

SUMMARY OF NEW PLYMOUTH FIELD DAY

FEBRUARY 24, 1973

JUDITH COWAN

Duncan and Davies
New Plymouth, New Zealand

Duncan & Davies: A tour of the *Research and Development Department* was first on the agenda, with Mr. Trevor Davies (Managing Director) outlining the conception and function of this area which is to grow new introductions (both local cultivars and imports) to a stage where their merits in this locality can be ascertained as to hardiness, merits of flower, foliage or growth habit, etc. Stock is thus built up allowing immediate propagation of worthwhile subjects.

Propagation Department: The emphasis here was that all visitors be allowed to wander about as they pleased, migrating to the area of particular interest to the individual. Static displays were mounted of heating equipment (kindly loaned by the local City Council), mist nozzles and ancillary equipment, and these stimulated much discussion and exchange of ideas. Much doubt was expressed about the types of misting nozzles at present available.

Media trial work on rhododendron and magnolia cultivars was displayed in chart form with samples of the media used. The inclusion of sawdust was somewhat startling to many people and the four grades of perlite caused considerable comment. The standard rooting media used by the nursery for the last ten years consists of 3 parts sawdust, 1 part peat, and 1 part sand. This again aroused comment but the results were self-evident on inspection of material in the glasshouses.

Further charts showing the rooting hormones and potting composts used were made available and obviated the repetitive answering of questions. A brief outline (with examples) was given of the recording system used throughout the nursery. Based on code system whereby each crop is given a code number which remains with it from inception to sale.

Considerable interest was shown in the Quonset type glasshouses, mainly in relation to the material used throughout.

Trial beds of open ground cuttings in a nearby sheltered valley brought back memories of "the old days" for some, and raised the doubt about the expense of indoor mist propagation. Of particular interest were the results of wisteria cultivars, and Golden Elm — the "Control" of which were superior in numbers rooted.

Following a salad lunch at *Pukekura Park*, members were introduced to Mr. George Fuller (Curator) who gave a conducted

tour of the glasshouses, then up to the City Council Nursery where he had mounted a display of orchid propagation methods.

A brief survey was then made of R. A. Duncan's *Propagating Department*. Members noted with interest the use of simple low tunnel structures for mist propagation.

On to Duncan & Davies container and field division at Brixton where considerable interest was shown in the new paddle mixer which turns out $\frac{1}{2}$ cubic yard in three minutes. The newly laid out container area of 12 acres stimulated discussion on methods of surfacing and materials used.

Seaview Plant Farm just out of Waitara was next on the agenda and here the owner, Mr. O. Gibson, had a very attentive audience as he displayed his method of open ground propagation of *Protea* and related species.

The final call for the day was paid at the home of Mr. Howard Theobald, a keen young nurseryman, specializing in a wide range of rare perennials, bulbs and cacti.