

For all New Zealand foresters who have been raised on a heavy dose of *Pinus radiata* culture I strongly recommend that you read this book and then visit China. It will greatly broaden your outlook on the potential for New Zealand interactions with China and also on the possibility for evaluating Chinese forestry species in New Zealand.

This book, of 384 pages and published in 1990, is available from:

Island Press
Washington Office
1718 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
Ph. (202) 232-7933

for Cloth \$45.00 ISBN 1-55963-023-x
Paper \$26.95 ISBN 1-55963-022-1

Allan G. Wilkinson

NZ Timbers

New Zealand timbers. Exotic and indigenous. The complete guide. 1990. By N.C. Clifton. Government Printing Office. ISBN 0-477-01488-7. Xii + 170 pages. \$NZ39.95 (including GST).

A book on exotic and indigenous timbers grown in New Zealand can hardly fail to appeal to local wood users, particularly when it embraces the timbers' functional, aesthetic, and craft attributes. No doubt Clifton's book will attract a widespread readership in New Zealand but after a first reading to satisfy initial curiosity I suspect the book will be returned to the shelf or coffee table and remain there for only occasional or passing use.

As acknowledged in the book, "New Zealand timbers" updates much of the information presented in earlier works such as Entrican *et al* (1957. Forest trees and timbers of New Zealand. Government Printer, Wellington). While a fervent wood technologist might not be satisfied, Clifton's book has the virtue of being written in a colloquial style using a minimum of technical terms.

Diagrams and photographs (black and white and colour) illustrate the book. The photographs did not always complement the text and the colour photographs, at least for the timber samples, were imbued with an unfortunate green hue (in both my copy and others I looked at). Some diagrams did not reproduce well.

Clifton's extensive knowledge and experience shows in this book and I found particularly illuminating the descriptions of timber use by Maori and early European settlers. Nevertheless, a reader might have benefited more from Clifton's work given judicious editing.

The text tends to be tedious and some has been omitted in publication (p. 63). The references to unspecified sources for further details probably will prove frustrating for readers seeking clarification of the occasional ambiguity, (e.g., Kauri heartwood durability, pp.4 and 57) and factual slip (e.g., concerning the blunting effects of *Eucalyptus saligna* timber). Even numbering the figures would have assisted author and reader alike.

Clifton's emphasis on the timber species themselves makes the separate turnery section appear misplaced. I thought the species emphasis made it hard to decide what timber to use for a given task. Some tables relating uses to required wood properties and wood properties to species could have indicated, virtually at a glance, the uses individual timbers suited. A glossary would have been helpful as well.

Clifton's book is timely insofar as it complements Scott's "Imported timbers in New Zealand" handbook (1987, Government Printing Office, Wellington). However I hope Clifton produces a second, more 'user-friendly' edition of "New Zealand timbers", an edition providing greater reader satisfaction than the first.

Bruce P. Glass

Bioenergy Agreement Summary Reports

Forestry, Forest Biomass, and Biomass Conversion: The Bioenergy Agreement (1986-1989) Summary Reports, edited by C.P. Mitchell, L. Zsuffa, S. Anderson and D.J. Stevens, Elsevier Applied Science 1990, 351pp, ISBN 1-85166-443-2.

Reprinted from the journal Biomass, this book contains 25 papers summarising the achievements of each of the activities carried out between May 1986 and April 1989 under the International Energy Agency Agreement on Bioenergy Research and Development. The papers are grouped under three main headings, namely, improvement of biomass growth and production technology; methods of harvesting, processing and transport; and methods of converting biomass into usable energy forms. Almost all papers deal with trees as a source of energy with an emphasis on short rotations and intensive culture. Ten countries began the co-operation in 1986. Subsequently three other countries became involved. New Zealand is the only southern hemisphere representative. Each paper outlines the scope and achievements of an activity which may encompass one or several co-operating countries. The wide diversity of

authorship has inevitably led to a variety of style which varies from broadly descriptive to quite detailed presentation of quantitative results.

Bibliographies provide the keys to the information only briefly summarised in the various articles but more extensively reported in proceedings of small international meetings used as a means of promulgating research findings. While not a fault of the book itself, this method of publication will undoubtedly be a source of frustration to the reader who wishes to pursue any topic at a deeper level. This will be particularly true where items referenced are clearly not available to the public.

The first reaction of many New Zealand readers on seeing the heavy emphasis on northern hemisphere hardwoods (birch, willow and poplar) in the early chapters may be to set this book aside as of little value in the local context. Such a response would be unfortunate. The wide range of topics covered should spark ideas in those associated with more conventional forestry. The comprehensive approach to a particular forestry problem challenges current attitudes towards forest research. Several facets of research considered important in forests for energy receive scant attention in conventional forestry in spite of their relevance to sustained biological and economic productivity.

Research into forests as a source of energy was stimulated by the oil crises of the 1970s. The subsequent slump in oil prices has led to a degree of complacency, particularly in New Zealand, which has been only slightly affected by the current rise in oil price to \$40 a barrel. This book is a timely reminder of the potential value of forests for energy in a country with high natural growth rates. The wealth of research reported emphasises the need for strategic research planning in this country if we are to make a smooth transition to alternative fuels as local oil production dwindles.

H.A.I. Madgwick
Rotorua

A NEW CHILEAN PUBLICATION

Fundacion Chile is publishing a new magazine "LIGNUM" which will be oriented towards showing the technological advances in forestry. This publication is one of the projects being undertaken by the Forestry Department of Fundacion Chile.

Its first issue is expected to come out in December 1990 and there will be four issues a year. It can be obtained by writing to the Editor, Ms. Maria Bugenia Diaz. Its yearly subscription is \$US50 (send cheque to the order of Fundacion Chile).