

# NEWSLETTER

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323 Philp Ave  
Frenchville  
Qld. 4701

12/12/2010

Dear Members and subscribers,

Once again I have to begin by apologising - this time to our Leader-in-waiting, Jan Lee, for the gender confusion earlier. I confused the Lee family email address (janken for Jan and Ken) with the name of a Dutch schoolmate (Janken) and made what proved to be an incorrect assumption. Our Jan is female.

For both Rockhampton SGAP and myself, for various reasons, the second part of this year has turned into rather a muddle, albeit a busy one. I have been away for quite a bit, and the group has found community commitments, peer group support, and similar calls on time have meant that the regular monthly programme has had to be modified to fit everything in. Even the weather has played its part.

As usual, some of our members travelled to Gladstone to assist Gladstone SGAP at the Eco-Fest held in Tondoon Botanic Gardens. Their stand featured talks, plant and book sales, and various displays, including bush food.

Then, on the long weekend of the Queen's Birthday holiday, we travelled to Monto at the invitation of Monto Landcare Group, to assist them at the Monto Show, and to explore some of the surrounding countryside. In their large display area, Landcare members were selling snacks of teas and coffee, wattleseed scones and delicious jams made from Alan Knight's bush fruits, and as part of the entertainment programme, I gave a presentation on bush food plants.

On the Sunday, the combined groups met up with Dr Bill McDonald of the Queensland Herbarium to visit Hurdle Gully, a botanically diverse and very interesting area, and on Monday, I finally got to visit Alan Knight's property at Mungungo to have a good look round his extensive bush food plantings.

The next week Col and I left on our long-planned expedition to see Lake Eyre with water in. We succeeded, but in the process, managed to see an awful lot of water we hadn't expected to. However, in spite of

all the mud and slush, closed tracks and rushing torrents, we also managed to see the Dig Tree surrounded by a carpet of Nardoo growing beside the Cooper Creek. We saw many other interesting plants and places as well, but that was the bush food highlight.

While we were away, the Rocky group was liaising with the Queensland Naturalists' Club whose annual study camp this year was based at Byfield. Some members attended the full 10 days, others merely visited for a day or a few hours, or joined an excursion. This event replaced the regular SGAP meeting for July.

On our return, we found that the cold and wet had resulted in a bumper crop of Native Raspberries (*Rubus probus*). While much of the fruit had been eaten by birds or lay rotting on the ground, the bushes continued to bear for months, and at the beginning of December (after the coolest November on record) there were still raspberries on the bushes next to ripe fruit on a Lillipilly (*Syzygium australe*).

At the end of September Ann McHugh and I travelled to Brisbane and thence to Jacob's Well on the Gold Coast to attend the Queensland SGAP Conference at the Jacob's Well Environmental Education Centre, where Glenn Leiper (author of "Mutooroo") was in his final year as principal.

The old Jacob's Well State School is the nucleus of the centre, and the totally native gardens are magnificent. Part of the grounds are dedicated to a large bush tucker garden, which was somewhat overgrown. (Of course, the fact that it rained most of the time probably influenced this state of affairs.) The week of the Conference was a mixture of talks, workshops and guided excursions.

Ann and I had been invited to present a series of bushfood cooking workshops, and had spent months preparing, since it all had to be done from a distance. We had to balance interest, taste, variety, ability to be eaten in the hand, availability of ingredients, ease of preparation, short cooking time, and an unknown kitchen. In the end, we decided on these recipes: wattleseed beverage and shortbread, raspberry and lillipilly muffins, lemon myrtle cake and quiche. We ran 2 sessions, and each session the participants made 2 of the basic recipes with individual variations on each one.

The grounds from the wattleseed drink, which everyone sampled, were saved and used in the shortbread. We made native raspberry muffins, lillipilly muffins and raspberry and lillipilly muffins. The lemon myrtle cakes were flavoured by lining the pan with fresh bruised leaves, but some of the syrups poured over the hot cake were made with fresh leaves, and another with ground dried leaves. Three variations of the quiche slice were made with differing ingredients. All contained warrigal greens, and one of the tastiest incorporated ground bunya nuts. There was much fun and laughter, and plenty of food for supper, and even leftovers for morning and afternoon tea the next day. Needless to say, Ann and I heaved huge sighs of relief on Wednesday night, and were so grateful to Jan Glazebrook for organising the bulk of the ingredients and equipment and having them ready.

