

Book review

An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand by B. Roy, I. Popay, P. Champion, T. James, and A. Rahman. New Zealand Plant Protection Society, Lincoln. 1998. Softcover. vi + 282 p. ISBN 0–473–05296–2. Price NZ\$54.95. Available from Manaaki Whenua Press, PO Box 40, Lincoln 8152, New Zealand.

This latest publication from the New Zealand Plant Protection Society is aimed at a wide audience. It is intended to bridge the gap between Volumes III and IV of the *Flora of New Zealand*, which provide detailed botanical descriptions of introduced plants in New Zealand but few photographs, and the Society's *Guide to the identification of New Zealand common weeds in colour*, which contains small colour photographs of plants but little description. This new book provides larger colour photographs plus descriptions and additional information. Plants covered by the book are mainly herbaceous or shrubby flowering plants, excluding grasses, sedges, and rushes, plus a few trees. They occur as weeds in stream and river beds, on banks, roadsides, and other "waste" land, on agricultural and horticultural land, in gardens and formal parks, and in native vegetation.

Following a brief introduction which sets out the aims of the book, Plant Pests (formerly called noxious weeds) and National Surveillance Plant Pests are defined and rules concerning their control are outlined. The reader is referred to Regional Councils or unitary authorities for detailed local information. Next there is a brief account of plants which are not fully described in the book: ferns and fern allies, conifers, and grasses, sedges, and rushes. For each group, the most common weed species are named, and photographs illustrate the various life-forms. The reader is referred to other publications for identification of these groups.

A clearly set out identification guide lists plants according to flower colour, individual flower size (presumably diameter), and habit or habitat. Thus, a person with no knowledge of plant families could quickly obtain a short list of plants with which to

compare their specimen for identification. This is followed by lists of books useful for further information about weeds, and a clear, basic glossary.

The main part of the book then describes the plants. The names of 329 taxa are arranged alphabetically by family and then by genus. For each taxon, the botanical and common names are given as a heading. There is a brief general description, which may include diagnostic characteristics, followed by main features of the flowers, fruit, leaves, stems, and roots. Other information is provided under subheadings of habitat, distribution, comments, similar species, and related species, and derivations are given of genus and species names. The comments may include edibility, toxicity, economic uses, and pest status as defined in the Introduction. Notes under Related and Similar species sometimes include information about plants which are localised weeds but are not treated separately in the book. Each taxon that is fully described is illustrated by one (occasionally two) clear, good quality colour photograph. Occasionally a related species may also be illustrated. The photographs mostly show sufficient detail of a plant's habit, leaves, and flowers that they are an invaluable aid to identification. Indexes of botanical names and common names include all plants named in the descriptions and notes.

Considerable care has been taken to ensure accuracy and up-to-date information. Spelling and typographical errors are rare. Notable is the authors' use of *Cassinia leptophylla* for tauhinu. This species has been transferred to *Ozothamnus* (as *O. leptophyllus*) by Breitwieser & Ward (1997).

Definition of a weed can be debatable. In this book, it appears to be applied to plants which establish and grow outside of their managed or natural habitat. In this context, both introduced economic and native plants can be considered weeds. Thus, for example, a basic species of New Zealand pastoral agriculture, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), is listed in this book as a weed, and indeed it can be a problem in non-agricultural situations. At first glance some people might object to the inclusion of a few native species. Some of those listed are woody primary colonisers of

