

ADDITIONAL SKIN IRRITATING PLANTS.

(See previous references in the *Agricultural Gazette* for February and December, 1909, December, 1911, and July, 1912.)

Humea elegans, alleged to be poisonous. This is an elegant plant found in the coastal and mountain regions in New South Wales. It also extends to Victoria. A favourite situation is at the foot of rock masses where there is a fair depth of soil. It is several feet high, and has elegant trusses of small pinkish flowers which are very sweet in perfume.

Owing to a fancied resemblance of the shape of the leaves and of the habit of the plant generally, it, with a number of other plants in New South Wales, often goes under the name of Native Tobacco.

Almost since the foundation of New South Wales it has been cultivated in English glass houses. A correspondent wrote to the Editor of the *Gardeners' Chronicle* for 24th May last, alleging that the foliage caused symptoms of eczema, and in the issue for 7th June the Editor replied that this is not usual. A further correspondent stated that he had suffered from inflammation of the eyes when standing on the leeward side of a clump when there was a breeze blowing.

Turning to *The Garden* of the 13th December, 1902, we see a similar statement made in regard to the effect of this plant on the eyes. A correspondent said that, forty years before, the poisonous qualities of this plant were brought painfully home to him after potting some plants. He was attacked by an inflammation of the eyes which lasted several days. This particular correspondent says that *Primula obconica*, a plant which is obnoxious to so many people (see the *Agricultural Gazette* for December, 1909), did not affect him.

Another correspondent wrote that he had suffered for some weeks with an inflamed eye, caused simply by drawing his hand over the leaves and afterwards rubbing the eye. This caused him much pain, almost as bad as being stung with a wasp.

Later on, 29th August, 1903, a correspondent drew attention to the injurious effect on Peach trees of the presence of *Humea elegans* in the same glass-house with them. The report seems to have been accepted without question.

Humea elegans is a plant known to so many people, and collected so frequently, that I wish to ask whether any people in Australia have ever heard of its injurious effects.

Dr. George Bennett in his work, "Gatherings of a Naturalist," wrote many years ago that the whole plant on being bruised emits a delightful scent, so overpowering as sometimes to produce headache, and he was of opinion that a valuable perfume might be obtained from it. This is the only reference that I have been able to glean in any way to the plant's detriment.

Doubtless it would not be so easy to make observations in regard to this particular plant in Australia, because they are all in the open air, whereas in North Europe they are confined in glass-houses. At the same time more than one correspondent points out that rubbing the eyes after touching a plant is injurious, and presumably similar, if less severe, results would ensue in New South Wales.

In this connection I again invite attention to the fact that in cases of dermatitis or skin irritation owing to contact with plants, some people are affected, while others appear to be non-affected on touching the same plant.— J. H. MAIDEN, Government Botanist and Director of the Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

GOOSEBERRY CULTURE.

IN reply to an inquiry from a Hartley correspondent, the Fruit Expert stated that he was of opinion that the soils of the district mentioned were suitable for the culture of both gooseberries and strawberries. The inquirer was further informed that gooseberries should be planted during the months of July and August and at distances about 5 feet apart each way, on soils which are not very rich. Pruning or thinning is carried out during June, July, and early August in the colder districts. This consists in removing a considerable portion of this and last year's growth. "Roaring Lion" is about the most profitable variety to grow. One of the best fertilisers recommended for that district is stable manure.

With regard to returns, so much depends on the land, care, season, supply and demand, that no estimate could be formed, as very little data are available. Ten acres planted with this fruit should be sufficient to keep a person going, provided he is in a position to employ help during harvest.

AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES' SHOWS.

SECRETARIES are invited to forward for insertion in this page dates of their forthcoming shows; these should reach the Editor, Department of Agriculture, Sydney, not later than the 21st of the month previous to issue. Alteration of dates should be notified at once.

1913.		Date.
Society.	Secretary.	
Yass P. and A. Association	W. Thomson	Oct. 1, 2
Millthorpe A., H., and P. Association	C. J. E. Hawken... ..	" 7, 8
Urana P. and A. Society	J. Wise	" 7, 8
Hillston P. and A. Association	S. J. Gordon	" 8
Crookwell A., H., and P. Society (Spring Show)	H. P. Levy	" 10
Balranald P. and A. Society	A. Malcolm	" 15
Lismore A. and I. Society	T. M. Hewitt	Nov. 5, 6, 7
Tweed River Agricultural Society (Murwillumbah)... ..	A. E. Budd	" 12, 13
Mullumbimby A. Society	W. A. Davis	" 19, 20