The post-conference trip to Stradbroke Island was wonderful. We stayed at the University of Queensland Marine Research Centre and visited a number of botanically interesting sites. The highlight was

seeing both *Phaius australis* and *Phaius bernaysii* growing side by side and flowering in the wild only a few metres from the main road. While the pseudobulbs are edible, I don't think anyone would ever willingly destroy such a beautiful orchid to eat it unless they really were desperate.



*Phaius  
australis*

By roadside

Photos by A.McHugh

*Phaius  
bernaysii*

Potted plant



However, we did get to sample some bush foods, notably the Leafless Currant Bush (*Leptomeria acidula*) which was fruiting profusely along a sandy track. The sour juicy little fruits were most refreshing and very much to my taste.

*Leptomeria acidula*

Photo A.McHugh

While we have continued working very happily in the nursery at Kershaw Gardens, and trying to look after a couple of special habitat areas, the gardens as a whole are looking very bare, as they have been very heavily pruned and cleared in response to RRC's public safety policy. Many species have completely disappeared, and the area looks less like a botanic garden and more like a sparsely planted open park. We have a nursery full of plants ready to go into the ground, but can't seem to move forward. After having visited Redland Shire's Indigiscapes during the Queensland Conference and seen their wonderful demonstration gardens, Rockhampton Council's attitude is quite disappointing by comparison. Nevertheless, hope springs eternal.

The weather has remained wet and uncharacteristically cool, with even more rain predicted. Dorothea Mackellar certainly had it right when she described Australia as a land of "droughts and flooding rains". It looks like we're in for a wet Christmas.

So, the compliments of the Season to you all from us here in Rockhampton, and best wishes for the coming year.

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton SGAP.

E-mail: lenorelindsay@hotmail.com

**EDIBLE SPECIMENS FROM MEMBERS' GARDENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:**

28/5/10: *Acronychia laevis*, *Alectryon tomentosus*, *Arytera divaricata* (fruit), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seed), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Dodonaea viscosa* (hop substitute), *Grevillea "Billy Bonkers"*, *G."Ivory Whip"*, *G.wickhamii*, another unknown *Grevillea* cultivar (nectar), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Viola hederacea* (flowers).

25/6/10: *Acacia disparrima* (root), *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides* (fruit), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Dodonaea viscosa* (hop substitute), *Ficus opposita* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Banksia integrifolia*, *Grevillea wickhamii*, *G."Billy Bonkers"*, *G."Ivory Whip"*, *G.'Robyn Gordon"*, *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar).

23/7/10: No regular meeting. Informal gathering at Byfield with members of the Queensland Naturalists' Club on their annual field study camp.

27/8/10: *Acacia fimbriata* (seed), *Arytera divaricata* (fruit), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seed), *Dianella caerulea* (2 forms) (fruit), *Diospyros geminata*, *D.humilus* (fruit), *Dodonaea viscosa* (hop substitute), *Eugenia jambos*, *E.reinwardtiana*, *Euroschinus falcatus* (fruit), *Grevillea banksii fosteri*, *G.wickhamii*, *G."Billy Bonkers"*, *G."Candelabra"*, *G."Ivory Whip"*, *G."Lollipop"*, *G."Pink Ice"*, *G."Sprite King"* (nectar), *Leptospermum polygalifolium* (leaves as tea), *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Rubus probus* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed), *Syzygium luehmannii*, *S."Cascade"* (fruit), *Viola betonicifolia*, *V.hederacea* (flowers).

24/9/10: *Bridelia leichhardtii* (fruit), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seed), *Cassia brewsteri* (edible gum from seeds), *Diospyros geminata*, *D.humilus* (fruit), *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Euroschinus falcatus* (fruit), *Grevillea banksii*, *G.baileyana*, *G.venusta*, *G.wickhamii*, *G."Lollipop"*, *G."Pink Ice"*, *Lysiphyllum hookeri* (nectar), *Hibiscus divaricatus*, *G.heterophyllum*, (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Lomandra confertifolia*, *L.multiflora*, *L.hystrix* (leaf bases), *Petalostigma pubescens* (medicinal), *Phaius australis* (pseudobulbs), *Syzygium australe*, *S."Cascade"* (fruit).

