

NEWSLETTER

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323 Philp Ave
Frenchville
Qld.
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Dear Members and subscribers,

Happy New Year wishes to you all, no less sincere for being a little delayed. No big road trip to report on this time, but some interesting food plant bits and pieces to share.

We enjoyed a wonderful Christmas, as our 3 children and their families were home together for the first time in about 8 years, and we all camped for a couple of weeks at Bell Park at Emu Park on the Capricorn Coast. It was a great feeling to see our eldest son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren from Japan camped in the old family tent that we had used as the children were growing up, and see all the grandkids doing the sorts of things their parents had done with their friends at the same age. The grandchildren range from 7 years down to 18 months, and it was the first time all the cousins had been together, so it was a very special time.

While we all snacked on the usual scrub fruit when we came across any on our walks, there was one really interesting discovery right next to our campsite. This was a small tree of *Semecarpus australiensis*, the Australian Cashew or Marking Nut Tree, with a good crop of fruit. I have no idea if it was a naturally occurring or planted tree, and no-one in the park seemed to know anything about it. It was up near the northern end, which was the most recently cleared, and bordered the coastal scrub, but I would not have thought this would be part of its normal range.

Initially, relying on remembered drawings, I thought it must have been a cashew nut, in spite of the rather lopsided shape of the orange "apple". However, a subsequent trip to the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens revealed an Asian Cashew Tree, also in heavy fruit, which was different, but the regular shape of the remembered illustrations. So... I then started trawling through books etc in an attempt to find a picture of the Native Cashew. Finally one came to light in Tim Low's "Bush Tucker: Australia's Wild Food Harvest", and yes, that's exactly what it was.

I knew that the nut required special handling and treatment, but that the "apple" or swollen stem was edible raw when fully ripe. So I carefully removed the nut from the base of the "fruit" and set them aside, and then just washed the smooth, bright orange apples and we ate them raw. They were very juicy and quite pleasant, with occasional stringy fibres. They were actually much nicer than the Asian Cashew apples up at the Gardens. I've eaten cashew apple icecream at the Frosty Mango, north of Townsville (one of our regular and highly recommended roadside stops) which was very enjoyable, so there are obviously selected cultivars of the commercial cashews.

I waited till we were home again to play with the nuts (both the *Semecarpus* and exotic cashews from the Gardens) and I decided to use the simple bush method detailed by Zig Madycki as reprinted in N/L 32 of February 1998 from "Grassroots" magazine.

I made an envelope of wire gauze from an old camping toaster and put a few nuts into it, then I built a small hot fire of fallen Ironbark in our outdoor iron brazier. When it began to fall into coals, I put the envelope of nuts in. The outer shells began to turn black and wet/shiny as the corrosive liquid seeped out. I turned the package with long handled tongs till all the "wetness" disappeared, then took it out and left the nuts to cool. With gloved hands it was then easy to break the outer shell and extract the toasted kernal. It took a bit of practice to get the timing right (the first ones were a bit too charred, but I practised on the exotics), and by the end I was doing ok. A larger container and fire would obviously allow a larger throughput. Unfortunately, the *Semecarpus* proved a bit of a disappointment. Many of the shells seemed completely empty, and the few kernals in the rest were tiny and shrivelled. I have no idea why this should be so, as the insides of the shells were not burnt or damaged, and the fruit was either picked from the tree or freshly fallen, so were not old. Anyhow, it was an interesting experiment.

Our walk over Keppel Sands headland at the beginning of March was really interesting. It is a great time of year on the coast for wild bush fruits: bunches of bright orange peanut shaped fruit on the Fruit Salad Vine (*Melodorum leichhardtii*), small blue/purple berries all along the stems of Muttonwood (*Rapanea variabilis*), little dark reddish-purple pear shaped fruit with brown knobs on the end on the Scrub Cherry (*Exocarpus latifolius*), red *Drypetes*, black Sandpaper Figs (*Ficus opposita*) and Native Currants (*Carissa ovata*), dark purple/black Beach Prunes (*Pouteria sericea*), pink Burney Vine (*Trophis scandens*), orange Tuckeroo (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*), lots of green fruit of all sorts, and over all the heavy scent of Eucalypt honey.

