

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

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AUSTRALIAN FOOD PLANTS STUDY GROUP

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# NEWSLETTER

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323 Philp Ave.,  
Frenchville.  
Q'l'd.  
10/6/91

Dear Members,

Well, it's THAT time of year again! Annual subscriptions for the year 1991-92 are now due, and have been set at \$5. Attached is a list of current financial members and subscribers, which will be updated through the year. It is a bit of a problem having to work from July to June, as people seem to find it more difficult to keep track of, but in this we have no choice. As it is, we feel we have made every possible effort to contact every one on previous records, so this is IT!

Response to our current projects has dwindled, so here's a reminder of what we're trying to work on: firstly, articles on specific edible plants for "Australian Plants"; and secondly, an audio-visual slide presentation. Add to this a roster of people willing to speak at meetings etc., the establishment of a workable seed bank, and the collection of photographs and material which could be used to mount a poster display, and there should be something for every body. Articles received so far are on *Ficus coronata*, *Eupomatia laurina* and *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, so there's plenty of scope. Neil and Diane Hoy, our seedbank curators, are eagerly waiting at 12 Anderson St., Rockhampton 4700, for some seed to curate.

The Kershaw Gardens are looking good, with lots of new development by the Council down the waterfall end. I went over one day last week to plant out a *Syzygium australe* and two *Pleiogynium timorense* in our useful plants area, and to do a bit of weeding round the embryonic Nardoo lawn I'm nurturing under the paperbarks. Trees in blossom and forming green fruit were *Acacia aneura*, *A. farnesiana*, *Myoporum montanum*, *Pipturus argenteus*, and *Sterculia quadrifida*. The sandpaper figs, *Ficus coronata* and *F. opposita*, were loaded with large, fleshy fruits. *Opposita*'s were not quite ripe, but *Coronata* provided a substantial snack. The rains must have been good for the local figs. On a school excursion to The Caves earlier this year, an old *Ficus obliqua* was so loaded with succulent fruit that, once the teenage sceptics were convinced that I really had swallowed what I'd picked, there was enough for samples all round, and still plenty left for the birds.

Did you catch one of Vic Cherikoff's Bush Tucker weekends featured on A.B.C. television's "Holiday" programme recently? We've also purchased the two "Bush Tucker Man" videos presently available, as we've been unable to get hold of any of Les Hiddins' written material so far, in spite of exhaustive enquiries.

Rocky S.G.A.P. has had a pretty busy couple of months. As well as our usual meetings and excursions, we've mounted displays at "The Good Earth Expo" at Rockhampton Show grounds, in the Mall for World Environment Day (featured on local T.V.) and for the visit of the A.B.C. "Green Train". Three of our members attended the Queensland Region Conference, where edible plants were much in evidence. (Details further on).

Bill Payne, editor of "Australian Plants", has sent us some articles for comments and additions, so looking at these has been a very interesting and challenging activity. We've also received an information leaflet from the Australian Bush Flower Remedy Society

Dr. Gwyn Jones has informed us that his next series of experiments are designed to study the safety or otherwise of consuming oil from the kernal of the Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), and enclosed a reprint setting out the background to this research.

Rodney Barker has written with the answer to one query, and to pose another. The Curry Tree or Curry Leaves is *Chalcas koenigii* (syn. *Murraya koenigii*). The fruits of *Murraya exotica*, now regarded as a native, are reported edible by Sturtevant in "Edible Plants of the World". Has anyone any experiences to report?

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton S.G.A.P.

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#### EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:

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22.3.91: Rod Elder spoke on native orchids, many of which have edible bulbs and pseudobulbs, and brought a substantial collection of examples with him.

26.4.91: Setting up display.

24.5.91: *Brugiera exaristata*, *Callistemon* "Little John", *C. pearsonii*, *Eucalyptus crebra*, *E. ptychocarpa*, *Grevillea* "Honey Gem", *G.* "Robyn Gordon", *Leptospermum bracteandra*, *Melaleuca* "Cotton Candy", *M. nervosa*, *M. viridiflora*, *Neofabricia myrtifolia*, *Syzygium fibrosum*, *Westringia* "Wynyabbie Gem".

