant and soft at once.'

Beech trees: 'the light plus the black trunks set against blue sky makes a mystical experience,' 'Grandeur of the South Island beech forests,' 'The sight of the mountain mists shifting through the hill sides of layered branches.'

Cabbage tree: 'handsome plant,' 'love the clacking sound of the leaves in the winter,' 'great social, cultural and ecological value.'

Carpodetus. putaputaweta, marble leaf: 'I love the vibrant leaf colour.'

Dianella or turutu: 'a real gem when a shaft of sunlight catches the brilliant blue berries.'

Dracophyllum, neinei: 'the striking Dr. Zeuss plant,' 'this one gives me most pleasure.'

Flax: 'Simmering displays in otherwise barren areas,' 'The perfect theatre for watching Tuis feed,' 'it has strength,' 'their history, uses and traditions,' 'so mathematical and tidy.'

Kowhai: 'always a thrill to see that splash of colour,' 'Purenness of the colour of the flowers and it heralds spring.'

Lancewood: 'Fierce and startling when young, intriguing when adolescent and stately when mature.'

Libertia: 'wonderful form and colour,' 'such pretty plants.'

Manuka: 'the coloniser and healer of the land,' 'En masse you can't beat it for summery blossom with that heartland New

Zealand feeling,' 'great smell,' 'now a garden show piece.'

Marlborough rock daisy: 'as the spring growth emerges it is like a flight of grey moths or butterflies hovering over dark greens leaves frosted with grey.' 'The petals radiate and cluster around a golden ball of stamens, just right for summer and Christmas.'

Mistletoe: 'like a group of candles, they illuminate the dullest kanuka or manuka.'

Muehlenbeckia: 'So versatile and yet so underrated as a garden plant.'

Northern rata: 'The stunning flowers, combined with bees buzzing about and birds taking shelter make for fantastic viewing,' 'What a perfect Christmas present from Mother Nature.'

Pohutukawa: 'beach holidays, blue sky, old and knarled,' 'glorious blaze of colour.' 'Adorable and symbolic — it should be used more often at Christmas,' 'To see their huge roots clinging to the banks and covering rocks gives on a feeling of forever and a day.'

Ponga: 'so graceful,' 'so perfectly shaped,' 'ethereal form,' 'layers of symmetry,' 'I am lost in admiration.'

Puriri: 'flowers and fruits all year with benefits to so many forms of our native wildlife,' 'I love the glossy leaves.'

The 2002 top ten native plant project prompted an enthusiastic response and for many people it brought back happy memories of place or childhood experience.

However, the question was asked, is this a useful exercise and what contribution, if any, does it make to conservation? Some people (who didn't contribute to the survey) were critical and considered such a survey to be of little value and indeed rather



Kauri (centre) was third.

eccentric. By way of contrast surveys of this kind in Britain have a huge response. Why don't we celebrate our native plant heritage with as much enthusiasm. We remain convinced that the survey, if it were to be done again, perhaps annually, would contribute to a greater awareness and appreciation of our native flora. (See questionnaire in box).

— IAN SPELLERBERG is Director of the Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University, and RICHARD HUISH a visiting student from the University of the West of England.

The Most Popular Plants

The 2002 vote for the top ten New Zealand native plants rated them 1-10.

1. Pohutukawa
2. Cabbage tree
3. Kauri
4. Nikau palm
5. Kowhai
6. Rimu
7. Puriri
8. Flax
9. Lancewood
10. Totara

What are your ten 'most favourite' New Zealand native plants and why?

The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University is now conducting a further vote for the 10 'most favourite' New Zealand native plants.

This is an invitation to enter the 2003 draw for one of three prizes.

To enter, simply write down a list of your 10 favourite native plants in order of preference (starting with your top favourite) and where possible give a brief explanation. The survey is supported by the Department of Conservation.

Send your entry with your name and postal address to:

The 2003 Top Ten Most Favourite Native Plants,

The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation,

P.O. Box 84, Lincoln University, Canterbury.

OR email your entry to Spelleri@lincoln.ac.nz (but please include your postal address — not email address).

All entries go into a draw: the prizes are national garden vouchers to the value of: \$250 (First Draw), \$150 (Second Draw), \$100 (Third draw). To be in the draw, entries must be made by December 20, 2003. Because of expected numbers, it is not possible to confirm or acknowledge every entry.

The results for the top ten most favourite native plants and the winners will be announced in the February issue of Forest & Bird.