

That certain forest-trees do remarkably well on this land has been amply demonstrated by the experimental plantations which were formed here some years ago. About the year 1898 four areas, in all 25 acres, on different parts of the plains were planted with various forest-trees, comprising principally larch, Norway spruce, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, Austrian pine, birch, oak, and sweet-chestnut. Of these, larch, Austrian pine, and birch were the only ones which proved suitable, and, owing to the many failures, the areas were in 1902 restocked with other species, consisting of larch, Corsican pine, Monterey pine, and Lawson's cypress, the last-named being the only one of these which failed.

The rate of growth of the species which have succeeded is, with the exception of birch, equal to that recorded at Waiotapu, and all have a remarkably healthy appearance. Douglas fir and Norway and Sitka spruces have not been included amongst the successful species, because for six years following their planting these species made little or no growth, and were badly frosted time after time. Since, however, shelter has been afforded them by the more accommodating larch and pines the Douglas fir has made rapid progress, and the spruces, although not so fast, have yet made satisfactory growth.

The preparatory work done in connection with the new reserve has consisted chiefly in laying off the roads and fire-breaks, at which work a surveyor has been employed for three months. It is intended to subdivide the land into blocks of about 1,200 acres, with fire-breaks 2 chains wide separating each block. The fire-breaks will, as far as possible, run north and south and east and west, and along the centre of each a belt of deciduous trees half a chain wide will be planted to serve as an extra means of preventing the spread of fire.

The work of erecting the buildings, and the preparation of the site to which it is intended to shift the prison camp, is well forward, and is dealt with in the report on Waiotapu Plantation attached hereto. It was expected that the camp would have been shifted about November last, but owing to the small number of prisoners available the tree-planting operations had to be curtailed at Waiotapu, thus necessitating the camp being kept in its present position for another planting season.

PRINCIPAL TREES GROWING ON WHAKAREWAREWA PLANTATION.

Mr. Buchanan, Assistant Forester at Whakarewarewa Plantation, has supplied a paper giving brief descriptions of the principal trees growing at Whakarewarewa Plantation, which is attached hereto. It is thought that the information contained therein will be of value to intending planters, from whom numerous letters are received each year asking for information about the respective merits of trees generally.

PROPOSALS FOR 1912-13.

The trees available for permanent planting in Rotorua Nursery number about 3,500,000, and these will be divided between Whakarewarewa and Waiotapu Plantations, where preparations are well in hand for planting them.

At Waiotapu the shifting of the prison camp will necessitate the employment of an extra number of free men to undertake the maintenance of the plantations. At both the plantations it is intended to reduce the cost of maintenance by sowing down a further area of the fire-breaks in grasses and keep them grazed with sheep.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I wish to place on record my appreciation of the assistance given me by each officer in carrying out the afforestation work.

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