

<i>Rubus cissoides</i>	Bush lawyer; tataramoa
* <i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Blackberry
<i>Rubus schmidelioides</i> var. <i>schmidelioides</i>	Bush lawyer; tataramoa
* <i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled dock
<i>Schefflera digitata</i>	Pate; patae; kotete
* <i>Selaginella kraussiana</i>	
* <i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel
* <i>Stellaria media</i> ssp. <i>media</i>	Chickweed
<i>Stellaria parviflora</i>	
<i>Streblus heterophyllus</i>	Turepo; milk tree
<i>Teucrium parvifolium</i>	
* <i>Torilis arvensis</i>	Spreading hedge-parsley
<i>Trichomanes venosum</i>	Veined bristle fern
* <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover
<i>Uncinia uncinata</i>	Watu
<i>Urtica incisa</i>	Stinging nettle
* <i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Field speedwell
<i>Weinmannia racemosa</i>	Kamahi; Towai; tawhero

Te Mara Reo – The Language Garden

Saturday 27th February 2010

A voyage through the Pacific via the plant names used by maori and their ancestors

The Waikato Botanical Society recently had the privilege of visiting Te Mara Reo (The Language Garden) on the banks of the Waikato River, to the north of Hamilton. Professor Richard Benton guided us through the voyages undertaken by Polynesians and their ancestors in the process of colonising every scrap of habitable land in the South Pacific. All colonisers carry to their new homelands plants and animals, genetic information, and a language that encapsulates a system for understanding the world around them. Each of these strands of evidence has been combined to retrace the unfurling of Polynesian migration across the Pacific. Te Mara Reo presents native New Zealand plants whose names exemplify each step of the migration, since they trace their origins to specific stages in the development of Te Reo Maori.

A walk through Te Mara Reo is almost as convoluted as the path Polynesians followed in discovering Aotearoa. Te Mara is at once a sprawling orchard, and informal arboretum, with paths that twine their way between pecan, fig, kauri and *Abutilon*. Luckily for visitors, Prof. Benton has prepared a map so that the plants for each stage in the migration can be found without excessive searching. We also had the benefit of a guide who knows the migratory paths well. Prof. Benton studied for his Doctoral thesis in Hawai'i, focussing on commonalities between Austronesian languages. Despite primarily dealing with political linguistics during his research career, he has maintained contacts in Hawai'i and travelled extensively throughout the Pacific. Now in his retirement, he is concentrating on developing Te Mara Reo as a resource for the local public, visitors to the Waikato region and school groups.

Some of the plant names in Te Mara are very revealing of the ways in which people have grouped or categorised plants in the past. The most ancient name in the garden is whara, which originated when people left Taiwan to colonise the Phillipines. It refers to plants with sheathing leaves of the genera *Astelia*, *Collospermum* and *Phormium*. The name is derived from the Proto-Polynesian *fara*, which in turn is believed to derive from a Proto Austronesian word which refers to Pandanus species that occur naturally in the Phillipines and throughout the tropical Pacific. Piupiu, which originated in the islands of South East Asia, is another name that describes a growth form, referring to fan palms in Sulawesi and mainly to ferns in Aotearoa, including the several *Blechnum* species found in Te Mara. Ti, also from insular South East Asia, has throughout its history has been associated with species of *Cordyline*. In the garden it refers to the cabbage tree (ti kouka).

Another distinctive name is kahikatoa (the name for manuka North of Auckland), deriving from the word kapika, which itself originated in the Bismark Archipelago. This name denotes a tall, graceful tree. The name

manuka, belongs to a later period, when the voyagers had settled the islands of Eastern Fiji and Western Polynesia. In the language of this period, the word nuka refers to plants with medicinal properties, and in Te Reo Maori relates to the antiseptic action of manuka leaves. The two names, kahikatoa and manuka, embody the dual wounding and healing purposes for which maori used *Leptospermum scoparium* (since toa is the word for warrior in Te Reo). One unexpected link was provided by totara, which in Tahiti refers to the puffer fish. It seems, more than anything, that totara's prickliness impressed maori when they first arrived in Aotearoa. The insights gained from linking plant names on a casual summer's afternoon were surprising. With the explanations provided by Prof Benton, we were immersed in a way of thinking that differs markedly from the Linnaean system of classification through which most botanists view the world of plants. Our visit also provided occasion for the mind to wander over the thousands of kilometres those ancient voyagers travelled. That this was possible simply by following the threads which link the names of a few dozen plant species reminds us how much language embodies our humanity.



Committee member Norm Mason with an intricately embroidered shirt made from pineapple fibre – precious item purchased by Prof Benton from the Philippines on his numerous travels.

Waikawau Bay, Coromandel Peninsula

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th March 2010

A small number of us enjoyed our weekend based at the DOC house which has fabulous views out to the Bay and Islands beyond. Sand dunes run along the beach from a small estuary to the far end. From the roadside edge there is a strip of mainly kikuyu covered paddock which the *muelenbeckia* on the dune side is appearing to win the battle of supremacy. The property was purchased from the Auckland University which had the land gifted to them by a wealthy American who wished them to sell the property to give the Business Management School much needed capital. The purchase by DOC was to save the land from development.

Saturday 13th March:

Our walk took us to the headland covered in coastal forest. Wayne wished us to help him do another transect and on the way to that location *Toronia toru* and *Pittosporum umbellatum* were seen. It was dismaying to see a few plants of *Ageratina adenophora* (Mexican devil) in this bush which is relatively pest plant free. *Pennisetum clandestinum* (kikuyu) was the dominant grass we saw while walking in. A number of seed heads of *Othoceras novae-zelandiae* were spotted on the trackside.



The start was marked by a “bashing” of a shrub *Corokia cotoneaster* so Peter could inspect what insects were in it. The lack of rain had made the undergrowth very dry but we were able to add to the fern list with *Lastreopsis glabella*, *L. microsora* and *L. velutina*. Also some nice specimens of *Pteris comans*. A number of coastal *Coprosma macrocarpa* were present along with good sized trees of *Elaeocarpus dentatus* (hinau), *Vitex lucens* (puriri), *Dysoxylum spectabile* (kohekohe) and *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (karaka). A few *Sophora chathamica* (kowhai) and a good number of lianes – *Parsonsia* sp and *Clematis* sp.

Peter showed us the technique of stroking a stick insect to make it lay quietly on his hand and then a few moments later he was heard to be “bashing” another rotten log to see what it yielded. This time, we were