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#### EXCURSIONS:

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7.4.91: Bouldercombe Falls: *Canthium odoratum*, *Diospyros australis*, *Drypetes australisica*, *Eucalyptus citriodora*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Ficus opposita*, *F. virens*, *Hibiscus heterophyllus*, *Planchonella*

pohlmaniana, Planchonia careya, Sterculia quadrifida, Syzygium australe, Cycas media, Cissus oblonga, Eustrephus latifolius, Geitonoplesium cymosum, Glycine tabacina, Passiflora suberosa, Tetrastigma nitens, Lomandra longifolia.

12.5.91: Mt. Archer summit:

2.6.91: Mt. Archer descent: Acacia bidwillii, A. farnesiana, Alectryon connatus, Banksia integrifolia, Brachychiton australis, B. populneus, Canthium odoratum, Capparis arborea, C. canescens, Carissa ovata, Citriobatus spinescens, Coelospermum reticulatum, Cordia dichotoma, Dendrocnide photinophylla, Diospyros australis, D. ferrea, Dodonea viscosa, Eucalyptus citriodora, E. intermedia, Exocarpus latifolius, Ficus obliqua, F. coronata, F. opposita, F. platypoda, F. virens, Hibiscus heterophyllus, Lysiphyllum hookeri, Melaleuca linariifolia, M. nervosa, Nauclea orientalis, Olea paniculata, Pipturis argenteus, Planchonella pohlmaniana, Planchonia careya, Pleiogynium timorense, Polyalthia nitidissima, Pouteria sericea, Rubus fraxinifolius, Sterculia quadrifida, Syzygium australe, Xanthorrhoea sp., Cycas media, Livistonia decipiens, Macrozamia miquellii, Cassytha filiformis, Cayratia acris, Cissus oblonga, Dioscorea transversa, Eustrephus latifolius, Geitonoplesium cymosum, Glycine tabacina, Hardenbergia violacea, Ipomea polymorpha, Malaisia scandens, Passiflora suberosa, Rauwenhoffia leichardtii, Tetrastigma nitens, Opuntia stricta, Commelina cyanea, Emilia sonchifolia, Myoporum debile, Oxalis corniculata, Physalis minima, Wahlenbergia sp., Curculigo ensifolia, Dianella caerulea, Gahnia aspera, Murdannia graminea, Panicum decompositum.

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#### QUEENSLAND REGIONAL CONFERENCE:

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This was held over the Queensland Labour Day long weekend on 4th, 5th and 6th of May, and hosted by the Pine Rivers Branch of S.G.A.P. We visited 2 private gardens, both of which contained a number of edible native species. The Ashauer's garden at Lawnton featured, among others, a beautiful little specimen Burdekin Plum tree (*Pleiogynium timorense*) loaded with large fruit, and Esther Wilson's treasure trove at Kallangur contains at least 50 edible species, before considering any of the nectar producing Banksias, Callistemons, Grevilleas, Melaleucas, or Leptospermums.

Jan Sked gave a slide programme, "An Introduction to the Flora of the Pine Rivers Valley", in preparation for the following day's field trips. Of the 120 slides, 28 featured edible plants. (There were some doubles such as flower and fruit.)

We visited the Lake Samsonvale plantings, a community project co-ordinated by the Men of the Trees around the perimeter of the remnant lowland Hoop Pine scrub known as Gold's Scrub. Among the 9452 trees planted so far are 2524 bearing edible parts, spread over 28 species. Occuring naturally in Gold's Scrub are 22 species of food plants. In the damp palm/eucalypt Wet sclerophyll/closed forest area we visited in the Mt. Mee State Forest, 30 edible species are listed. The Rollo Petrie Rainforest Walk, a community project of Pine Rivers S.G.A.P., is part of the North Pine Country Park. At least 100 species of food plants are growing here, and the whole project is a credit to Jan and the group. Anyone interested in

obtaining the full species list(s) for any of these areas, please write, and I will be happy to oblige.

The Bill Tulloch Memorial Lecture, delivered by Peter Jurd, was entitled "The Bancrofts as Botanists". I found it extremely interesting, as Joseph and his son Thomas were not, strictly speaking, botanists at all, but doctors searching for drugs for their patients! Thomas is reputed to have tasted over a thousand plants, and to have made extracts from fifty. Their contribution to Queensland was enormous, and 38 species of plants and animals bear their name.

