

# NEWSLETTER

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323 Philp Ave  
Frenchville  
Qld.  
30/5/2008

Dear Members and subscribers,

"Be careful what you wish for." After years of unfulfilled wishes for a "proper wet season", we were finally rewarded early this year. The Heavens opened, and the rain fell. The rivers filled, and Rockhampton's mighty Fitzroy flooded not once, but twice! However, it was not the double peaked six week flood that caused havoc (we're used to that, and it was pretty standard as Rocky floods go), but the two intervening downpours which proved too much for town drainage systems, blocked with debris after years of drought, to handle.

There was flash flooding in many suburbs, but the areas which suffered most were the new housing developments where the natural drainage lines had been piped and filled, and which are full of brick houses on cement slabs. The older style Queenslanders on their high bases survived virtually unscathed, as always. The other relevant factor I think, is the high proportion of paved ground (roads, paths, courtyards, house and garage slabs) which leaves little natural surface for the rainwater to soak into, and minimal gardens.

Unfortunately, in the aftermath, a large number of mature trees, both natives and exotics, have slowly turned up their toes and died or are dying from the top down. It appears that after so many years of adaptation to drought conditions, the prolonged waterlogging stressed the trees so much they were easy prey to a root fungus, which did not succumb to the various treatments tried. Among the casualties is our beautiful, 35 year old Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) which died slowly and painfully in spite of all our efforts to save it. The saddest thing is that, while there are lots of seedlings here and there in our garden, none appear to be in places where we'd want another largish tree, and we've had no luck in the past with transplanting seedlings, which don't react well to root disturbance of any sort. Still, we're trying.

On to happier things...

I currently smell good enough to eat, as I'm using some bath products called Yiyangu I was given for Christmas. They incorporate

Kakadu Plum (*Terminalia ferdinandii*) and Macadamia (*Macadamia ternifolia*). The 'blurb' refers to the high Vitamin C content, and the anti-oxident and hydrating qualities of the ingredients.

There's an interesting article by Frances Ingram in the September 2007 issue of "Australian Plants" on the Indigenous Food Plants of the ACT and Snowy Mountains. Now, I know some states (such as Qld) include this magazine as part of their annual subscription, and in others it is optional or a separate subscription, so I'm not sure how many of our readers would not have read it already. Therefore I've assumed that most have so have not reprinted it, but if this is not the case, perhaps you could drop me a line. It is a very comprehensive and well-researched document.

I recently purchased a copy of "Edible Wattle Seeds of Southern Australia" by Maslin, Thomson, McDonald and Hamilton-Brown, from the Queensland Region sale. Although published 10 years ago, it contains much detailed and useful information. It seems overseas countries are way ahead of us as far as utilising various species of *Acacia* are concerned.

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton SGAP.

E-mail: lenorelindsay@hotmail.com

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**EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:**

1/2/08: *Acronychia laevis*, *Bridelia leichhardtii* (fruits), *Callistemon polandii* (nectar), *Diospyros humilis*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Murraya ovatifoliolata* (fruits), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Phaius australis* (tubers), *Pouteria sericea* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds).

22/2/08: *Abelmoschus moschatus ssp tuberosus* (root, shoots, flowers), *Acacia bidwillii* (root), *A.salicina* (seeds), *Acronychia laevis*, *Alectryon tomentosus* (fruits), *Araucaria bidwillii* (seeds), *Arytera divaricata* (fruit), *Bowenia serrulata* (treated tuber & seeds), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seeds), *Callistemon polandii* (nectar), *Cissus reniformis* (fruit flesh), *Carissa ovata* (fruit), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* (fruit), *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Diospyros humilis*, *Drypetes deplanchii*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Euroschinus falcata* (fruit), *Ficus opposita* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Geijera paniculata* (medicinal), *Grewia latifolia* (fruit), *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (nectar, paperbark for cooking, medicinal laves), *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Murraya ovatifoliolata* (fruit), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Petalostigma pubescens* (medicinal), *Phaius australiensis* (tubers), *Pipturis argenteus*, *Planchonia careya*, *Podocarpus elatus*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *P.sericea*, *Psilotum nudum*,

*Psydrax odoratum*, *Rubus probus* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds), *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruit), *Trophis scandens* (arils).

