



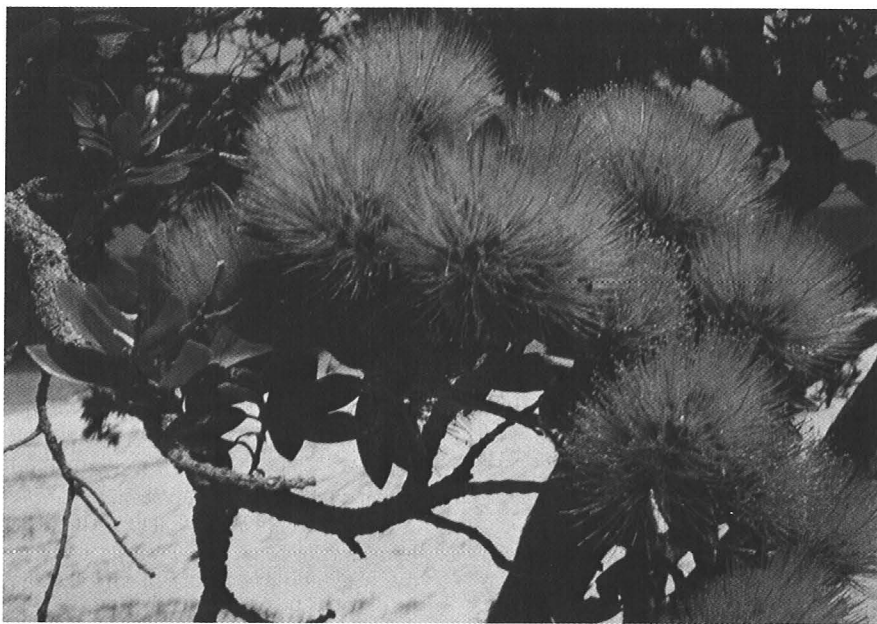
PROJECT CRIMSON

Nick Hancox, DOC, Northland

The pohutukawa is perhaps one of New Zealand's best-loved trees. It graces our northern coastline and many of us have spent the most enjoyable hours of our lives lying on a beach under the welcome shade of an ancient, spreading pohutukawa aflame with crimson blossom.

They are tough trees, well adapted to rigours of coastal life. Salt-tolerant, they thrive on exposed rocky sites where soil seems non-existent. They produce and disperse a huge quantity of fine seed which enables quick colonisation of bare surfaces exposed by slips or rockfall, making them invaluable for control of coastal erosion. Their flowers provide valuable nectar for the honeyeaters such as tui and bellbird; also for geckos, which are important pollinators. The bark of old trees offers a rich hunting ground for insectivorous birds. The shelter they provide in exposed locations is crucial to the development of mixed coastal broadleaf forest, allowing less hardy trees and shrubs to establish. Pohutukawa is both foundation and backbone of a healthy coastal forest ecosystem.

But over the last decade, the signs of pohutukawa decline have become all too obvious. The grey skeletons of dead trees



Pohutukawa bloom, Smugglers Bay, Bream Head, Northland. Photo: Piet Nieuwland

are a common sight along cliffs and headlands, particularly in Northland. There are few signs of natural regeneration to replace the dead and dying trees. Pohutukawa are in trouble.

There are a number of reasons for this. Regeneration of pohutukawa has for a

long time been stifled by the encroachment of livestock and the invasion of stands by dense mats of the vigorous introduced kikuyu grass. Increased foot and vehicle traffic at popular beaches has had an impact, as have careless fires at beach parties and barbecues.

With natural regeneration being blocked in this way, we now have aging pohutukawa stands with little recruitment of a younger generation of trees. And the final straw is additional stress on the old trees caused by the now prolific possum. Possums have taken a liking to the spring growth of pohutukawa, and repeated browsing hastens the decline and death of older trees. The animals often seem to focus their attention on a particular tree, repeatedly defoliating it until it succumbs, and then moving to another.

In 1990, Northland staff of the Department of Conservation and NZ Forest Products (now Carter Holt Harvey Forestry) decided pohutukawa needed help, and Project Crimson – a combination of corporate money, conservation expertise, and community support – was born. The project's aim is to restore the coastal pohutukawa fringe of northern New Zealand.