Ann McHugh and I had gone down in mid January to check whether the Fruit Salad Vine was fruiting, and we found a most unusual flower on what seemed to be a small tree - 4 fleshy brownish petals, a long magnolia-like style, and the most heavenly heavy rich fruity fragrance. The nearest thing we could think of as a comparison was the exotic Port Wine Magnolia. Eventually, we tracked down an ID and discovered it was the flower of the Fruit Salad Vine, which neither of us had seen before. (It's not uncommon for the vine to act like a small tree, especially in hard conditions). So there's another good reason for growing one in the tropical/sub-tropical home garden.

On a recent repeated episode of "The Food Lover's Guide" on SBS TV, the camera accompanied north Queensland exotic fruit growers around their property as they picked the ingredients for a lunch-time salad. One of the interesting inclusions was *Costus* flowers of many colours, and reportedly of many flavours. I remembered that there's a native *Costus* down the side of our house, so I went to investigate. *Costus potierae* or Showy *Costus* has a white flower with a yellow-streaked lip. The flower was crisp and juicy, with a slightly lemony taste, and would be an excellent addition to a salad. This was something completely new to me, and most interesting. *Costus* are hardy and easy to grow, but do need extra water.

Unfortunately, Arthur Rudnick, a long-time member of this group, writes that the drought has finally claimed all his food plants except the barely surviving *Muntries*, so he has decided not to renew his sub. I'm sure we all echo his wish for rain, and wish him well in the future.

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton SGAP.

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EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:

24/11/06: *Brachychiton acerifolium* (seed), *Citrus* sp. (fruit), *Crinum pedunculatum* (medicinal), *Cyclophyllum odoratum*, *Dianella* sp., *Diospyros geminata*, *D. humilis* (fruits), *Erythrina vespertilio* (root), *Ficus virens* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage"), *Lomandra hystrix* (leaf base), *Lysophyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Psychotria daphnoides*, *Rhodomyrtus canescens* (fruit).

2/2/07: *Diospyros humilis*, *Mimusops elengi*, *Murraya ovatifoliata*, *Myoporum montanum* (fruit), *Semecarpus australiensis* (treated kernal), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds).

23/2/07: *Abelmoschus moschatus* var *tuberosus* (shoots, root), *Achronychia laevis*, *Arytera divaricata*, *Diospyros humilis*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana* (fruit), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Pouteria sericea*, *Rhodomyrtus canescens*(?), *Syzygium australe* (fruit).

23/3/07: *Achronychia laevis*, *Capparis lucida*, *Citrus garrawayi*, *Cupaniopsis wadsworthii*, *Dianella attraxis*, *Diospyros humilis*, *Syzygium australe* cultivar, *S. oleosum*, *Trophis scandens* (fruit) *Commelina diffusa* (leaves).

27/4/07: *Abelmoschus moschatus** (shoots, flowers, roots), *Achronychia laevis*, *Alectryon tomentosus*, *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Davidsonia pruriens*, *Diospyros humilis* (fruit), *Geijera paniculata* (medicinal).

EXCURSIONS :

3/12/06: Christmas barbecue at Kemp Beach, followed by a walk up over the southern headland: *Acacia disparrima* (root), *Acronychia laevis*, *Alectryon connatus*, *Carissa ovata*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Diospyros geminata*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Euroschinus falcata*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, (fruit), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Eustrephus latifolius* (root, aril), *Ficus opposita*, *F.rubiginosa* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Cissus oblonga* (fruit flesh), *Corymbia intermedia*, *C.tesselaris*, *Eucalyptus crebra*, *E.tereticornis* (nectar), *Hibiscus heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Lantana camara** (fruit), *Lomandra hystrix* (leaf base), *Mallotus discolor*, *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Passiflora suberosa**, *Planchonia careya*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Pouteria sericea* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed kernels), *Trophis scandens* (aril), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage"), *Pandanus tectorius* (fruit, seed, leaf base), *Opuntia stricta** (fruit, "leaves").

4/2/07: CQU - median gardens with Dr Ashwath, "The Hill" with Neil Hoy, and propagation nursery for Queensland Rail erosion control project: *Abelmoschus moschatus var tuberosus* (shoots, root), *Dianella spp.*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Planchonia careya* (fruit), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Lomandra spp.*, *Xanthorrhoea spp.* (leaf bases) in the median gardens.