28/3/08: *Banksia robur* (nectar), *Cassytha pubescens*, *Capparis canescens*, *Diospyros geminata* (fruits), *Eucalyptus crebra* (nectar), *Euroschinus falcata*, *Murraya ovatifoliolata*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Rubus probus*, *Terminalia porphyrocarpa* (fruit).

25/4/08: *Callistemon polandii* (nectar), *Orthosiphon aristatus* (medicinal), *Lysiana filifolia*, *L.maritima* (fruits). \_

23/5/08: \_: *Acacia salicifolia* (seed), *Capparis lucida*, *Diospyros geminata* (fruit), *Geijera salicifolia* (medicinal).

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### **EXCURSIONS:**

3/2/08: Cammoo Caves, Mt Etna National Park: *Acacia aulacocarpa*, *Clerodendrum floribundum*, *Erythrina vespertilio* (roots), *Alectryon subdentatus*, *Capparis arborea*, *Carissa ovata*, *Pittosporum spinescens*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Diospyros australis*, *D.geminata*, *D.fasciculosa*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Grewia latifolia*, *Lantana camara\**, *Mallotus discolor*, *Pipturis argenteus*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *Psydrax oleifolia*, *Rapanea variabilis*, *Siphonodon australis*, *Terminalia porphyrocarpa*, *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Smilax australis*, *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruits), *Ficus opposita*, *F.rubiginosa*, *F.virens* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Hibiscus heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Geijera parviflora* (medicinal), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds) *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Cayratia acris*, *Cissus oblonga*, *C.cardiophylla*, *C.reniformis* (fruit flesh), *Trophis scandens* (arils).

2/3/08: Bouldercombe Gorge: *Cayratia acris*, *Cissus oblonga*, *C.repens*, *C.reniformis*, *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruit flesh), *Euroschinus falcata*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Carissa ovata*, *Capparis arborea*, *Siphonodon australis*, *Terminalia porphyrocarpa*, *Diospyros australis*, *D.geminata*, *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Cassytha filiformis*, *C.pubescens*, *Planchonia careya*, *Syzygium australe*, *Rapanea variabilis*, *Aidia racemosa*, *Zizyphus mauritiana*, *Psychotria daphnoides*, *Psydrax odorata*, *Acronychia laevis*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Alectryon connatus*, *Arytera divaricata*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Pouteria cotinifolia*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *Smilax australis*, *S.glyciphylla*, *Grewia latifolia*, *Pipturis argenteus*, *Lantana camara\**, *Pittosporum spinescens*, *Eremophila debilis* (fruits), *Livistona decora?* ("cabbage"), *Emilia sonchifolia*, *Oxalis corniculata* (whole plant), *Sonchus oleraceus* (leaves), *Opuntia tomentosa* (fruit, pads), *Gahnia aspera* (seeds), *Dioscorea transversa*, *Erythrina vespertilio*, *Glycine tabacina*, *Acacia bidwillii*, *A.aulacocarpa* (roots), *Cycas media*, *Macrozamia miquellii* (treated seed), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Eustrephus latifolius* (tubers, arils), *Lomandra longifolia* (leaf bases, seeds), *Hibiscus heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Geijera salicifolia* (medicinal), *Sterculia quadrifida*, *Themeda australis*, *Acacia salicina* (seeds), *Brachychiton australis*, (seeds, roots, shoots, mucilage from wood), *Trophis scandens* (arils), *Ficus coronata*, *F.opposita*, *F.platypoda*, *F.racemosa*, *F.virens* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap),

*Corymbia intermedia*, *Eucalyptus crebra* (nectar), *C.citriodora*, *E.exserta* (nectar, leaves for flavouring & medicinal).

