

INSTRUCTIONAL WORK.

The people of the respective districts show increasing interest each year in the work on these experimental areas, this being particularly manifest in connection with Puwera. In July last the writer, at the joint request of the Whangarei Chamber of Commerce and the sub-provincial executive of the Farmers' Union, gave a lantern lecture on "Gum Lands" at the Whangarei Town Hall. There was a large attendance, including farmers who had travelled a distance of thirty miles. The boys taking agriculture at the local high school were also present. Next day the farmers and members of the Chamber of Commerce made a visit of inspection to Puwera and were conducted over the area. The day was very wet, but the attendance numbered fifty persons. Those boys of the high school who take agriculture as a subject made their annual visit to Puwera on 27th September last. Sixty-five pupils with the master and the Chairman of the High School Board and others were shown over the area and the experiments explained to them. The instructional side of Puwera is steadily growing in popularity. It is the only Government experimental area in the far North, and its general help to the farming community and others, apart from the matter of the gum-land investigation, is much valued.

LOCAL RAINFALL RECORDS.

The following tables give the rainfall at the two areas during the period covered by these notes—October, 1922, to September, 1923:—

Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	Sept.	Total.
PUWERA.												
<i>Rainfall (Inches) and Number of Wet Days.</i>												
4.10	2.65	4.89	3.24	0.92	1.95	6.61	7.78	8.04	6.50	3.19	3.05	52.92
20	12	10	4	4	7	11	21	24	19	13	12	157
ALBANY.												
<i>Rainfall (Inches) and Number of Wet Days.</i>												
4.04	3.56	5.99	6.44	3.85	1.76	5.73	4.12	8.95	2.81	3.19	4.00	54.54
19	17	11	10	12	8	10	26	29	19	21	22	204

Mean Annual Rainfall : Puwera, 53.9 in. ; Albany, 43.8 in.

Spent Oxide from Gasworks.—This material, which can often be had for the cartage, is rich in sulphur and also in nitrogenous compounds, which when allowed to oxidize on the surface of the pasture are transferred into useful nitrogenous fertilizers. The sulphur is also of value on some soils.

Seed-testing.—During the official year 1922-23 9,056 seed-samples were tested at the Agriculture Department's seed-testing station for germination, and some 1,500 were analysed for purity. Of this number only eighty were forwarded by farmers, which may be taken as showing an increasing confidence in the ability and desire of seed-merchants generally to supply good seed. This position has arisen, firstly, from the demand by the farmer for high-class seed, and, secondly, from the efforts of the merchants to cater to that demand, and their widely adopted custom of selling on the Department's certificate.