

At last, New Zealand!! (North Island)



Hebes in Glenhope

We disembarked on New Zealand's South Island in February 2023, and had the whole month ahead of us to find hebes in their natural state. We began by following Highway 6 towards the West coast and near the municipality of Glenhope we found the Hope Saddle Lookout. We stopped to view the landscape and found many pale pink flowering hebes on the mountainous sides of the lookout. I was surprised because I thought that all the native hebes would have white flowers and that it would be difficult to find pink colours and wide leaves as if they were hybrids of *Hebe speciosa*.

When we were on the road, every time we saw hebes we stopped to photograph them. However, on the South Island, the number of hebes is such that we had to stop taking photographs because you find hebes on the road shoulders for many kilometres, especially in the vicinity of Hokitika.



Hebe seedlings



Pseudopanax ferox

A few days passed until we saw hebes again, when we were returning from Milford Sound, along Route 94 and got off the road to start walking towards Gertrude Saddle. Along the way the presence of hebes was continuous and I was able to see for the first-time young seedlings 2–3 cm tall which had germinated on top of lichen. It is an extremely humid area and I was surprised not to find spots of mildew, which happens in Europe when we have several humid days with a mild temperature of around 20 °C. Without a doubt, being at

an elevation of about 500 metres does not facilitate the spread of fungi.

It was very pleasant to find a strange bush named *Pseudopanax ferox* in the southern fjords, which I had not come across previously. Its unusual appearance caught my attention especially when touching its leaves, because they are very thick with a texture which reminds one of a succulent plant.

We had already visited several botanical gardens during earlier parts of our trip, and of course that is what we did when we went to Dunedin. The Dunedin Botanic Garden celebrates its 160th anniversary in 2023, and was New Zealand's first botanic garden. It occupies 33 hectares in North Dunedin at an altitude



Rhododendrons at Dunedin

of 25–85 metres above sea level. The garden has hill views from sunny lawns, and contains more than 6,800 plant species.

I was impressed by the forest where the garden was established, as well as the site where the first rhododendrons were planted as an

experiment to see if they would acclimatise. It is a slightly hidden place in the garden itself that you have to look for to access it, but it is worth seeing and getting to know the heart of the garden.

Finally, Christchurch, where I visited Landcare Research New Zealand Limited in Lincoln to meet Murray Dawson, the Vice-President of the Hebe Society. I was able to talk to him about my trip and ask questions about what I had seen during my journey. We also discussed various matters which I did not understand, as well as some doubts I had had about the vegetation of New Zealand, its climate and hebes in particular. He gladly and comprehensively responded to me, for which I am particularly grateful.

Enjoy Hebes

Josep M. Vendrell