6/4/08: Gracemere Pasturage Reserve: *Melaleuca fluviatilis*, *M.leucadendron* (nectar, paperbark), *Hibiscus heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Marsilea hirsuta* (sporocarps), *Phragmites australis* (shoots, rhizomes), *Elaeocharis dulcis* (tubers), *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Carissa ovata*, *Nauclea orientalis* (fruit), *Ficus opposita*, *F.racemosa*, (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap).

4/5/08: Lakes Creek: *Acacia disparrima* (root), *A. salicina* (seed), *Avicennia maritima* (seeds), *Clerodendrum inerme*, *Cupaniopsis anacardiodes*, *Diospyros geminata*, *Euroschinus falcata*, *Nauclea orientalis*, *Planchonia careya*, *Pleiogynum timorense*, *Terminalia porphyrocarpa* (fruits), *Ficus opposita*, *F.platypoda*, *F.racemosa*, *F.virens* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Melaleuca fluviatilis*, *M.leucadendron* (nectar, paperbark), *Hibiscus heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Marsilea hirsuta* (sporocarps), *Phragmites australis* (shoots, rhizomes), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds), *Livistona decipiens* ("cabbage").

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## **THE BLACK OLIVE'S LEMON FISH**

Preparation:

A whole fish eg barramundi

Stuff the body cavity with crushed lemon aspen, desert lime and river mint, topped with a couple of slices of lemon.

On the upper skin surface place lemon myrtle leaves, slices of lemon, and bruised lemon grass.

Drizzle with macadamia oil.

Wrap in damp paperbark and tie like a parcel with string.

Cook:

Traditional method: Bury in hot sand and ashes.

Modern: Wrap paperbark parcel in alfoil and bake for 30-40 minutes in an oven set at 180°C.

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## **DETAILS OF THE MOST PROMISING SPECIES OF EDIBLE WATTLE SEEDS OF SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA** (Maslin, Thomson, McDonald & Hamilton-Brown)

*Acacia victoriae* and *A.murrayana* appear particularly promising for production of human food in southern Australia. The seeds of both species have good nutritional characteristics and were commonly used as food by Aborigines.

Wild populations have wide adaptability, grow rapidly, and produce moderate to heavy seed crops in most years. Both species are easily propagated from seed and plantations can be established by direct seeding. Over-mature, declining stands may be regenerated by coppicing and/or shallow ripping to induce suckering. *Acacia victoriae* is currently the most important species of *Acacia* in the Australian bushfood industry.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Vic Cherikoff Food Services Pty Ltd  
Rear 167 Kingsgrove Rd.,  
Kingsgrove. NSW 2208.  
20 Feb. 2008.

Dear Lenore,

Whenever you get to put together another newsletter, could you mention that I'm still after tonnage of round limes, even if it has to come in by the handful.

There's lots happening in the export of Australian foods and as calls are made to growers and others it is quite apparent that there are some really strange goings on in the Australian food industry. There are many tales of growers and wild harvesters throwing away fruit or even cutting down producing trees because they couldn't find a market for the produce. It seems a case of 'grow or harvest it and they will buy' being proved as dumb as the 'build it and they will come' belief from the movies.

Surely a smart business person would identify a strategic partner who can market the expected crop and find a few markets and then produce for this existing demand. Investing in growth is less risky if strategic partnerships are established between suppliers and marketers so that serious growth can be planned in collaboration and executed with minimum downside. I'd welcome approaches by such thinking growers as the native food industry is poised for a significant growth spurt and opportunities abound.

It's a big market out there and I'd love to talk to some big thinkers.

Cheers,  
Vic.

<vic@cherikoff.net>

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## BUSH TOMATO AND PEPPERBERRY DIP

Mix together until smooth:

- 300ml sour cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- dash of tabasco sauce
- 1 teaspoon mountain pepper or ½ teaspoon pepperberries
- 2 tablespoons bush tomatoes

Make at least a day ahead. Keeps for a week in the fridge and freezes well.

(From Bev Leggett)

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## VALUE THE ELDERS

The products of the elder or elderberry, *Sambucus* spp., have been used for centuries. There are many varieties, both exotic and native, but only a few are commonly cultivated.

