

**PRODUCTION AND CULTURAL NOTES RELEVANT TO
*MYOSOTIDIUM HORTENSIA***

GRAEME C. PLATT

*Platt's Nursery
Albany, New Zealand*

There is nothing more exasperating, as a professional horticulturist trying for years to grow a plant species without success, than to call around at a friend's place to find the plant growing to perfection in their garden. When you enquire as to how they achieved such results, you are rather off-handedly told, "Oh, that was something Mildred picked up at the Country Women's Institute"! The successful grower of the plant doesn't even know what it is.

Until the last few years, the Chatham Island forget-me-not (*Myosotidium hortensia*) has been a plant that has almost driven me to despair. We purchased numerous plants from other growers but no matter what we did with them they failed. We then obtained seed and tried to grow our own. The seeds germinated then came to nothing with most plants collapsing six months after germination.

The Chatham Island forget-me-not is an herbaceous plant that grows naturally only in the Chatham Islands. It was once abundant around the foreshore of these islands but last year I was only able to find two rather small patches. However their natural habitat on the Chathams is right on the foreshore generally under shady cliffs and a few feet above the high tide mark — often surrounded by rotting seaweed and constantly lashed with salt spray. Those plant I did find in the natural environment were perfection. They had leaves 12" to 14" across of the most vivid lush green you could imagine, and without chew marks or any damage by insects. When these plants are in full flower, with large bunches of sky-blue flowers, they can only be described as "exquisite". They would make a delightful addition to any cool, shady, herbaceous border, which had a rich soil and was free from severe frost.

Most references on the growing of this plant mention the need for seaweed or dead fish to be in the proximity of the root zone. Two years ago we drenched a seedbox of freshly germinated plants with seawater, taken directly from the sea. The results were dramatic. From that day onwards the rather sickly seedlings put on rapid and lush growth, and have grown extremely well. This year we have flowered plants, from which we shall be collecting our own seed for the first time.

With the seawater treatment, we have found that the plants can be grown in full sun. However, if the plant wilted it would

suffer from chronic sun scorch. Because of the very big leaves, the transpiration rate is such that the plant requires large amounts of water. I would still advise planting Chatham Island forget-me-nots in shade — not dense shade, however, as they do best with an high indirect light intensity. The main and only factor that appears to be important is the extra minerals they are picking up from seawater.

Nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, and magnesium we always used with no results, but this balanced fertiliser is now quite adequate after seawater treatment. It doesn't appear to be essential to treat these plants with seawater more than twice a year. I know many people will say they have been able to grow Chatham Island forget-me-nots without such treatment. However, after inspecting the plants of the other growers, it is my view that they would improve dramatically with this treatment. Some amateur growers are using proprietary-brand liquid seaweed fertilisers. These work just as well, but I feel it is an expensive way of buying seawater. Those of you who are fortunate enough to be able to grow this delightful plant without this treatment, probably have the missing mineral — which could possibly be sodium — in your soils.

We have found no disease problems appearing since this treatment. Slugs and snails are a major curse — the more lush you get your Chatham Island forget-me-nots, the more attractive they are to slugs and snails, which must be dealt with if you wish to have your plants looking their best.

As the Chatham Island forget-me-not is one of our most spectacular plants — and we always have a waiting list of customers wanting them — I hope this plant becomes more widely grown.

NEW ZEALAND CLEMATIS FROM CUTTINGS

TERRY C. HATCH

*Joy Plants Nursery
Pukekohe East, New Zealand*

It is strange that a large proportion of New Zealand plants are: (a) white-flowered, and (b) unisexual.

These two factors are well illustrated by the genus *Clematis* 'N.Z.' Of the ten species, two have white flowers and the rest have green-yellowish ones; all are evergreen. Bearing this in mind, we come to the reason for producing them from cuttings. The species most commonly grown is the showy *Clematis panicu-*