22/10/10: *Arytera divaricata* (fruit), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seed), *Backhousia citriodora* (leaves), *Dianella caerulea*, *Eremophila debilis*, *Euroschinus falcatus* (fruit), *Ficus opposita* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Grevillea banksii*, *G.baileyana* (nectar), *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *P.sericea*, *Psydrax odorata*, *Syzygium fibrosum* (fruit), *Terminalia porphyrocarpa* (fruit, seed kernel).

26/11/10: *Arytera divaricata* (fruit), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seed), *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Diospyros humilus*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Euroschinus falcatus* (fruit), *Grevillea banksii fosteri*, *G."Billy Bonkers"*, *G."Ivory Whip"* (nectar), *Lomandra longifolia* (leaf bases), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Phaius australis* (pseudobulbs), *Pipturis argenteus*, *Psydrax odoratum* (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed), *Syzygium "Captain Cook"*, *S.wilsonii*, leaves & large fruit of a *Syzygium* sp., *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruit), *Viola hederacea* (flowers).

## EXCURSIONS:

6/6/10: Tondoon Eco-Fest with Gladstone SGAP.

12,13,14/6/10: Monto with Monto Landcare Group. (See editor's letter).

4/7/10: Kershaw Gardens rainforest: *Elaeocarpus angustifolius* (fruit), *Ficus racemosa*, *F. opposita*, *F. rubiginosa*, *F. virens*, *F. watkinsiana* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Alpinia caerulea* (fruit, roots), *Backhousia citriodora* (leaves).

23/7/10: Shoalwater Bay with Qld Nats.

1/8/10: Mt Wheeler: *Corymbia* spp. (nectar), *Eucalyptus exserta* (nectar, medicinal leaves), *Lomandra multiflora* (leaf bases), *Melaleuca hemisticta* (previously *Callistemon polandii* Mt Wheeler) (nectar), *Rubus moluccanus* (fruit), *Alpinia caerulea* (fruit, roots).

5/9/10: Cocoanut Point section of Capricorn Coast NP with Emu Park Community Bush Care Group: *Acronychia imperforata*, *A. laevis*, *Alectryon connatus*, *Arytera divaricata*, *Carissa ovata*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Mallotus discolor*, *Euroschinus falcata*, *Lantana camara*\*, *Planchonia careya*, *Pouteria sericea*, *Psychotria daphnoides* (fruits), *Ficus* sp. (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Geijera salicifolia*, *Petalostigma trilocularis* (medicinal), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage"), *Cissus opaca* (fruit, roots), *Passiflora suberosa*\* (fruit), *Eustrephus latifolius* (root, aril), *Trophis scandens* (arils), *Emilia sonchifolia* (whole plant), *Lomandra hystrix* (leaf bases), *Gahnia aspera* (seeds), 2 *Amyema* species (fruit), *Opuntia stricta* (fruit, leaf "pads").

3/10/10: Prior Park, Bajool: *Acronychia laevis*, *Arytera divaricata*, *Alectryon subdentatus*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Psychotria daphnoides* (fruit), *Dioscorea transversa* (root).

7/11/10: Big Dune Surfing Reserve with Capricorn Branch of the Surfriders Foundation: *Acacia disparrima* (root), *Acronychia imperforata*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Alectryon connatus*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Arytera divaricata*, *Diospyros geminata*, *Drypetes deplanchei*, *Euroschinus falcate*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Planchonia careya*, *Pouteria sericea*, *Psychotria daphnoides*, *Rapanea variabilis* (fruits), *Carpobrotus glaucescens* (fruit, leaves), *Ficus opposita*, *F. rubiginosa* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Dodonaea viscosa* (hop substitute), *Ipomea pes-caprae*, *Vigna marina* (roots), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed), *Melaleuca dealbata* (nectar, bark for cooking and other purposes), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage"), *Pandanus tectorius* (leaf bases, fruit, seed).

5/12/10: Christmas BYO barbecue lunch on Mt Archer summit: Road partly closed after heavy rain, and walking tracks dangerous. Heavy weed infestation. *Rubus parvifolius*, *R. probus* (fruit), *Corymbia intermedia* (nectar), *Xanthorrhoea latifolia* (leaf bases, growing tip), *Wahlenbergia gracilis* (flowers), *Cycas ophiolitica* (seeds after extensive preparation), *Pteridium esculentum* (fiddleheads).

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Fernleigh  
NSW 2479

March 2010

....I really appreciate the information and recipes in the newsletter.

The North Queensland Davidson's Plums are again starting to fruit and I still haven't finished last year's jam! I would love to know of a foolproof way to make a good wine from these plums, or something else that uses large quantities. Over a few years of wine making I did make a wonderful port-like wine but have never been able to replicate it.