These include the European or Black Elder from temperate Europe (*Sambucus nigra*), naturalised in many parts of southern Australia, the American or Golden Elder (*S.canadensis*) from Canada and eastern USA and the Blueberry Elder (*S.caerulea*) from north-west USA.

Australian native species with edible fruit are the yellow-berried *Sambucus australasica* and the white-fruited *S.gaudichaudiana*. Barung Landcare Nursery <barung@sun.big.net.au> had plants for sale a couple of years ago and may still carry them, and Brush Turkey Enterprises [brushturkey@myplace.net.au](mailto:brushturkey@myplace.net.au) had seed. Look in any specialist bush tucker nurseries for stock.

Once established, plants may be propagated by softwood cuttings taken in spring, or from suckers. While generally pretty tolerant, elderberries do best in temperate to sub-tropical areas with humus-rich soil and plenty of moisture. They are cold tolerant, and the White Elder in particular prefers a fairly shady situation.

There are many uses for various parts of the Eldertree. The large creamy white bunches of flowers or cymes were traditionally used for Elderflower champagne or wine. Flowers may also be lightly battered and fried as fritters, added to pikelets, placed in a muslin bag and cooked with apples and pears, made into sorbet or added to vinegar.

The flowers were widely used for toilet water, lotions and ointments, and were dried for potpourri and sleep pillows. A tea made from elderflowers and a mint leaf was recommended for influenza. The muscatel scented flowers attract bees and result in excellent honey.

Harvest elderberries by cutting the heads and raking the berries into a container with a fork, or freeze and then shake off. They were made into wine or jellies, either alone or in combination such as with blackcurrants or apples .

Berry juice was used to treat colic and as a laxative, and dyes may be made from crushed berries boiled with soft water. Different mordants will give different shades in the blue/grey/purple range.

Leaves are traditionally an insect repellent - in the house and garden, or as an infusion dabbed on the skin. A poultice of warmed leaves relieved bruises, sprains and chilblains.

As the pith is easily removed from twigs and small branches with a straight wire, it is a traditional source of material for musical instruments such as flutes and whistles.

I drank a commercially produced Elderflower Champagne in Tasmania a couple of years ago, and it had a subtle, delicate perfume and taste, and a slightly fizzy 'nose'. The alcohol content is low.

### **Elderflower Champagne:**

6-8 elderflower heads  
2 lemons sliced  
2 tbsp cider vinegar  
700g white sugar  
4.5 litres boiled water

Place flower heads and lemons in a clean plastic bucket.  
Add water and cover with a clean cloth.  
Leave to soak 24-36 hours, then strain through cotton sheeting.  
Add sugar and vinegar and stir till dissolved.  
Pour into screw-top bottles, leaving the tops loose for 14 days to allow excess gas to escape.  
May be drunk after 4 weeks.

### **Elderflower Wine:**

600 ml flower heads, removed from stalks and washed  
350g honey  
120 ml strong black tea cooled and strained (for tannin)  
10g wine yeast  
½ tsp yeast nutrient  
4.5 litres boiled water  
juice of 2 lemons

Heat honey in 600 ml of the water and allow to cool.  
Place flowers in a clean plastic bucket with the honey water, lemon juice, cold tea, yeast nutrient and rest of water.  
Start the yeast then add to the bucket.  
Stir well, cover and leave in a warm place for 10 days.  
Stir twice daily.  
Strain, decant and store for at least 6 months.

### **Elderberry Wine:**

8 cups destalked elderberries  
16 cups water  
1 cup minced raisins  
7 cups white sugar

Boil berries in water for 20 minutes.  
Strain into a clean bucket.  
Add sugar and raisins.  
Cover and allow to ferment for 2 weeks.  
Strain into fermentation jars with airlocks.  
Bottle when all bubbling has stopped.  
Allow to mature for a year.

There are lots of variations of these traditional recipes, as you would expect, but experimentation is fun if you have a supply of accurately identified flowers or fruit available. Just remember to keep records for every batch. There is nothing worse than producing a winner and not being able to remember how you did it!

