

PLIMMERTON BUSH, MOTUHARA ROAD

(an assessment and species list)

forest of Motuhara Gully, Plimmerton, represents a vigorous remnant of the coastal forest vegetation that originally clothed the western slopes of the Wellington Peninsula.

Kohekohe and karaka are the main trees forming a canopy above the fertile gully at approximately 13-15 metres. This forest is interesting for the number of other species which also attain the canopy, (although not in abundance) these are, rewarewa, hinau, tawa, mahoe, ngaio, titoki and a specimen of northern rata. Beneath the canopy there is a shrub stratum around 2-3 metres dominated by kawakawa but other broadleaf shrubs are also present; they are rangiora, mahoe, hangehange, and pigeonwood.

The forest floor is characterized by a very thin and patchy litter layer. This is typical of the fertile mull soils under kohekohe forests, the rapidly decomposing litter is quickly incorporated into the topsoil and does not accumulate. The fern flora of the gully is diverse and is the most important component of the forest floor stratum.

This forest is capable of regenerating itself; karaka and titoki seedlings are abundant on the forest floor. Kohekohe seedlings and saplings are not present, the lack of regenerating specimens of this species is probably a result of the closed canopy of the forest as kohekohe regeneration and invasion is vigorous in other more open remnants of coastal forest around the Wellington area.

Two plant records in the gully are of special interest; Adiantum aethopicum is a fern of very limited distribution in the southern half of the North Island and has only one other known record in the Wellington area. The record of the climbing rata Metrosideros colensoi is the only one known to me on the western side of the Wellington Peninsula.

The higher and drier slopes of the gully have been cleared or burned over at different times. At the head of the gully there are very large kanukas which would

from the turn of the century or earlier. They have served as a nursery for the coastal broadleaved shrubs which now grow vigorously beneath it. In more recent times a fire or clearance has occurred on the northern side of the gully. This area is now clad in manuka scrub and will also regenerate into coastal broadleaved forest if protected from further damage.

This forest possesses an intact canopy and wind damage inside the forest is minimal. Any removal of canopy trees will help to increase the destructive effects of the wind on forest trees. At present there are quite a large number of adventive plants in the reserve. Old Mans Beard - Clematis vitalba and the Scrambling Senecio - Senecio mikanoides could present a problem if they are allowed to scramble unchecked over the trees and shrubs at the periphery of the forest. Both species can be kept in check by grubbing out the rootstocks.

Any decrease in the size of this forest will increase the vulnerability of the rarer species in the forest to any disturbance. It is to be expected that some of the rarer species in the forest may be lost, but if the forest continues to remain in a healthy, viable state it will encourage the continuance of these rarities and provide an environment for new arrivals also.

As it stands this forest remnant is of both scientific and aesthetic value and should be retained in its present form as far as is possible.

(Species List attached)

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Indigenous Plant List.....Plimmerton

1000 Wgtn Botanical Society
for Papa Kowhai Bush

Arubs

- Asplenium* ~~excelsus~~ titoki
Antrodia ~~serrata~~ wineberry
Asplenium ~~schmidia~~ tawa tawa
Brachyglottis repanda rangiora
Coprosma aeriolata
C. australis
C. repens taupata
C. robusta x *C. propinqua*
Cordyline australis cabbage tree
Corynocarpus laewigatus karaka
Cyathodes fasciculata mingimingi
? *Dysoxylum spectabile* kohekoko
E. A
? *Eleocharis dentatus* hinam
Geniostoma linguistrifolium Hangehange
Griselinia lucida puka -broadleaf
Hebe stricta var. *atkinsonii* koromiko
H. arborea
? *Hedycarya arborea* pigeonwood
Hoheria populnea lacebark
? *Knightia excelsa* rewarewa -native honeysuckle
? *Leptospermum ericoides* kanuka
? *L. scoparium* manuka
? *Macropiper excelsum* kawakawa
? *Melicope ternata* wharangi
? *Melicytus ramiflorus* mahoe
Metrosideros robusta northern rata
? *Myoporum laetum* ngaio
? *Mysisine australis* red matipo
Olearia paniculata
? *Pennantia corymbosa* kaikamako
Pittosporum tenuifolium black matipo (kohuhu)
Pseudopanax arboreus fivefinger
? *P. crassifolium* lancewood
Rhopalostylis sapida nikau palm
Sophora microphylla kowhai

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| <i>banksii</i> | kiekie |
| <i>colensoi</i> | climbing rata |
| <i>erata</i> | " |
| <i>lienbeckia complex a</i> | pohuehue |
| <i>arsonia heterophylla</i> | native jasmine |
| <i>Rhipogonum scandens</i> | supplejack |

Dicot Herbs

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|-----------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Apium australe</i> | native celery |
| <i>Cardamine sp.</i> | |
| <i>Hydrocotyle moschata</i> | |
| <i>Stellaria parviflora</i> | |

Monocot Herbs

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|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Carex geminata</i> | |
| <i>Microlaenia avenacea</i> | bush rice grass |
| <i>M. stipoides</i> | |
| <i>Phormium tenax</i> | flax |
| <i>Uncinia uncinata</i> | hook grass |

Ferns

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|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Adiantum aethopicum</i> | maidenhair |
| <i>A. viridescens</i> | " |
| <i>Arthropteris tennela</i> | jointed fern |
| <i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i> | hen and chickens fern |
| <i>A. lucidum</i> | shining spleenwort |
| <i>A. polyodon</i> | |
| <i>Blechnum capense</i> | |
| <i>B. filiforme</i> | |
| <i>B. chambersii</i> | |
| <i>Cyathea dealbata</i> | silver tree fern |
| <i>C. medullaris</i> | black " " |
| <i>Hymenophyllum demissum</i> | filmy fern |
| <i>Lastreopsis glabella</i> | |
| <i>L. velutina</i> | |
| <i>Pellaea rotundifolia</i> | |
| <i>Phymatodes diversifolium</i> | |
| <i>P. scandens</i> | |
| <i>Polystichum richardii</i> | |
| <i>Pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum</i> | bracken |
| <i>Pteris maculenta</i> | |
| <i>P. tremula</i> | |
| <i>Pyrrhosia serpens</i> | |

Approx. 72 species and one hybrid