The Bunya nuts have been prolific this year so the "Go Native" wild food cookbook has been well thumbed. My partner has made an excellent 'cracker' out of an old machete with a hole in the blade end point with a bolt through attached either side with metal pieces to a long piece of hardwood. The nut is placed in the space between the metal pieces, and the machete becomes a levered blade to cut it open.

Regards,  
Rosie Tongmar.

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# If anyone has any ideas to help out next season we'd love to hear from you. Apart from jam and wine, all I can think of are chutney and sauce. Of course, you can stew the pulp and freeze it for future use in desserts, gravies or whatever, but that takes up valuable freezer space. There is a method of pouring hot pulp into heated glass jars up to the rim and immediately sealing them either with Vacola lids and clips or well-fitting screw lids. As the pulp cools a vacuum is created which preserves the contents. While you have occasional failures with this method, it generally works. Probably using wired mason jars with rubber seals would work too.

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Dear Lenore,

Please find enclosed a printout of some bushfood recipes I devised, which appear on my website. I thought other members of the group might be interested in them. My website address is currently <http://users.academy.net.au/~samantha> but it will change soon. There will be more recipes here as soon as I can get my hands on ingredients to test my ideas!

Bon appetit!  
Samantha Lane.

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# Thanks Samantha. The recipes are reprinted on pages 8 and 9.

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Moore.  
QLD 4306

10 July 10

Dear Lenore,

....Since receiving your newsletter I've been trying to get in touch, as I have some information about the flowering and seeding times of *Viola betonicifolia* from one of my SG members.

Frank Jordan and his former partner Helen Schwencke have been working on, and gardening with, butterflies since around 1985, and in 1994, they established the Butterfly and Other Invertebrates Club in Brisbane. The connection between *V.betonocifolia*, butterflies and Frank was the turning point in the strong campaign between 1995 and 1998 to save the Deagon Wetlands from becoming another commercial shopping precinct near Sandgate. *V.betonocifolia* is the food plant of the rare Australian Fritillary Butterfly, which was thought to exist within the Wetlands, and a thorough search of this mainly *Melaleuca quinquenervia* bushland revealed the presence of the Native Violet. Frank played the main part in finding the plants, and to this day, members of the Wallum Study Group can always locate them in several places. The discovery of the violet prompted the Brisbane City Council, due to pressure from the Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld and locals, to use its first "income" from their new Environmental Levy, to purchase the seven sections of the Wetlands, a total of 170 hectares. It was a wonderful victory.

To get to the real point of all this introduction, I got this information about the flowering and seeding times of *Viola betonicifolia* from Frank. It produces its flowers, of varying sizes and colours (see enclosed copy of a photograph), only in the cooler months/Winter, but seed pods appear all year long, with no visible flowers in Summer. When the flowers are pollinated, the petals tend to roll up. The plants appear prolifically in pots of plants in shadehouses etc, but can take a little while to establish out in a garden. Some people regard them as weeds, but I love to find them anywhere. Unfortunately, I've never seen an Australian Fritillary Butterfly. Back in the mid 1980's, members of the Redcliffe Australian Plants Club found *V.betonocifolia* in the *Melaleuca* and *Eucalypt* bushland adjoining Hay's Inlet and Saltwater Creek on the Redcliffe Peninsula - similar habitat to what it favours at the nearby Sandgate bushland and wetlands.

Hope this helps a bit with the queries about this plant's flowering times.

Regards,  
Barbara (Henderson)

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# Barbara is the Leader of the ANPSA Wallum and Coastal Heathland Study Group. Her photocopy is reproduced on the back page.

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# Use a bruised Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) leaf to flavour milk for use in a milk pudding.

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## RECIPES by Samantha Lane.

