

# In our Contemporaries

Judy Griffith

## What's New in Forest Research

- No. 225 Paulownia – The timber of the future?  
No. 226 Market trends for paulownia timber in Japan  
No. 227 Sudden decline of cabbage trees (ti kouka) – How bad, how extensive?

## New Zealand Journal of Forestry Science

Douglas fir, Japanese larch, and European larch in pure and mixed stands

West G.G. Vol. 21(1): 3-9 (1991)

An area of pure and mixed stands, with two thinning treatments, in Kaingaroa Forest was studied from age 19 to 32 years. Although early growth of Japanese larch was superior on this site, Douglas fir is likely to be the most productive of the three species at the end of the rotation. Results confirm that manual thinning to achieve a desired regime should remain the preferred management technique for Douglas fir in New Zealand.

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*Eucalyptus* species selection for soil conservation in seasonally dry hill country

Bullock B.T. Vol. 21(1): 10-31 (1991)

Species selection trials on drought-prone hillsides in the Wairarapa district included over 120 provenances of eucalypts drawn from over 60 species. The trial sites of Pakaraka and Kahuiti, planted in 1976, were re-assessed in 1991 after an earlier comprehensive measurement in 1984.

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Genotype x environment interaction and optimal number of progeny test sites for improving *Pinus radiata* in New Zealand

Carson S.D. Vol. 21(1): 32-49 (1991)

A progeny test of 25 parents was established on 11 sites chosen to represent all major site types in New Zealand. Statistical analysis of an assessment at age nine years suggested that genotype x interaction was important for diameter. However, multi-site index selection suggested that regionalisation of seed orchards would increase average genetic gain in diameter over all sites only slightly. Many fewer than 11 sites were required for selection in order to capture essentially all of the predicted genetic gain for a national programme.

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Apparent phosphorus uptake and change in nitrogen content of *Pinus radiata* growing on soils of different phosphorus retention, treated with superphosphate and A-grade rock phosphate.

Hunter I.R., Hunter J.A.C. Vol. 21(1): 50-61 (1991)

Seven years after the fertiliser was applied, the treated plots contained approximately 10% of the applied phosphorus. A further 3% was present in the forest floor. The marked difference in phosphorus retention characteristics between the sites appeared to have little effect on utilisation of applied phosphorus by the trees. Rock phosphate was as effective a fertiliser as superphosphate, and the difference in nitrogen content after phosphorus application was inconsistent.

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Varying selection ratios (initial versus final crop stocking) in *Pinus radiata* evaluated with the use of MARVL

Maclaren J.P., Kimberley M.O. Vol. 21(1): 62-76 (1991)

There was an apparent site index differential of 1.6 m between selection extremes, attributable mainly to differences in initial stocking rather than to the effect of selecting taller trees. There was no significant difference in mean dbh due to selection ratio. Straightness of both the unpruned logs and the pruned butts

was enhanced with increasing selection. By increasing selection ratio, total merchantable volume and pruned volume were substantially improved, owing to height differences and reduced malformation.

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Market requirements for *Pinus radiata* clearwood: Implications of length specifications

Horgan G.P. Vol. 21(1): 77-95 (1991)

Clearwood is defined as defect-free solid wood of any length. Analysis of the markets for clearwood reveals that they are niche ones, and frequently the lengths of clearwood required are quite short, although some markets, notably mouldings and veneers, require longer lengths. Many users could use short length clears but are reluctant to shift away from the use of long lengths because of the perceived loss of flexibility.

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Properties of treated and untreated *Pinus radiata* plywood after 12 years' weathering

McLaughlan J.M. Vol. 21(1): 96-110 (1991)

The trial included three adhesive types, five preservative treatments and four surface/exposure treatments. Panels were tested prior to exposure and then after one, two, four and 12 years. All wood failure declined significantly over time in plywood with veneers treated to 5 kg CCA/m<sup>3</sup>. Uncoated melamine-urea formaldehyde panels failed completely after 12 years and delaminations occurred in panels of the other adhesive types. Uncoated panels treated with CCA fared less well than the untreated panels or those treated with copper naphthenate.

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## FRI Bulletins

- No. 176 Chemical modification of lignocelluloses

**Plackett, D.V., Dunningham, E.A. (1992)**  
**\$50 + GST**

This symposium was held in Rotorua, November 7-8, 1992. Papers presented described wood modification research in the United States, Japan, Sweden, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand. Sessions included acetylated wood products,

thermoplasticisation of wood, and new materials from modified wood.