We were treated to a beautiful morning tea in the old Courthouse, which featured scones and jam, and deep fried bunya nuts, and other things. This is what I found out about the jams:-

Sandpaper Fig:-made by Rollo Petrie with *Ficus coronata* fruit from his garden. This was a really nice dark cherry red whole fruit conserve.

Finger Lime:-a delicious tart greenish yellow marmalade made from green *Microcitrus australasicus* by Betty Richardson from fruit from a garden near Montville. She used 1 cup of pulp/juice to 2 cups of sugar.

Burdekin Plum:-made by Rollo Petrie with fruit sent from Collinsville.

Lillipilly:-made by Jan Sked from *Syzygium luehmannii*, with added lemon juice.

Midyim and Dianella:-a bluish purple sweet conserve made by Jan from *Austromyrtus dulcis*, *Dianella* spp. and lemon juice.

We also visited a rainforest nursery, a production nursery, and a rare palm and *zamia* nursery. All told, it was an incredibly interesting few days!

## CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

# Bush tucker finds way to restaurant

What does a water buffalo, macadamias, bugs in blankets and wattles have in common? They're all on tonight's menu at TAFE's Willby's Restaurant.

Cuisines and countries go hand and hand, but very few Australians have sampled the culinary creations of their indigenous ancestors.

Guests will be surprised at the organic delicacies and fair dinkum bush tucker early Australians and Aborigines concocted.

The four-course Australiana dinner might include some one-off recipes, but TAFE's Associate Diploma of Business (Hospitality and Catering) students have planned a night to remember.

"The Morning Bulletin"  
7.9.90.

A representative from Dreamtime Cultural Centre will talk about their native diet and soft background music will be replaced with the authentic sounds of a didgeridoo.

And Chef Sally Stack can vouch that the dishes are made from natural Aussie tucker because this was one meal that got her out of the kitchen and into the bush.

She picked some of the ingredients herself, with the help of other students in the course.

Products for the starter, Macadamia Nut Soup, might have come off a grocery shelf, but the same cannot be said for the leafy vegetable in the entree.

Guests may recognise the native greens when they sample the Bugs in Blankets, because the chef plucked

them from the brush at Mt Archer and other local creeks.

Berry-picking from the side of the road provided the flavour for the Wild Raspberry Water Ice pallet cleaner, but the group had to delve deep in the outback to find the main course.

Buffalo is not known as the most delicate meat, but the Braised Buffalo Fillet Kakadu has been marinating for two days in pawpaw and a pepper sauce.

But be warned. The meat is guaranteed to tickle the taste buds with a flavour unlike anything ever tasted.

The meal will be topped off with a rich Wattle Creme Brulee, made from wattle seeds brought from Sydney.

To make reservations for tonight's meal, ring Sally Stack or Bruce Pickering on 222182.

# MEMBERS' GARDENS

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Rodney Barker writes to tell us of :-PLANTS I AM GROWING (OR WAS)!

*Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midyim): died off completely when I dug it out of the ground at Kangaroo Ground, then about 2 months later started sprouting. A real survivor!

*Backhousia citriodora*:- also disliked being uprooted. Is recovering slowly.

*Myoporum debile*:- ditto. Lingered rather than alive.

*Planchonella australis* (Black Apple):- extremely slow grower. Several years old and only a few inches high.

Have had no luck in germinating *Davidsonia pruriens* or Bunya Pine nuts from seed. Trying *Alpinia caerulea* at the moment.

All of my Lillypillies died from combined effect of transplanting, lack of regular water and disease.

*Microseris lanceolata* (Yam Daisy):- yet to resurrect from dormancy.

Basically, I am entering an interim period until I get a permanent garden, and then I will start building up my stock of useful native plants again.