### Wattle Seed and Macadamia Bread (for automatic bread machines)

290ml boiling water  
1 tsp salt  
2 tsp roasted ground wattle seed  
1½ tbsp macadamia oil  
500g bread flour  
1½ tbsp sugar  
1¼ tsp instant dried yeast  
1 tsp bread improver (eg No knead bread improver™)  
½ cup chopped macadamia nuts

#### Method:

1. Add water to wattle seed and allow to cool to room temperature.
  2. Add wattle seed mixture, salt, oil, flour, yeast and bread improver to bread machine pan.
  3. Select basic setting.
  4. At the beep add macadamia nuts.
  5. Eat warm or toasted with honey.
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### Pumpkin and Native Pepper bread (for automatic bread machines)

270ml water  
½ cup pumpkin, peeled, drained and mashed  
480g bread flour  
1 tbsp sugar  
1½ tsp salt  
1½ tbsp milk powder  
1¼ tsp instant dried yeast  
1 tsp bread improver

#### Method:

1. Add ingredients in listed order to bread machine pan.
  2. Select basic setting.
  3. Serve with hummus.
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### Wattle Seed Liqueur

1½ tbsp roasted ground wattle seed  
1½ cups boiling water  
1 cup brown sugar  
½ cup water  
2 cups brandy  
1 tsp vanilla essence

#### Method:

1. Sterilise a large, sealable jar.
2. Add boiling water to ground wattle seed in the sterile jar and allow to cool.
3. Put the sugar and water into a saucepan and bring to the boil,

- stirring.
4. Simmer, without stirring, for 1 minute. Cool.
  5. Add the cooled syrup, brandy and vanilla to the wattle seed mixture and seal.
  6. Allow to stand for 7-10 days , shaking occasionally.
  7. Filter the liqueur into an attractive bottle, seal and store for 4 weeks before using.
  8. Serve with a dash of cream for added indulgence, substitute for coffee liqueurs in dessert recipes or spike hot chocolate.
  9. Makes about 5 cups.
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### **Bush Herb Pasta and Chicken.**

#### **Pasta:**

- ¾ cup white flour
- ¼ cup wholemeal flour
- 1 egg
- ¼ tsp dried ground native pepper leaf
- ¼ tsp dried ground lemon myrtle

#### **Sauce:**

- 250g chicken breast fillet strips
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- 1 clove garlic finely chopped
- 1 onion finely chopped
- 1½ tbsp white wine
- flour
- pepper
- 1 tbsp cream
- 1 cup roughly chopped silverbeet or warrigal green leaves

#### **Method:**

1. Combine pasta ingredients and prepare fettucine by hand or machine according to instructions.
  2. Dust chicken with flour and pepper.
  3. Heat half the butter in a fry pan and brown chicken slowly.
  4. Add lemon juice and season with pepper.
  5. Cover pan and sauté gently over low heat until chicken is tender.
  6. Remove from pan.
  7. Melt remaining butter and add almonds. Brown over low heat.
  8. Add onion and garlic. Cook for 1 minute.
  9. Add wine.
  10. Cook the fetucine for 2 minutes, adding the greens for the last 30 seconds.
  11. Combine pasta, chicken, almond mixture and cream.
  12. Serves 2.
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# On an episode of "Gardening Australia" on ABC Television, Jerry Colby-Williams showed a superb flowering hedge of Phillip Island Hibiscus (*Hibiscus insularis*). As part of the information he was sharing, he mentioned that he makes a tea from the flowers which is an excellent treatment for a sore throat. Australian Aborigines used various related species of *Hibiscus* similarly.

## **SNIPPETS:**

# The Sub-Tropical Fruit Club of Queensland have published a 2011 calendar featuring photographs of bush foods. It is A4 size, and costs \$12 which includes postage. Phone Sheryl on 07 3289 4198 or email [backhouse@acenet.net.au](mailto:backhouse@acenet.net.au)

# If you have any *Myrtaceae* growing, don't forget to be vigilant and inspect the leaves regularly for any rust-like symptoms. If you see anything suspicious, don't destroy the plants, but immediately report it to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

# Aussie Bee Website <http://www.aussiebee.com.au> promotes the enjoyment and preservation of Australian Native Bees. They have booklets for sale, photos and videos to view and notices of forthcoming events and workshops.

# Currant Bush (*Carissa ovata*) has become a significant and difficult to control woody weed on properties on the duplex soils of Queensland's 500-650mm annual rainfall (brigalow) belt. It is a shallow rooted plant spread by seed and vegetative layering, which can form dense prickly thickets. It is a pity that harvesting the small delicious fruit is just not commercially viable. However, the bush, with its glossy green leaves and small scented white flowers, makes an excellent garden hedge or specimen plant, as it responds well to pruning.

# Two more interesting websites with a commercial/industry focus are [www.anfil.org.au](http://www.anfil.org.au) (Australian Native Food Industry Limited) and [www.andrewfielke.com](http://www.andrewfielke.com)

# The Australian Desert Lime (*Citrus glauca*) is the fastest citrus in the world for the time elapsed between flowering (August/September) and ripe fruit (November). It can handle heat, cold, drought and wet, and can be a significant source of extra income for rural land owners through value-adding.