4/3/07: Keppel Sands northern headland: *Acacia disparrima* (root), *Acronychia laevis*, *Aidia racemosa*, *Alectryon connatus*, *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Capparis canescens*, *Carissa ovata*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *C.odoratum*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Diospyros geminata*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Euroschinus falcata*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, (fruit), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Dodonaea lanceolata*, *D.viscosa ssp burmanniana* (seed capsules hop substitute), *Ficus opposita*, *F.rubiginosa* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Cissus oblonga* (fruit flesh), *C.opaca* (tubers), *Geijera salicifolia* (medicinal), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Lantana camara**, *Mallotus discolor*, *Myoporum acuminatum*, (fruit), *Corymbia intermedia*, *C.tesselaris* (nectar), *Eucalyptus umbellata* (nectar, leaves), *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Passiflora suberosa**, *Planchonia careya*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Pouteria sericea*, *Rapanea variabilis* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed kernels), *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruit), *Trophis scandens* (aril), *Opuntia stricta** (fruit, "leaves"), *Gahnia aspera* (seeds), *Amyema* (either congener or *conspicuum*), *Dendrothoe glabrescens* (fruit), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage").

1/4/07: Kershaw Gardens: Extract from our branch newsletter: Only a small group of us spent the afternoon checking the current state of our plantings on Thozet's Walk at the Kershaw Gardens. After finding the Charles Street gates locked, we re-convened at Knight Street and set off along the lower path to eventually wind up towards SGAP Hill. Many of the original plants are no longer in evidence, and even many of those present in 2002 (our last recorded survey) are there no more. Much cleaning up and replanting is obviously necessary, and to tackle the whole walk will be a very daunting experience.

Nevertheless, there were many interesting flowers and fruits to see, comment on and taste. *Bursaria spinosa* was in sweet flower, and there was ripe fruit on *Morinda citrifolia* (Cheese fruit or Noni). The small yellow flowers of *Elaeagnus triflora* (*Milla milla*) were highly perfumed, and Beach Cherries (*Eugenia reinwardtiana*) were much in evidence, but there was no sign of the beautiful prostrate *Grevillea banksii* hybrid or cultivar with the grey woolly foliage that used to grow on the lower walk next to the Highway. We found a fallen Davidson Plum; there were flowers on *Pipturus argenteus* (Native Mulberry), green fruit on the Byfield Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus congesta*) and ripe fruit on the native Grape (*Tetrastigma nitens*).

Capparis lucida had large ripe fruit, as did *Citrus garrawayi*, but the other native citrus need revitalising and augmenting, as do the various *Hibiscus* species. The boundaries between the original habitat areas have become very blurred, with lots of random planting, overgrowing, self-seeded interlopers, and many, many weeds. Particularly in need of TLC are the Canoona and Brigalow habitat areas. Name plates and information boards appear to be almost non-existent, and the few remaining seem to be mostly in the wrong places. There's a lot of work to be done. We are lucky that opportunities to remedy some of the problems are opening up.

As we walked, a disjointed commentary was recorded, so we will have that as a memory jogger at the next meeting. A pleasant cuppa and chat in the shade followed our circuit, and many ideas and suggestions were aired.

6/5/07: Rockhampton Botanic Gardens: Neil Hoy led a guided walk, open to the public, of some of the original plantings of the colonial curators of this more than century old garden. Much of the early framework planting was of local native plants. Edibles included: *Alpinea caerulea* (fruit, roots), *Backhousia citriodora* (leaf), *Bowenia serrulata*, *Cycas media*, *Macrozamia moorei* (seeds after extensive treatment), *Brachychiton australis*, *B. acerifolius*, *B. discolor* (seeds, roots), *B. rupestris* (seeds, roots, shoots, mucilage from wood), *Alectryon connatus*, *Austromyrtus bidwillii*, *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Drypetes australasica*, *Diospyros australis*, *D. fasciculosa*, *Eleagnus latifolia*, *Euroschinus falcata*, *Mallotis discolor* (fruit), *Capparis* sp. (fruit, buds), *Corymbia citriodora* (leaves as flavouring), *Ficus virens* (fruit, shoots), *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Nauclea orientalis*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Podocarpus elatus*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *Mimusops elengi* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds), *Terminalia melanocarpa* (fruit, seed kernel), *Thespesia populnea* (young leaves, shoots, flowers) *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage").

Among the bush food offerings at the local markets in Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast are the growing range of sauces, herbs, and preserves of all sorts produced by Eddie Currie under his "Murri Magic" brand, and Wattle Bread from O'Grady's Bakery.

Brochures and stock lists have been received from Graeme and Veronica at Witjuti Grub Bushfood Nursery, PO Box 171, Kenilworth. Q. 4574.