To achieve its aim, Project Crimson operates on a number of fronts. Corporate sponsorship provides the financial backing for replanting and maintenance projects, but the real strength lies in the support of coastal communities, landowners and schools. Contact with these is maintained through networks of local coordinators, who help organise planting days, possum trapping and the all-important aftercare following planting. Commercial nurseries have taken the project to heart, growing large numbers of pohutukawa at low cost. Since Project Crimson's inception, thousands of pohutukawa have been planted at scores of sites, and not just in Northland – Crimson has now spread south to Auckland, Waikato, the Bay of Plenty and the East Coast, covering the natural range of the tree.



Following its rather informal beginnings, Project Crimson is now a legal entity and a charitable trust, and publishes an annual calendar and quarterly newsletter. Present Chairman of the Project Crimson Trust is Devon McLean of Carter Holt Harvey and the Trust's patron is retired Auckland University Zoology Professor and well-known conservationist Professor John Morton.

FRI looks to the future

Susan Cook

Forestry could become New Zealand's second largest, if not its main, export earner by the turn of the century, says the Forest Research Institute.

A corporate division analyst, Dr Patrick Aldwell, said forestry could give the meat industry "a fright" by the year 2000.

It was already close in export earning power to the dairy industry, he told an Institute presentation at its Rotorua headquarters.

The outlook for forestry in New Zealand was positive, after several years of a "substantial" drop-off in new planting. The Institute, regarded as a world leader in forest research, had overcome upheavals of recent years.

The central North Island, which now produces 70 per cent of the industry's output, would gradually become less predominant in plantation forestry. Over the next 20 years, farm forestry would become increasingly important.

Dr Aldwell said the sale over the last four years of commercial forests, many to overseas corporations, had affected the Institute's research.

"We entered into very serious discussions with the new owners about our research plots in their forests. A tremendous amount of work had to be done to protect those plants," he said.

The Institute had received a "very positive" response from industry, which now provided 40 per cent of its research funding.

The Institute's Chief Executive, Dr Frank Wood, said the Government was

now looking to the sector as one of the leaders in New Zealand's economic recovery.

One of the Institute's goals was to gain enough funding to devote 20 per cent of scientists' energies to long-term, or "blue sky free-thinking", research.

As well as undertaking joint research projects around the world, the Institute was increasing links with New Zealand universities and planned to establish a postgraduate campus at Rotorua, Dr Wood said. – **Reprinted from The Press (Christchurch)**

NZ radiata price rises cause concern

Japanese import trading houses and, more particularly, packaging lumber manufacturers, accustomed to the relatively low price of radiata, are growing increasingly concerned by the recent cost rise for the species, as it edges towards the 30,000 yen/m³ level.

A meeting of packaging industry representatives and six trading companies was held in Okayama in late November to review the situation. The price rise is seen by some as a reflection of the fact that radiata is now starting to be utilised in the plywood sector, and that as a species its value is growing in tandem with Douglas fir, which has been exported by New Zealand in reasonable volumes to Japan in recent times. Other factors impacting on the radiata price into Japan are the returns achievable in third markets like Taiwan, Korea and China.

Traditional Role

In particular, the concern is that as radiata's price increases it will not be able to fulfil its traditional role as a lynchpin of the packaging sector. Certainly it will be difficult from this point on, some opined, to use A-grade logs exclusively for packaging, and with expectations of further increases, most believe a rethinking of radiata and its use will be necessary. There is some talk of a crisis in the making. – **Reprinted from Japan Link, Ministry of Forestry, Rotorua**

East Asia Pacific Mountain Assoc.

Lincoln University has decided to convene and service an "East Asian Pacific Mountain Association" as part of a World Mountain Network. The designated convener is Emeritus Professor Kevin O'Connor. The new association aims to link into a network of interchange for scholars, researchers and managers of mountain lands and to assist in education, training and research.

The Association will be formally inaugurated at a symposium at Lincoln University from May 2-7 this year. The symposium focuses on the ecology and sustained development in the East Asia Pacific mountain area.

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