**No. 177 Pacific Rim Bio-based Composites Symposium**

**Plackett, D.V., Dunningham, E.A. (1992)**  
**\$70.00 + G.S.T.**

This symposium was held at Rotorua,

November 9-13, 1992. Papers covered all aspects of manufacturing and performance of composite products from wood, and some other natural fibres. They reflected an increasing research focus on utilisation of low-value waste materials from the forest industry to create new high-value products.

## Ducks in the bedroom

(continued)

In more conventional environments, there is a burgeoning interest in deer farming. The pilose antlers of deer have long been highly regarded medicinally – for the invigoration of reproduction, increasing libido, the nourishment of marrow and blood, to strengthening of muscle and bone, and the improvement of debility, hearing, vision, dizziness and dysentery. Most parts of the deer are “health foods” in China – tails, genitals, sinews, blood, meat, bones – even embryos and slinks (aborted foetuses); increasingly, such exotica are garnered and prepared as “sidelines”; the Guangdong branch of the Timber Import and Export Corporation advertises 159 crude medicinal herbs (many of them with no English or pharmacopaeian Latin names), eight essential oils, seven medicinal minerals and 195 natural product medicines for the treatment of every conceivable condition (and some quite beyond the imagination).

Success – as well as failure – in sideline production may pose problems. There

are stories of sabotage of successful operations by less competent neighbours; and of over-enthusiasm for the sideline leading to neglect of the central purpose of the enterprise. The economist Prybla notes that when bureaucrats become businessmen they behave more like black-marketters than capitalists. And the problems of switching from “command” to “guidance” planning are formidable. Responsibility at enterprise management level may rest with the lost generation of the Cultural Revolution – uneducated, insecure and resentful victims of China’s biggest political disaster. Anthony Lawrence has written: “China is a labyrinth of human relationships: factions weaving behind the scenes; international networks of mutual obligations; old men hanging on to perquisites; long-term revenge-seekers waiting in the wings”. It sounds just like New Zealand.

### Farmers More Articulate

There is evidence that the old men are indeed hanging on, and that some re-collectivisation is taking place. Supposedly long-term land holding contracts have been cancelled; free-markets are being distorted by local taxation practices; decentralisation of control of natural resources (to autonomous minority areas) is accompanied by much closer controls by local bureaucracies (the “mothers-in-law”); provincial protectionism is growing. “Guidelines” have in fact become inflexible prescriptions which ignore micro-environments, whether geographic or economic. The spurious double-speak slogans of the command society are re-emerging, and bring to mind the inchoate jargon of our own corporate missionaries. At the same time, farmers are becoming more articulate and ingenious in their own defence. A puzzling feature of visits to village sawmills in Henan last year was the constant repetition of claims by sawmillers to be cutting “on contract”; they would not acknowledge ownership

of logs. Eventually, the explanation emerged: at every stage in the chain from growing tree to processed product, there are taxes, some prescribed by the central Government, but many imposed erratically by provinces and counties. In Sichuan, at least seven taxes are imposed and, in Yunnan, the burden is such that the farmers refer to plantation trees as cigarette trees because, by the time all taxes have been levied, they are worth no more than the price of a cigarette!

### ‘Community Tourism’

Problems of local taxation are real, with the central Government having to engage in negotiations to obtain its share. There are stories of “commodity tourism” – the movement of commodities across jurisdictional boundaries and back again in order to attract subsidies and enable taxation (just like the EC!). I have written elsewhere: “If revolution comes again to China, it will owe little to the supposed democrats who sought media coverage at Tienanmen in June 1989. It will come from the farmers and the specialised householders who have had the satisfaction of making their own decisions and profiting from them; and who fear the ever-growing army of bureaucrats who usurp power without responsibility.”

### Advice for Visitors

Present-day visitors to China – unlike those of earlier decades – are amply provided with economic statistics. But they tell only part of the story. The anthropologist Fei Xiaotong advises visitors to “look for the invisible”. Remember, if you will, the Sichuan fisherman in his poor man’s penthouse, insulated from the extremes of winter and summer by a living larder. And wonder perhaps, as I do, if the duck herder has a mother-in-law!

Dennis Richardson

### MARUBENI AND RAIN FOREST PROJECT

Much criticism has been levelled at the Japanese trading companies for their involvement in rain forest felling in South East Asia, with Mitsubishi Corporation a particular target. The companies are sensitive to the criticism and are taking steps to improve their environmental reputations. Marubeni’s environmental division is now running a research project related to rain forest regeneration in Sarawak, with the involvement of Japanese and American researchers as well as the Sarawak Forestry Bureau. The project is focusing on animal and plant ecology related to the forest crown as well as the linkages between biological and climatic factors. – Reprinted from Japanlink, Ministry of Forestry, Rotorua.