Ph: (07) 5446 0264. <witjutigrub@optusnet.com.au>

One of their practical offerings is a Bushfood Garden Starter Kit of 8 different species to form the basis of a home bushfood garden.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Calamvale. Qld. 4116
18 January, 2007.

Dear Lenore,

I have planted the ZigZag Vine seeds, and will let you know the results.

I would like to share my experience in germinating Screw Pine or Pandanus. It is an odd looking tree with exposed roots which you often see growing on sandy soils next to the beach. The fruit looks like a small pineapple.

Last June I picked up 3 woody nuts from a fruit and left them on top of a pot which already contained another seedling. I then forgot about them, though they obviously received moisture when the seedling was watered. A couple of weeks ago I tried to add fertilizer to the pot, and discovered that each woody nut has 3 seedlings growing from it.

I read from the internet that the tree can easily be grown indoors, so I might try this. Following are the notes I have compiled:

Screw Pine (*Pandanus tectorius*): A small spreading evergreen tree up to 6m high with stout prop roots which firmly anchor the tree in loose sand. A prop root is a root formed from the stem, usually close to the ground, which helps hold the stem erect and anchor the plant. The large, light green leaves are spirally arranged on the stems. They are usually 90-150cm long and 5-7cm wide, with small white upturned spines along the leaf edges. When the leaves fall from the tree they leave prominent leaf scars on the stout stems. The fruiting heads, resembling a pineapple, are up to 25cm across and consist of many woody segments. The woody segments of the fruit are essentially seed pods that take up to one year to ripen. Each segment usually contains 1-3 seeds. The heavy heads hang from very stout branches and can remain on the tree for over 12 months. For ripe fruit, chew the inner fleshy part. Cook fruit that is not fully ripe in an earth oven. Before cooking, wrap the whole fruit in banana leaves, breadfruit leaves, or any other suitable thick, leathery leaves. After cooking for about 2 hours, you can chew fruit segments like ripe fruit. Green fruit is inedible. It is sand and salt tolerant and can withstand exposure to strong winds. The trees can be propagated from seed, or more rarely from cuttings. Just place the woody segments on top of the soil. The seeds inside the woody segments germinate in 3 months, coming out from the smaller end. When young prop roots develop on upper stems the entire growth can be cut off the tree and used to vegetatively propagate a new plant.

All the best,
Tom (Ling).

Tom is a recently retired Academic, formerly of the University of Queensland, with a special interest in *Citrus* of the world.

BUSHFOOD PLANTS OF MELBOURNE.

With fewer markets to attend over the Christmas/New Year period, Pam and I have been able to pause , reflect and attend to tasks we'd not had time for until now. So I thought I'd write a little about the bushfood plants of the Greater Melbourne area.

There are many edible plants that grow in this area. A few of them are listed below. Some of these are traditional foods of local Aboriginal people...others were used by the early settlers of Victoria.

- Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*) - edible tubers
- Pigface (*Carpobrotus rossii*) - edible fruit and leaves
- Chocolate lily (*Arthropodium strictum*) -edible tubers
- Warrigal greens (*Tetragonis tetragoniodes*) - edible leaves
- Island celery (*Apium insulare*) - edible stems and leaves
- Sweet appleberry (*Billardiera cymosa*) - edible fruit
- Mountain pepper (*Tasmannia lanceolata*) - leaves and berries used for flavouring

I became Vice-President of the Southern Bushfood Association in 2002, and for some years there has been discussion about the relative benefits of wild harvesting (taking products from the bush) and growing bushfood plants (usually in plantations). It is generally agreed that wild harvesting is unsustainable, and therefore that both commercial and private users should be encouraged to grow their own product wherever possible.

This leads to comparisons of monoculture and polyculture, or conventional plantations versus permaculture and organics. It's a complex subject, but when growing bushfood plants in your own backyard, we (Blue-tongue Organics), recommend imitating the bush as much as possible. For example, planting a mixture of trees, shrubs and groundcover plants. You might start with *Tasmannia lanceolata* (Mountain Pepper, tree), *Prostanthera rotundifolia* (Native Mint, shrub) and *Viola hederacea* (Native violets, groundcover), and even add a climber or scrambling plant such as *Billardiera scandens/cymosa* (Appleberries) or *Rubus parvifolius* (Native Raspberry).