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## SOME RANDOM RECIPE IDEAS FROM ALL OVER:

Midyim (*Gossia dulcis* syn *Austromyrtus dulcis*) and apple strudel.  
Cooked Bunya Nuts (*Araucaria bidwillii*) rolled in white chocolate.  
Omelet filling of chopped blanched Warrigul Greens (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*), chopped bacon and Tasmanian Pepper (*Tasmannia* sp).  
Chopped blanched Warrigul Greens and sour cream as a filling for steamed ricepaper wraps or canneloni.  
Savoury Riberry (*Syzygium luehmanii*) sauce with roast or grilled pork.  
Dianella (*Dianella caerulea*, *D.attraxis*) and apple jelly (saves dealing with the Dianella seeds, sets well and the colour astounds people).  
Peach Melba with Native Raspberries (*Rubus probus* or others).  
Lightly cooked Native Raspberries added to red jelly.  
Davidson Plum (*Davidsonia* sp) pie with vanilla icecream and/or thick cream.  
Tea with Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) leaves.  
Midyim (*Gossia dulcis*) and apple muffins.  
Bunya nut rissoles.  
Macadamia cream pie.  
Tossed green salad with blanched Warrigul Greens, Milk Thistle, Pigweed, Purple Emily, Native Violets and a dressing of Macadamia oil and cider vinegar.

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## MURRI MAGIC

Rocky SGAP's November meeting was enlivened by a visit from Eddie Currie and Phill Blake of Murri Magic. This is a business specialising in Indigenous products - bush tucker produce and manufactures, plants, arts and crafts and dance.

Based in Yeppoon, Eddie was the winner of the Nescafe Big Break in 2005, and his business operates at local markets, selected outlets and on line at [www.murrimagic.com.au](http://www.murrimagic.com.au)

A tempting array of jars and bottles was laid out for sampling, a colourful array of pamphlets and information sheets spread for our perusal, and a selection of plants displayed.

After an interesting rundown on the various items, we were given the opportunity to taste many of the sauces and spreads. These included Smoky Mountain BBQ Pepperberry, Gidneywallum (Illawarra Plum), Akadjura (Bush Tomato), Quandong in a Bottle, Pepperberried Apple and Chuck it on your Chook sweet and sour style sauces; Quandong, Burdekin Plum, and Lilli Pilli and Chilli jams, Bush Tomato spread and Bush Lemon and Honey.

As well, there was a range of herbs and spices, dried fruits, nuts and seed meal, oils, syrups and juices, and the medicinal dried Gumbi Gumbi leaf.

There was much lively discussion and many questions, as we sipped and sampled, and eventually decided on our purchases.

All together, this proved a most informative and very lively conclusion to our year's meeting programme, and we thank Eddie and Phill for their effort.

**BOOK REVIEW: *Adnyamathanha and beyond - useful plants of an ancient land.* By Neville Bonney.**

Published by APS (South Australia) 2007; 100 pages, soft cover, colour illustrations. Reviewed by Trevor Blake for APS Victoria's "Growing Australian" magazine.

This is a most attractive book which deals with the native peoples of the northern Flinders Ranges of SA, and their adaptation to the plants available as foods, medicines, implements and weapons.

It delves into the surges of contact with the Europeans as the expansion of the colonies consumed more land for practices that we are now regretting, and yet at the time were the only ways that the settlers knew for survival.

Neville Bonney, in producing this book, has assisted the Aboriginal people of this region in their bid to keep alive the traditions of the Adnyamathanha culture. By recognising the worth of the profound depth of knowledge accumulated over vast generations, not only is the understanding of plant material passed on to modern generations, but it is also a record of the way these people interacted with their environment, which at times could be very harsh indeed.

Neville was given the opportunity to work with the communities of the area to produce this book as a record that would serve as a reinforcement of experiences of visitors, as well as documenting the role plant material played in their lives.

In a somewhat subjective way he discusses the white man's arrival, the explorations, historical changes and the insensitive ways that the Udnya (local native inhabitants) were treated and their knowledge ignored - a typical response to so many native cultures worldwide.