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## FROM OUR FILES

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Both the Queensland "Bulletin" for March, and the Rainforest Study Group newsletter for April, featured *Elatostema reticulatum*, the Rainforest Spinach. This is a perennial herb with bright green succulent stems and opposite or alternate, rough-textured, strongly-veined, dark green leaves, up to 20cm long, with toothed margins. It forms sprawling clumps, up to 30cm high, with the stems frequently rooting at the nodes, in the moist soil and leaf litter, sometimes in the water along the edges of streams in rain forest, from north Queensland to mid New South Wales. Although a member of the nettle family, it has no stinging hairs. Flowers are unisexual, small, green or yellow green, produced in summer and autumn. Propagation is by seed, cutting or division. It is easily grown in a moist, shady and sheltered position, or in a pot in a bush house or indoors, as it will tolerate quite dark conditions. It does not like draughts or frosts, and must not be allowed to dry out. The young stems and leafy tips may be eaten raw or cooked, with the cooked stems tasting rather like beans.



### SAVOURY ELATOSTEMA. (Jan Sked).

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2 cups chopped *Elatostema* stems,                      2 medium onions chopped  
1/4 cup oil,                      garlic powder,                      2 tbs grated Parmesan cheese

Cover *Elatostema* and onion with boiling water and simmer uncovered for 5 mins. Drain. Heat oil in pan, add *Elatostema* and onion and saute for 2 mins. Add a sprinkle of garlic powder. Place on a serving plate and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

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## SANTALUM ACUMINATUM.

*Santalum acuminatum* is usually known as Quandong today, but in the early days, like many other plants, it was given a European plant name which had "native" or "wild" added. Then it was known as Wild Peach, though it bears little resemblance in looks or taste to a peach.

*S. acuminatum* is wide-spread throughout all mainland states, mainly in the semi arid areas, but is being depleted because its foliage is very palatable to grazing stock, rabbits and kangaroos, so few young plants survive.

It is a small tree 3 or 4 metres high, with light green opposite leaves, and bears an edible fruit which has been widely used since the days of early settlement.

The fruit is usually bright red when ripe, although there are varieties with pink or yellow fruit. The plant flowers in the summer and the fruit ripens in the following spring or early summer. This is not very sweet, is rather dry, and is not very palatable raw, but is delicious when cooked. The traditional method of presentation has been as a sweet pie with pastry crust, served hot with cream or ice cream, but it may be served in other forms, such as a sauce with meat dishes or as a relish.

The fruit is variable in size, round in shape, and from 2 to 3 cm in diameter with a smooth skin. The stone is roughly pitted, and contains an oily kernal which some people find edible. The aborigines used the kernal to make an ointment for healing wounds. The fruit contains twice as much vitamin C as oranges. The flavour is difficult to describe, but somewhat resembles rhubarb or a tart plum.

It is only in recent years that an effort has been made to propagate the plant. The C.S.I.R.O. developed a method of germination and established the plant in an experimental orchard at Brian Powell's property at Quorn in South Australia in 1973. It was discovered the seed would germinate readily if kept at a temperature between 16 and 20°C for several weeks. They advise placing the seed in a plastic bag with damp wood shavings or vermiculite in a dark place. I use a 4 litre ice cream container with 2cm of damp sand, and leave the kernals on top of the sand with the lid on in a warm room with little variation of temperature.

I have a good germination in autumn or spring. When the shoot on the seed is about 1 or 2cm long, I place it in a pot with a couch grass plant as a host. The first shoot to appear is the root, so place the seed with the shoot down. It may be several weeks before the first leaves appear. Ordinary potting soil may be used, and they can be planted out into their permanent positions when about 12cm high. They are not affected by frost. Fungal infection is a problem, and sterilizing the seeds in sodium hyperchlorite (White King or similar) diluted 10 to 1 for 30 mins and rinsing in sterile



BUSH TUCKER  
**QUANDONG**  
Native Peach  
*Santalum acuminatum*

water before sprouting is recommended by C.S.I.R.O. I also sterilize the sand. Dusting with a fungicide may be required before the seeds germinate to control mould. Seed will germinate in the shell, but is quicker if cracked and the kernal removed.

C.S.I.R.O. insist that a host plant is required, but I have some doubts on this point as I have a number of plants growing well although the host couch grass died soon after planting out. I have a theory that if the plant is watered through the first summer at least, a host plant is not required.

Fruiting should start in 4 or 5 years and continue for a long time, as they are long lived trees. I know of trees growing naturally that have been producing fruit for over 60 years. The quality and quantity of fruit produced varies greatly from tree to tree, but methods of grafting are being developed, so it should be possible to propagate the best types.