They all enjoy some shade and moist, well-drained soil, so if your garden's hot and dry and you're doing your bit to conserve water, you could try *Myoporum insulare* (Boobialla, large shrub), *Enchylaena tomentosa* (Ruby Saltbush, small shrub/groundcover), *Carpobrotus spp.* (Pigface, groundcover) and *Kennedia prostrata* (Running Postman, scrambler) together.

Think about the leaf litter found in the bush and add some mulch, too. This will conserve water, give the roots shade and provide shelter for worms and other helpful garden creatures.

And if you're thinking, "I don't even HAVE a garden," you can choose from a variety of bushfood plants that are happy in pots. *Tetragonia tetragonioides* (Warrigal Greens, also known as NZ Spinach), Appleberries, *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon Myrtle) and *Kunzea pomifera* (Muntries) are just a few examples. Pebbles make a particularly good mulch for plants in pots and tubs. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you might have about all of this.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE CORRECT PLANT BEFORE TASTING ANYTHING.

Some plants also require cooking or preparation to remove poisonous substances, in order to be safe to eat. This information can be found in the books listed below, among others.

- *Wild Lime: Cooking from the bushfood garden*, Juleigh Robins, 1996
- *Grow your own Bushfoods*, Keith and Irene Smith, 1999
- *Koorie Plants, Koorie People*, Beth Gott and Nelly Zola, 1992

These are all particularly useful books for beginners, and are available through the public library system.

I hope I've whetted your appetite to try the rich bounty of the bush.

Pam Orren & Ali Broome
Blue-tongue Organics.
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(Reprinted from *Growing Australian (APS Vic) March 2003*)

Some ideas for Propagating Difficult to Germinate Seed

The Wallum Action Group working out of the Community Nursery on Bribie Island report some successes with a few notoriously difficult species.

Cupaniopsis anacardioides (Tuckeroo) seeds were cleaned and placed in cold water. All seed that floated was rejected, and the remainder left in the water for 24 hours before planting. This treatment resulted in by far the best germination rate they have ever achieved for this species.

Another species that responds well to cold water soaking is *Lomandra*. After 24 hours the seed appeared to have fermented, but they decided to plant it anyway, and got a really good result.

Brian Roach has invented a natty little gadget for the painless treatment of hard seeds such as *Acacia* and other pea-type plants, which traditionally are germinated by treatment with boiling water and soaking, or abrading the impervious seed coat in some way.

Brian lined a small plastic container with coarse grade sandpaper by cutting the sandpaper to fit inside the circular sides of the container and gluing the pieces in place. Seeds are shaken in the container for a couple of minutes before planting.

Brian reports excellent germination rates, and he didn't lose either his finger tips or his eyesight in the process!

Organic Delights from the Grassy Woodlands

By Phil Watson.

Preparing your backyard organic garden for the inevitable high water demands of the dry summer and autumn periods is an ideal winter activity. One method of saving water involves converting the driest portion of your back yard into an organic bush tucker garden. This can be achieved by selecting from the extensive colourful array of daisies, lilies, herbs, orchids, etc., commonly found amongst the grass and sedge tussocks that characterise our grassy woodland communities.

Described below are a few tempting floral and taste treats, drawn from the many inter-tussock plant options, along with a brief note on their bush tucker attributes.

Firstly, the ground hugging, Native Cranberry (*Astroloma humifusum*), has attractive long lasting winter bell-shaped flowers and forms a sweet red berry which ripens in spring. Both the Peach Berry (*Lissanthe strigosa*) and the Ant's Delight (*Acrotriche serrulata*) are alternatives to the Native Cranberry. The Ant's Delight has an added bonus of the being able to have its flowers soaked in water to produce a pleasant nectar flavoured drink.

Another is the Native Pigface (*Carprorotus rossii*), which was such a treat for the Tasmanian Aborigines, that during lean times, they would camp nearby drifts of this plant to feast on its prized fruits. It is now recognised as one of Australia's tastiest wild fruits. The flavour of these succulent, late summer ripening fruits has often been described as a blend between a strawberry and fig. Their fleshy leaves can also be cooked as greens or squeezed to provide soothing juices for bites and burns.

Our coastal grassy woodlands succulent ground cover named Warrigul Greens (*Tetragonia implexicoma*) could be one of the earliest bush tucker exports. By the 1820's the French were regularly harvesting it from their vegetable gardens following its importation by their early explorers. The English, as a result of Banks' introduction, still enjoy it today, as a pleasant spinach substitute, as it is ideal for stir-fries. Its succulent red fruit in late summer can also be eaten.