To these original inhabitants the knowledge of plants has been passed down from the 'Dreaming' and, as we have discovered, many existing species are in the fossil record. The usage of plant material has been extended over the generations and the knowledge has been shared with white settlers and academics, as too was land management through fire etc, and over the years recorded in publications.

The useful plants are recorded in detail in chapters on Trees, Small Trees, Grasses, Sedges & Reeds, Scrambling & Twining Plants, Large Plants, and Small Plants & Lilies. There is plenty of good pictorial information and the species are treated in the broadest sense outlining how the plant can be utilised in every way. The native and botanical names are given, and the preparation and the use is explained. It is interesting to note that species with a breadth of uses can be regarded as sacred and attract a number of separate names to denote the different uses.

It is obvious that Neville has worked closely with the Adnyamathanha people in the preparation of this book, and also that he has taken pains to research widely on early contacts the white people had with this Aboriginal community. He includes some of the early

illustrations of artifacts and records a number of portraits of earlier inhabitants who passed the knowledge down.

A comprehensive chart of the plant species, their native names, part of plant utilised, notes and page reference numbers is a really worthwhile addition. The response from the Aboriginal elders is an enthusiastic blessing for this publication, as they are proud to have another recording of their culture and language that is contained in this permanent form.

A most interesting book that will give a lot more than just the plant ID to visitors to the Flinders Ranges. It adds to the library of publications on this subject such as Peter Latz's 'Bushfires & Bushtucker', IAD Press's 'Punu - Yankunytjatjara Plant Use' on Central Australia, 'Rirratjinu Ethnobotany - Aboriginal Plant Use from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land' and the recent addition, 'Aboriginal People and their Plants' by Peter Clarke.

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**BOOK REVIEW: "Mitakoodi Bush Tucker - Edible and medicinal plants of the northwest highlands and gulf plains of Queensland" by Margaret Ah Sam.**

This small (40 pages) beautifully presented soft covered book published by Black Ink Press in Thuringowa with the Mitakoodi Juhnjar Corporation is a useful and affordable (\$25 including postage) addition to the bush food library.

The geographical area covered has been largely neglected by writers in this field to date, so this book fills a gap. Plants are divided into groups according to shared characteristics, such as Trees with Fruit and Seeds, Trees with Galls, Trees with Gum, Trees with Grubs, Trees with Manna and Honey, Grasses and Water Plants, Vines and Yams, and Small Bushes. There are also sections on Useful Trees, Medicines found in Water, Notes on Mitakoodi Language and Notes on Nutritional Values. The biographical information about the author adds to the reader's interest.

The text is clear, simple and conversational, and could be easily understood by school-aged children. There are multiple coloured photographs on each page showing different parts of plants and growth habits.

Each plant is given a common name and a Mitakoodi name. Unfortunately, and this is the major weakness of an otherwise excellent publication, a number of the plants are not identified by scientific name, which limits its usefulness. There are also some plants mentioned but not illustrated, and as the photos are not captioned, it is sometimes rather difficult to be certain which plant is pictured.

Nevertheless, this would be a useful addition to a school library, or an easy introduction to the subject of Aboriginal Use of Plants of the Dry Tropics.

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## Follow-up on Long Stem Planting:

Long stem tube stock is a tree or under-story shrub grown in the same standard 50 mm square forestry tube used in the growing of standard tube stock, but grown to a length of a metre or more. The root ball is therefore small enough to be inserted into a deep, narrow hole so that about three quarters of its length is below the soil surface.

A special fertiliser regime with particular emphasis on trace elements and significantly high levels of N.P.K. fertiliser ensures the plants grow to the required size with an ideal, undistorted root structure.

While originally developed by Bill Hicks to provide an alternative to willows in riparian revegetation programmes, providing the same deep anchorage, there are many additional advantages.

The roots are planted below the hot, dry surface strata which is so often damaging to shallow planted standard tube stock. This also protects the roots from frost in winter, allowing the plant to re-shoot in spring, and puts the root system below the area of weed competition.