# According to Kerry Rathie, Leader of the *Brachychiton* & Allied genera Study Group, most strains of *Brachychiton bidwillii* have pods almost lacking siliceous irritant hairs around the seeds. They produce lots of pods when bees are prevalent, and have good seeds and easily hand-opened pods, which makes them a prime source of seed for grinding into 'coffee' or flour. Always take precautions and wear gloves when shelling *Brachychiton* seeds.

# Research by scientists at the Glycomics Institute at Griffiths University has shown that a traditional indigenous migraine treatment is at least as effective as aspirin. The plant is a type of native lemon grass, *Cymbopogon ambiguus*.

# Some research has recently been carried out with the aim of developing vocabulary for describing the unique flavours of commercially important native plant foods, this having been identified as a key priority for the Australian native food industry. Each of the native food samples was assessed by a panel of sensory experts, and descriptions were formulated as a result of the work done by these panels. The report setting out the results of this research project is available on the RIRDC website [www.rirdc.gov.au](http://www.rirdc.gov.au)

## Zig-Zag Vine or Acid Drop Vine

### *Melodorum leichhardtii*

Jan Sked

Previously known as *Rauwenhoffia leichhardtii*.

*Melodorum leichhardtii* is a tall woody vine from the rainforests of Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, where it climbs high into the canopy, often extending for long distances. A characteristic of this species is the looping of stems to form a tendril to aid in climbing. If kept pruned or growing in full sun, plants may look nothing like climbers, but resemble woody shrubs.

Leaves are leathery, moderately glossy, oval shaped, 8-15cm long, with young growth covered in brown hairs and with undulate margins.

Highly fragrant, dull yellow to brown, unusual looking flowers, 2.5cm across, are carried singly or in pairs on long stalks in spring and summer. They have a luscious fruity smell.

These are followed in late summer and autumn by a profusion of bright yellow-orange fruits, up to 3cm long, which are slightly constricted between the two or more seeds they contain. The soft pulp around the seeds is edible and tastes like dried apricots, thus giving the common name of Acid Drop Vine.

*Melodorum* belongs to the mainly tropical Annonaceae family which contains the exotic Custard Apple. These fruits can be hard to find as they are often high up in the treetops. Therefore, if you want to grow it in the garden and enjoy the fruit, it would be best to keep it pruned to a shrubby form and plant it where it gets plenty of sunlight. If you want a climber, then you had best provide it with a tall robust tree to climb!

Plants will do best in a moist, well mulched soil, and can be grown in shade or part sun. Seeds apparently have a limited period of viability, and for best results should be sown fresh. However, they can be very slow to germinate.

This is a food plant for a number of butterflies.

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# In Central Queensland we know this as Fruit Salad Vine, and it is reasonably common in the local evergreen scrubs. The presence of a fruiting climber in the canopy is often signalled by the fallen, rather distorted looking fruit, but the common form on Keppel Sands Headland is of a small, rather gnarled tree. In fact, the first time I saw it I was completely puzzled, as the trees were flowering heavily, and I'd never seen anything like the strange blooms - 4 leathery brown petals enclosing a structure reminiscent of a tiny hibiscus style, and the heavy, fruity fragrance was amazing. When you realise that the orange fruit are arranged in a spray on a single stem, it is even weirder. The raw fruits are delicious, but we have been unable to discover a way of cooking it (eg in jam) so that it remains palatable. (Ed).

## **Bush Tomatoes (*Solanum centrale*)**

***Based on a presentation by Ms Raylene Brown (Kungas Can Cook) and Ms Jenny Cleary (Desert Knowledge CRC) at an Indigenous Economic Development Workshop in Broome in August 2009.***

Also known as Desert Raisin, Desert Tomato, Akatjera, Kampurarrapa and Kati Kati, *Solanum centrale* is a fruit produced by a small fast growing shrub (200-500mm). It is native to Central Australia, and belongs to the widespread family Solanaceae, which includes some of the world's staple food plants eg potatoes and most potent poisons eg datura. Australian solanums include representatives from both ends of the spectrum.

The fruit is about the same size and shape as cherry tomatoes (10-20mm) in diameter, but are yellow when ripe and have a strong flavour similar to that of tamarillo and caramel. When dried the fruit resembles dried raisins. Traditionally bush tomatoes are eaten raw.