Many of the spring flowering herbaceous lilies die back during summer and autumn to form underground tubers of various shapes and sizes. The delicate, purple Fringed Twining Lily often referred to as Daisy Bates or Nullabor Yam (*Thysanotus patersonii*) produces a long finger sized yam which has been proved by Aborigines to be very nutritious, once cooked in a hot charcoal bed. Its leaves and flowers can also be cooked.

Other plants which have nutritious tubers located under their lush spring growth include the yellow flowering Leek Lily with the intriguing botanical name of *Bulbine bulbosa*; the white flowering, vanilla scented Vanilla Lily (*Arthropodium millefolium*); the blue flowered, chocolate scented Chocolate Lily (*Dichopogon strictus*) and the numerous exquisite orchids. These include the Donkey, Sun, Greenhood, Potato, Flying Duck and Bearded Orchids. They all have a pair of edible tubers from which the Greek name *Orchis* is derived.

It is hoped that this brief introduction will help motivate the reader into upgrading the dry areas of your yard to form patches of colourful water saving grassland. The added bonus of course is a chance to sample some home grown organic bush tucker.

Bush Tucker from the "Carrot" & "Daisy" Families

Inter tussock spaces, located between a selection of native grasses and/or sedges making up a backyard organic native grassland garden patch, are ideal locations for planting a selection of bush tucker plants. Of course, this planting technique can also apply to organic veggie gardens. For example, the fast growing lettuces (from the "Daisy" or Asteraceae family) can be tucked in between slower growing celery plants and/or radishes can be planted with carrots or parsnips (Apiaceae family members).

Have you ever thought of growing in these inter tussock spaces, bush tucker representatives from the same botanical families as those plants in your veggie garden? This is not only an intriguing way to botanically compare vegetable and indigenous plants from the same family, but it will also improve your understanding of the similar cultural requirements for most plants grouped within a common family.

Having asked the question, let's explore this theme by concentrating on examples of indigenous bush tucker taste-bud tempters, from the Carrot (Apiaceae) and Daisy (Asteraceae) Families.

As an initial learning experience, allow a carrot, parsley or celery (Apiaceae family) to go to seed in your veggie patch. Not only will you benefit from harvesting your own seed supply, but also you will be fascinated by the large umbrella like flower (umbel) formed. A comparison with flowers from indigenous Apiaceae members soon establishes the family's floral similarities. Suitable exquisite examples include the green flowers of the alpine grassland herb, Alpine Trachymene (*Trachymene humilis*) and/or the squat prickly-like flowers of the Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovium*).

In order to harvest organic bush tucker derived from the Apiaceae family, try the native *Apium prostratum*, known as Sea Celery. Its broad leaf form occurs naturally on sunny beaches, while its tenderer and tastier, narrow leaf form known as Native Parsley, likes moist shady areas. The First Fleeters relied heavily on the variable forms of this plant as a cure for scurvy. Both Cook and Banks referred to it as parsley and regularly ate it.

Other Apiaceae bush tucker options are the Caraway herbs, which all can be added to stir-fries. These include the silver leaved, Silver Caraway (*Oreomyrrhis argenta*) and the strong carrot scented, Carroty Caraway (*Oreomyrrhis sessiliflolia*), along with Aussies equivalent to the garden Carrot, known as the Native Carrot (*Daucus glochidatum*).

The Daisy family (Asteraceae) also has many intriguing bush tucker herbs that are floristically similar to organic veggies such as

lettuce, salsify, endives and artichokes. Again, as a learning and seed collecting experience, allow a lettuce to flower and go to seed. Compare this flower with produces myriad of tiny seeds with rings of fine hairs (pappus) with the same flowers and seeds produced from a few inter-tussock *Asteraceae* plantings. These can include the yellow button-like flowers of the native herb Billy Buttons *Craspedia glauca* or the smaller flowers of Shiny Buttons *Leptorhynchos linearis*. Both produce bulbous roots with a crisp nutty taste.

In addition introduce the attractive yellow daisy Native Dandelion or Murnong, *Microseris scapigera*, that is known as an important Aboriginal bush tucker plant. Its fleshy bulbous tubers can be either eaten raw or baked in baskets within an earth oven. The sweet syrup, which exudes from the roasted tubers, has given it staple food status amongst the aborigines.