Having been extensively and successfully trialled in the Hunter Region, Long Stems are now being used for arid region plantings, revegetation of saline areas, sand dune stabilisation and rehabilitation of degraded rainforests in regions all over Australia. While developed using Australian natives, the system is equally applicable to regions outside Australia, using plants indigenous to those areas.

We in Rockhampton have just begun experimenting with this technique. We have no specially grown tube stock at our disposal yet, but we do have many plants that have stayed too long in pots and grown tall and leggy.

Half of the plants used in the last re-veg weekend on North Keppel Island were deep planted according to the Hicks model in holes dug with a hand auger. It was noticed that the root balls were then planted in damp, rather than dry, sandy soil, even before watering in, and well below the depth of the grass and weed roots. As the survival rate of conventional plantings here is not high, this definitely holds out more hope.

With the forced local council amalgamations last year, and subsequent administrative turmoil, it is a welcome relief to finally have people at the Kershaw Gardens who are allowed to make decisions, even if they have no money to work with. This has translated into a huge clean and revamp of the nursery, which is to be the only propagation site in town. (The fate of the other regional gardens and nurseries is still unclear). In the process, a large number of neglected and overgrown plants still in pots have been discovered. The SGAP/Friends volunteers have salvaged the natives, and are working towards getting them actually planted into the ground using the long stem model, possibly in an experimental area so we can more easily monitor their progress.

This system promises much better planting results than at present, so we are quite excited about the possibilities.

### Some Sheather Bits on Myoporums:

When you are obsessed with growing natives and you propagate the majority of your plants, then it does not take long to build up a backlog of tube stock. To reduce the number of plants patiently waiting to be planted we have started to place pieces of various species in planting holes and allowing them to strike in situ. Of course, this system only works with plants that strike easily.

*Myoporum parvifolium*, Creeping Boobialla, has been very successful using this method. Creeping Boobialla develops into a dense, ground covering mat and comes in a range of foliage colours and shapes. White is the usual flower colour but we also have an attractive pink flowering form. Fleshy edible fruits follow the flowers and Skinks and Crimson Rosellas are partial to them.

We usually place two plants in each hole and in every third or fourth hole a piece of *Myoporum* is planted as well. These pieces are about 15 cm long with the leaves stripped off the lower half. We keep the cuttings well watered and usually achieve a 70% strike rate.

*Myoporum debile* is now known as *Eremophila debilis*. This Emu Bush is widely distributed in New South Wales and is also found in Queensland and New Zealand. *Eremophila debilis* is known as Winter Apple or Amulla. Winter Apple is a glabrous spreading ground cover with long, narrow, toothed leaves. The population west of Armidale grows in an Ironbark forest and has attractive mauve flowers that appear in spring and summer. Five petals are united to form a small tube. The fleshy edible fruits ripen to a reddish purple colour and resemble small apples (hence one of the common names). Foliage, flowers and fruits are all attractive features. We have introduced *Eremophila debilis* into our garden and have found it to be hardy and free flowering. The species propagates rapidly from cuttings.

Warren and Gloria Sheather.

(Reprinted from "Native Plants for New South Wales" April 2003.)

# The common name of *E.debilis* here in CQ is Dibble Dibble, and the fruit tends to be cream flushed with pink or purple. It occurs in grassland and open eucalypt woodlands. (Ed.)

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### Grass Trees from Seed - slow but satisfying.

Lorraine Deppler, the proprietor of The Bush-House Nursery, has been experimenting and growing *Xanthorrhoea* or Grass Trees from seed. These are slow-growing plants, taking around 5 years to flower, and another 5 to begin forming a trunk.

As the widespread practice of removal of established plants for landscaping seems to involve a high casualty rate, growing from seed appears to be a far preferable method.

While the initial technique is commonplace - sowing seed in trays and pricking out into deep native tubes, the secret is to do this as soon as the first shoot is about 2cm high. Then, as soon as the roots begin to show at the bottom of the tube, regardless of the number or sparseness of the leaf spikes, the plant is placed in the ground.

It is most important that the roots not be disturbed or damaged in any way, particularly the fat, paler, fleshy ones. If necessary, cut or break the pot to remove the plant cleanly, and plant immediately in prepared ground.

