

The most important work to be taken in hand during the present season is the classification of forest reserves, which will necessitate a detailed examination of each forest preparatory to laying down a plan for its future management. This will occupy all the time that the Chief Conservator and his assistant will be able to devote to it for several years.

The following classification has been adopted:—

CLASS I.

Climatal or Mountain Reserves, to include all Forests reserved for Shelter, for the Conservation of the Water-supply, or for Climatic Reasons, irrespective of Altitude.

This class comprises most of the reserves already proclaimed; in many cases they occupy the crests of ranges and other situations in which it is absolutely necessary that forests should be maintained on account of their climatic importance. In forests of this kind the timber is frequently of small value, and in many cases its removal would be too costly to prove remunerative at present rates. In certain climatal reserves, however, the present timbers may be replaced by others of greater value, and will prove of great importance in years to come. In forests of this class only a limited area can be felled in any one season, and the trees must be branded by an officer of the department.

CLASS II.

Forest Reserves and Plantations.

This class will ultimately include the great bulk of our convertible timber, whether kauri, rimu, totara, eucalypts, oaks, or other kinds. Felling will be by periodic selection, or by rotation of area, according to the nature of the forest.

CLASS III.

Timber Reserves.

This class will include forest blocks reserved until such time as the timber can be profitably converted, and can scarcely be considered as forming a portion of the permanent reserves. When cleared, such blocks will be placed under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands for settlement, unless specially proclaimed under Class II. In this way it will be possible to prevent the needless destruction of a large amount of valuable timber without retarding the progress of settlement, at the same time providing for the employment of settlers of limited means.

It is intended to commence the classification of the forests in the Otago and Southland Districts and Stewart Island at an early date. A complete enumeration of all forest reserves gazetted will be given as an appendix to this report.

Planting Operations.

It has been already stated that it is not intended to establish large nurseries in localities where local nurserymen may be prepared to tender for the supply of young plants; but in places difficult of access it will be necessary to form temporary nurseries when planting operations are to be carried on to a large extent, especially where pines are to be planted. In the case of eucalypts, sowing may be adopted when the ground is moderately level; and this is undoubtedly the cheapest method, as under favourable circumstances cleared land may be prepared and sown at from £1 to £1 15s. per acre, not including fencing. As far as possible the land should be ploughed and cleaned in the early autumn, so as to allow it to sweeten by exposure. Under favourable conditions one-year-old eucalypts may be planted on low manuka land at about £1 15s. per acre, the plants to be set out at about seven and a half feet apart over all. Generally speaking it will be advisable to transplant pines and give them a second year in the nursery, but it is not possible to lay down cast-iron rules, and it will be found wise to give the nurseryman in charge a certain amount of discretion in the matter.

Catalogue of Forest-trees.

A brief descriptive list of the chief kinds of trees available for forest-planting in New Zealand is issued as an appendix to this report.

It is proposed to commence the following planting and replacement operations during the present season:—

HOKIANGA COUNTY.

Omahuta and Waikoropupu Forests.

To form a temporary nursery to raise plants of jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and Californian redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), for planting about 500 acres of open land included in the boundaries of the reserves, and replacing a similar area now covered by worthless scrub. The scrub to be thinned or cleared during the summer.