Finally, as something fairly radical, consider growing Salsify or Vegetable Oyster (*Tragopogon porrifolius*) by purchasing seed and sowing it preferably in your veggie patch. This delicious unpopular veggie is also recognised as a common weed of the native grasslands. It has outstanding food value with the long parsnip like tap root being eaten (sweetish oyster like flavour) as a vegetable or roasted and broken down into a rich sweet, chocolate like powder ready to use as coffee substitute or sprinkled on ice-cream. The young shoots can be cooked and eaten like asparagus. Interesting enough the Latin meaning of the botanical name directly translates as "Goats Beard flower" with "leek like foliage" This certainly provides an excellent mental picture of the plant.

Plan to Plant the Plain Plantain

Many would link the name Plantain to a large cooking banana, but more significantly it also refers a series of fascinating herbaceous species found in the genus *Plantago*.

Within most open grassy and grassy woodland communities, both indigenous and introduced *Plantago* species can be discovered happily thriving amongst the inter-tussock spaces formed by both native and exotic grass species or sedge species.

From the little known *Plantaginaceae* Family the Plantain, commonly known as a troublesome lawn weed, is one of the commonest or plainest plants. In fact Ribwort, *Plantago lanceolata*, is known worldwide by kids as Soldiers Herb, since the flowering head shoots out as the lopped stem is pull rapidly over the head. It is also known as White Man's Footprints by the American Indians as the wagon trains of the American pioneers inadvertently carried the seed of the plant across western USA. Buckshorn Plantain *Plantago coronopus* is common in all poorly drained and compacted sites world wide. However, the genus has so many values that it deserves recognition beyond its plain status.

In our grassy woodlands and begging to be planted in your backyard bush tucker patch are a few rare endemic species; namely *Plantago*

paradoxa, *Plantago tasmanica* and *Plantago glabrata* along with the more common variable Plantain *Plantago varia*.

Specially adapted Plantains enjoy the colder alpine areas, and are worthy of trying in your patch purely for their superb foliage displays. These include Montane Plantain *Plantago antartica* and Tasmanian Alpine Plantain *Plantago daltonii*.

Phil Watson.

GOLDEN GUINEA TREE (*Dillenia alata*).

Greg Calvert.

Throughout the far north, along creeks, swamps and littoral rainforest, grows a most attractive tree. The Golden Guinea Tree (*Dillenia alata*) has a lush, attractive appearance that softens the harshest of landscapes.

Like the beautifully flowering Hibbertias, *D.alata* has an exquisite yellow flower with a red centre. The flowers last for only a day before the petals fall and litter the ground beneath the tree. This does make one somewhat less remorseful about plucking the petals off to eat, as did Aborigines throughout their range.

The yellow flowers give rise to a spectacular, bright red, star-shaped fruit. Within each arm of the star is contained several small black seeds, each enveloped with a soft white aril. This aril is edible with a taste reminiscent of coconut. Birds also enjoy these fruits and people who sleep in late rarely ever beat the birds to the delicacy.

Identification of the Golden Guinea Tree is particularly simple when the tree is flowering or fruiting. However, there are other features that make this tree distinctive at any time of the year. The leaves have a large 'wing' growing out the side of the petiole (leaf stem) and are the only species of tree I have ever seen with such an arrangement.

Of all the features of *Dillenia*, it is the bark for which it is best known. The bark is a bright, coppery red and peels off in thin sheets, finer than tissue paper. Artists who specialise in making 'bark pictures' by cutting and pasting different bark types to create a scene often seek this bark for its bright vivid colours.

Golden Guinea Tree is readily propagated from seed and makes an attractive addition to a tropical garden. Although the red flaky bark takes some years to develop, the plants flower and fruit in as little as two years.

It should be noted that this species loves wet feet; so if there is a corner of your garden that is poorly drained and difficult to grow plants in, then this is your tree!

(Reprinted from "The Native Gardener", Newsletter of SGAP Townsville Branch, June 2000.)

BUSH FOOD SPECIES FOR TEMPERATE AND COOL CLIMATES.

FRUITS:

Billardiera species (including *B.scandens*, *B.longiflora*): Generally known as Apple Berries, these are the small, soft, oval fruit of a number of scrambling twiners of dry forests and woodlands. While the flavour is variable, apple seems to be a common component, and the tiny black seeds are reminiscent of Kiwi Fruit. They seem to cope with a wide range of conditions, and some eg *B.cymosa* are quite decorative.