A sunny or partly shaded spot in well-drained soil is needed, and occasional supplementary watering during the first year or so. Apart from this, leave the plant completely undisturbed.

Your Grass Tree will spend the next couple of years building its root system, with little to show above ground. Then the leaves will begin to grow and multiply, and eventually, in a few more years, a flower spike will appear.

It is possible to grow your plant to flowering stage in a pot, as long as a sufficiently large, deep container is chosen, and great care taken to avoid root damage when potting on. A low-phosphorus, slow release fertiliser needs to be added to the potting mix.

This is definitely a situation where patience is a virtue, but you will eventually be rewarded by a spike of nectar-laden blossom.

Lorraine may be contacted at [bushhousenursery@yahoo.com.au](mailto:bushhousenursery@yahoo.com.au)

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So apart from its stunning visual impact as a landscape component, what is edible and/or useful about Grass Trees or *Xanthorrhoeas*?

The Aborigines all over Australia found them very useful plants, yielding edible starch, nectar and shoots, grubs, gum or resin, and firesticks and spear shafts.

The growing shoot, and in some species the roots, were harvested for their starch content, which can be as high as 41% carbohydrate. Unfortunately, this kills the plant, so taking the pith is not nowadays recommended. There was actually a patent granted in the 1870's for a process that extracted a sweet syrup from Grass Tree cores which could be used to produce crystal sugar. Fortunately it never reached commercial production. If the small leaves in the centre of the rosette can be pulled, the white bases may be nibbled, though the flavour is very variable.

The many small white to yellow flowers are borne on long woody spikes. As they are largely animal pollinated, they produce copious amounts of nectar, which the Aborigines relished. Flower spikes could be sucked like lolly pops, or soaked in water to make a sweet drink. In some districts the nectar was fermented into an alcoholic brew.

The resin of Grass Trees or Black Boys was heated and used as glue. It is often found in globules around the bases of trees that have been affected by fire.

The straight, light flower stalks made good spear shafts when dry, and were perfect for firesticks.

Wood grubs found in the trunks were an added bonus from this extremely useful plant.

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**Abelmoschus moschatus ssp tuberosus**

Formerly *Hibiscus rhodopetalus*, the Creeping Hibiscus or Native Rosella belongs to the family Malvaceae. Its Latin name refers to the musky smell of the seeds and to the tuberous root.

It is a prostrate plant with soft, hairy, creeping stems and rough-textured, hairy, alternate leaves, 5-8cm by 4-6cm, with serrated margins. Leaf shape is variable and may be ovate, heart-shaped or deeply 3-5 lobed.

The stems die back in the winter dry season to an underground tuber, with new growth usually appearing again with the summer rains. In cultivation, the tubers should be kept dry while dormant.

Beautiful hibiscus-like flowers, up to 12cm across, are produced during the wet season. The common colour form in Queensland is a deep water-melon pink or pinkish red, but there is a white or yellow form with a red or maroon centre which is more often found in the Northern Territory. Like all hibiscus, flowers only last for a day, but are replaced daily too.

The woody fruiting capsules are dark grey to black when ripe and contain several small seeds. The capsules are about 2cm long and covered in bristly hairs.

*Abelmoschus moschatus ssp tuberosus* is found in open forests and woodlands amongst annual grasses on a wide range of soils in coastal Queensland, across northern Australia and into Papua New Guinea.

It makes a useful and decorative rockery plant in tropical and subtropical areas as far south as Coff's Harbour, and may be grown as a glasshouse plant further south.

Propagation can be from seed or stem cuttings, or from tubers lifted during the dormant period. Seed germination usually occurs in mid-summer.

We have had success at the Kershaw Gardens propagating large numbers of plants from seed. Most of these are destined for the rockery at the back of Thozet's Walk or "SGAP Hill", which is visible from the Bruce Highway.

*A.moschatus ssp tuberosus* is related to the edible Okra, *A.esculentus*, and the leaves, shoots and roots were eaten raw or cooked by the Aborigines. (Thanks to Jan Sked for botanical information).

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