One advantage this plant has is its salt tolerance, so poor quality bore water can be used. Although a native of the semi arid regions, it does appreciate extra water especially in dry years.

Gerald Kuerschuer.  
Orroroo, S.A.

## PRESS CUTTINGS



Neil Hoy samples bush tucker at the St Barnabas fete at the weekend.

"The Morning Bulletin"  
16.7.90

French crepes and Central Queensland native plants discovered by a French explorer were the main attractions at the St Barnabas Church fete on Saturday.

Bastille Day was the focus and parishioners decorated stalls in red, white and blue to mark France's celebration.

Greening Australia's Mr Neil Hoy said Central Queensland botanist Thozet, who was French, had found plant near Rockhampton that other botanists had



ABOVE: Jan Sked and bunya nuts ... delicious recipes use native Australian foods.

"The Sun"  
27.2.91

overlooked. Fete patrons had the chance to sample bush tucker.

Gardeners were also able to see how to plant and nurture rainforest seedlings.

Mr Hoy said some native species would be used to regenerate a brigalow belt behind the church.

The area would be used to educate children about plants and wildlife.

Two of the main species named after Thozet were *Archidendropsis thozetiana* and *Alchornea thozetiana*.



# INTERVIEW

Following a couple of advertisements and an article in the local paper last year, I arranged an informal interview with Gerard Hills, the chef/manager of Rosehill House Restaurant in North Rockhampton on July 24th, 1990.

Gerard has begun introducing patrons gradually to the idea of bush tucker dishes, and hopes to continue expanding the range offered. He has started with desserts, as he feels these have the widest initial acceptance. As his aim is at least partly to educate people, he doesn't want to scare them away with any thing too bizarre to start with. By including offerings incorporating wild fruits in the dessert trolley selection, so diners can actually see what they're getting first, he has received a very positive response. So far the dishes have utilized wild raspberries, Burdekin Plums, lillipillies, prickly pear and wild figs, and Gerard is constantly working on developing new recipes. His big problem at present is product supply.

Because fruits are seasonal, he is trying to preserve as much as possible in the form of sauces, syrups, pulps, jams, jellies, chutneys and pickles. The day I visited, he had just finished processing 4kg of Burdekin Plums into a sauce. He is basically working from the book by Cherikoff and Isaacs, and adapting and improvising. He is anxious to learn, and when I pointed out the Mt. Morgan wattle in full bloom in the garden, and mentioned that Escoffier had a good dessert recipe using acacia flowers, it was immediately jotted down.

We are looking forward to his proposed Bush Tucker Nights, when a smorgasboard of dishes will be offered, allowing diners to taste and experiment, without committing themselves to a choice that they may discover doesn't appeal after all. We'll let you know how they shape up.



"The Morning Bulletin" 20.7.90

● Tucking into some bush tucker is Rosehill House Restaurant chef Mr Gerard Hills. The restaurant specialises in a wide range of bush tucker and intends to increase the types of dishes available in the future.

## Restaurant takes on a bush flavour

Most people recoil at the thought of eating witchety grubs or crawchies, but a Rockhampton chef has found a way to turn the creepy-crawlies of the bush into mouth-watering food.

Rosehill House restaurant chef Mr Gerard Hills can turn crawchies, witchety grubs, or prickly pear ice-cream into an appealing dish.

Mr Hills has recently started serving Central Queensland bush tucker at the restaurant and says the response of diners has been fantastic.

While some may cringe at the thought of eating a crawchie, Mr Hill says they are as good as crayfish.

Although he does not yet serve witchety grubs at the restaurant,

he has plans to incorporate them into his menu.

Most of the bush food at the restaurant consists of wild fruits, but the restaurant owners have plans to introduce a whole range.

Burdekin plums, wild raspberries and prickly pears feature on the desert menu.

"Rockhampton people are taking to it very well and the number of people eating the food is increasing," Mr Hills said.

Fruit growers supply most of the bush fare, but Mr Hills also does some of his own searching.

He said he wanted to hold a bush food night when he had established regular suppliers.

The bush food night entertainment would include Aboriginal dancers.