

NZBS GARDEN EXPERTS—1

SOIL fertility has always been the special concern of R. L. Thornton, who, for the past 23 years, has been IYA's gardening expert. "Without a healthy soil you can't have healthy crops; and without healthy crops you can't have healthy people," he told *The Listener*. As a boy he learned the value of natural manuring in producing crops from barren, sandy soil in Wanganui, and this knowledge served him well when he was apprenticed to a nursery in Auckland. Later he took up landscape gardening, and laid out the gardens of the Middlemore Hospital, and Avondale Technical College. About eight years ago he joined the staff of the Mount Smart Domain Board, and became responsible for the care of 50 acres, including a large sanctuary of native plants.

But gardening is not just Mr. Thornton's occupation—it takes all his spare time, too. Every Tuesday at 8.15 p.m. he is on the air answering listeners' questions; and on Thursdays at 8.15 p.m. he conducts the session *In Your Garden This Week*. He also takes Adult Education classes.

R. L. Thornton is a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Horticulture, President of the Auckland Compost Society, and of the Carnation and Gerbera Society. He has also been elected a



R. L. THORNTON

special member of the New Zealand Lily Society and life member of several horticultural societies. In his own garden, a half-acre plot in Remuera, Mr. Thornton experiments with all the new varieties of plants and shrubs before he discusses them in his sessions and in the many lectures he is asked to give.

By contrast, Eric Francis has been 12B's gardening expert only since last November, when the session was switched from Saturday mornings to Thursday evenings at 10 o'clock. Eric has spent 34 years in the horticultural trade, and holds the seedsman's diploma



ERIC FRANCIS

of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture. At 14 he went to work for G. W. Wright, a well-known dahlia hybridist and pot-plant specialist, and he became keenly interested in the growing of gerberas. Nowadays his interests have broadened to include seeds, perennials and trees.

One of the features listeners look forward to in Eric Francis's sessions are the talks by guest speakers. Lately they have heard D. M. Robinson speaking about compost, Roy Sinclair on carnations, N. Joyce on pruning, A. Merfield on cloche-growing, and many others.

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the other day that in his leisure and tastes John shows a not surprising affection for the substantial and the unchanging. "My money," he says, pointing to his bookshelves, "goes mostly on those, I'm afraid." "Those" are one of the finest collections in England of late 18th century volumes on the topography of the British Isles, John, by the way, is married and has two boys.

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AS soldier or civilian, Richard Lawson, who is now music specialist teacher at Greymouth Technical High School, and conductor of the Greymouth Ladies' Choral Group, has been actively associated with music for most



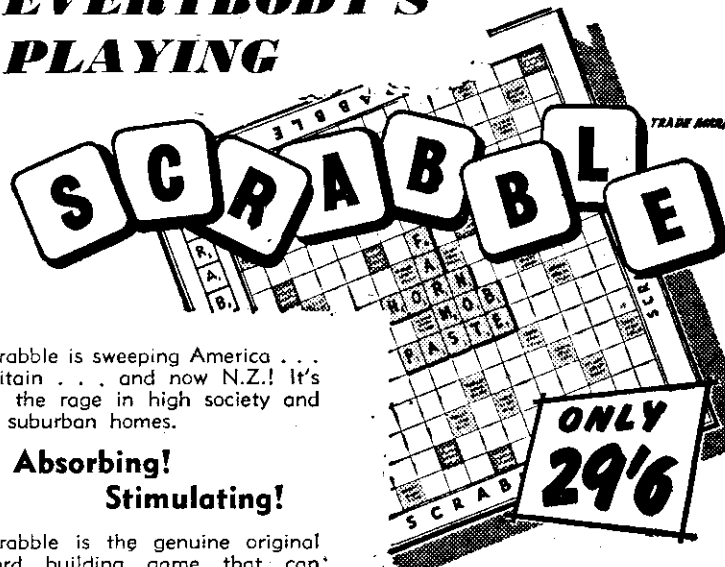
RICHARD LAWSON

of his life. Mr. Lawson, who will conduct the Greymouth Ladies' Choral Group from 3YZ on August 20, was born in Liverpool and, joining the British Army as a bandboy, had his musical education at the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall. "I was appointed Bandmaster Royal of the Ulster Rifles in 1939," he says, "but when the war came I gave up music for more active soldiering." Mr. Lawson saw service in India, Burma and New Guinea, and after the war came to New Zealand, where he settled in the Nelson district. While fruit-farming there he formed the Hills Choir, and with them took part in many Nelson Provincial Choirs Festivals. In 1954, before moving to Greymouth, he was Musical Director of the Festival.

★

AS far back as 1941 we ran an item about Iris Norgrove which mentioned that though then only 19 she had not only gained a reputation among Auckland's younger singers, but was also a good pianist and a competent performer on the Wurlitzer organ. The latest news of Iris—who began her career at IYA and will be remembered as an organist at the Auckland Civic Theatre—is that she has been engaged to play entr'actes at a leading Melbourne theatre. A 3DB announcer who interviewed her recently said Iris was the first woman she had heard of who could play the Wurlitzer and sing at the same time. In Australia for an indefinite stay, Iris likes Melbourne so much that she is thinking of settling there, and as soon as she can find a house will take her three children there from New Zealand.

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