Podocarpus elatus: Illawarra Plum, Plum Pine, Brown Pine: A rainforest tree that, left untrimmed, can become quite large. Adaptable to a wide variety of conditions, it does require fairly good soil and moisture to bear well. Both male and female trees are needed to set fruit. The "fruit" is actually a swollen stem (similar to *Exocarpus*), and makes beautiful jam and savoury sauces and relishes, which are appearing more frequently in mainstream cuisine.

Rubus species (including *R.probus*, *R.parvifolius*, *R.moluccanus*): The native raspberries vary enormously in flavour, even within species, but when they are good, they are very, very good. This is one that would benefit enormously from selective breeding with a view to commercial production as well as the home gardener. Plants are similar to the scrambling prickly canes of the exotic raspberry, though the fruits are generally a brighter scarlet in colour.

Syzygium species (including *S.paniculatum*, *S.oleosum* and a host of others): Dwarf to large trees bearing small shiny fruit of varying flavour and texture. While frequently rather sour raw, Lillipillies make good sweet and savoury preserves. The trees are decorative, with vivid pink or coppery new growth, fluffy flowers and colourful fruit. Selected cultivars are useful as hedges, screens and topiary subjects.

Carpobrotus species (including *C.glaucescens*, *C.rossii*): Pigfaces or Beach Bananas are decorative useful groundcovers in dry, sandy situations, both coastal and inland. As a bonus, they produce a succulent 'salty banana/strawberry/fig tasting' fruit.

Tasmannia lanceolata: Mountain Pepper: A shrub or small tree of high altitudes, slow to establish and needing regular moisture. The dried berries are used as a condiment, and can really give exotic pepper stiff competition. Becoming more common in mainstream cuisine as well as specialty products.

LEAVES:

Tasmannia lanceolata: Dried leaves of Mountain Pepper are used in cooking.

Tetragonia tetragonioides: Warrigal Greens, New Zealand Spinach, Botany Bay Greens: The first Australian vegetable to be cultivated overseas, this is a hardy, prolific ground cover producing an abundance of crisp green arrow shaped leaves, which must be blanched before eating. Great for the home garden, and in demand at markets, and by restaurants. Grows easily from seeds and cuttings.

Apium prostratum: Sea Celery or Sea Parsley: A very popular herb with early sailors and colonists, it has a lot of potential, but has yet to make the mainstream. It likes sun and damp, and tolerates frost.

Prostanthera species (including *P.incisa*, *P.rotundifolia*): The Mint Bushes are fairly hardy shrubs with highly aromatic foliage containing essential oils. Great potential and some commercial interest, but more research needed.

SEEDS:

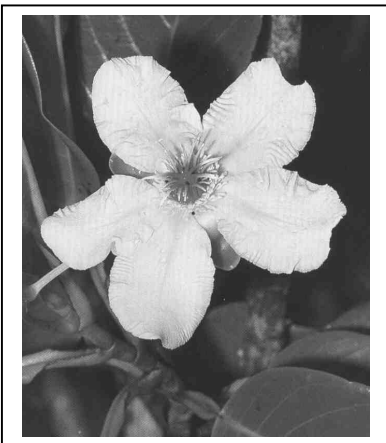
Acacia species (including *A.melanoxylon*, *A.sophorae*, *A.decurrens*): The seeds of many are edible, though much work is necessary to realise the commercial potential of most. Certain overseas countries have made greater use of edible *Acacia* seeds than mainstream Australia. Wattles, which may be small shrubs to large trees, have multiple roles in mixed plantings, and there is also medicinal potential in a number of species. There should be no difficulty finding a number of appropriate *Acacia* species in any climate, including those which experience heavy frosts.

Araucaria bidwillii: Bunya Pine grows into a very tall tree which produces excellent timber. The large starchy seeds, usually prepared by cooking, were an Aboriginal staple, eagerly adopted by European settlers, and eaten right up to the present.

TUBERS:

Microseris lanceolata: Yam Daisy, Murnong: Though a staple of Victorian Aborigines, the tubers of this small, dandelion-like herb are not much cultivated, in spite of having been identified early in the period of European settlement as a tasty vegetable.

Native Lilies and Orchids: While the small flowering plants of Vanilla, Chocolate, Fringed and Bulbine lilies among others and many ground orchids are beautiful additions to the home garden, their tubers are generally too small and too variable in taste to be a viable food crop. (Refer to Phil Watson's previous article on food plants of the grassy woodlands).



Dillenia alata