Bush tomatoes have been a source of nourishment for the central desert Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years. According to Food Standards Australia New Zealand the fruit (15A10371) is low in fat (3.8g/100g), with a low glycaemic index, very high energy (472kj), high potassium (1918mg) and moderate levels of vitamin C (17mg). (I checked these figures, and discovered they were based on an analysis of fruit wild-gathered prior to 1990. I think the fruit must have been dried, especially as I found different figures in another part of the same website. These were 48kj/100g, 462mg potassium, and 75.4ml water, which suggests they were based on 100g of fresh fruit. Ed.)

Their strong flavour makes them suitable as an ingredient in sauces and chutneys. The demand for fruit has led to horticultural and mechanical harvesting trials, particularly as good rains, which are not consistent from year to year, are needed for the shrubs to fruit in abundance.

This is a significant industry worth between 16 and 20 million Australian dollars. Sensitivity to the weather has made it difficult to maintain a consistent source of supply. This has dented the confidence of investors and the benefits to Aboriginal people is marginal.

That said, there is an increasing demand for this product.

Although Aboriginal people are involved in the industry, their roles are limited to the harvesting and supply of bush tomatoes as a raw product. There is only some limited capacity for value-adding through the production of cottage based food products.

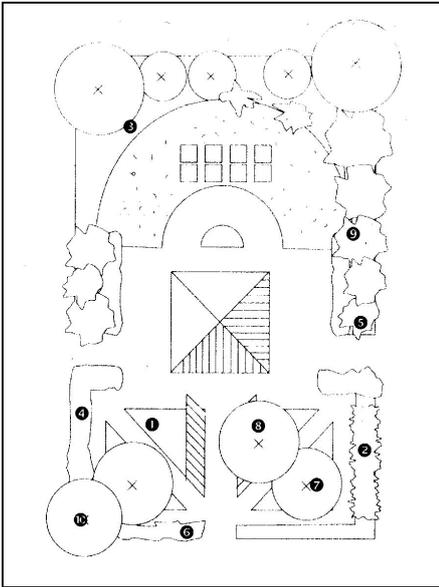
The Desert Knowledge CRC's research shows that improving livelihoods for Aboriginal people requires research, knowledge brokering and capacity building. Some of what is needed to develop the industry further includes alternative sources of supply beyond wild harvesting, appropriate business structures that fit with culture and worldview, certification of Aboriginal supply, and better understanding of the social context of the value chain.

## Redlands IndigiScapes Centre.

Run by the Redland Shire Council, the Indigiscapes Centre at Capalaba south of Brisbane is a complex of sample backyard gardens, walks, picnic and barbecue areas, natural bushland, lagoon and wildlife habitat, nursery and plant sales, shop, information centre, educational displays, café, playground, and sculpture garden, where workshops and activities are run all year. Only plants indigenous to Redland Shire are used here (and in any public plantings in the shire). Entry is free, and the Redlands Council is to be congratulated on their vision and the way it has been realised.

The sample gardens are a series of 14 interconnected garden rooms, and there is a comprehensive double sided information sheet on each. These sheets are available to the public from a self-serve weatherproof holder in each garden.

Contrary to what one might expect, the Wild Herb or Bush Tucker Garden is laid out with formal symmetry, with flagged paths, pergola, raised beds, feature pot, pruned trees, clipped hedges and disciplined ground cover.



On one side of the relevant fact sheet is a plan of the garden with some of the plants numbered, and some general information about edible and medicinal plants found in the shire. On the other side are 12 small colour photos of some of the plants used with accompanying information on each, and suggestions of other species one might like to consider for a similar garden: 4 each of trees, shrubs, herbs and small plants, and vines and creepers.

One really interesting feature was a very effective clipped hedge of *Rubus moluccanus*, a use I hadn't ever considered. Another was the variety of ground covering plants used. The eye-catching feature was a wide shallow bowl on a plinth containing a flowering Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea*).

Species used and illustrated: *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, *Cissus Antarctica*, *Austromyrtus dulcis*, *Alpinia caerulea*, *Rubus moluccanus*, *Dodonaea viscosa*, *Petalostigma pubescens*, *Sterculia quadrifida*, *Podocarpus elatus*, *Syzygium australe*, *Macadamia integrifolia*.

Other suggested species: *Ficus coronata*, *Hibiscus heterophyllus*, *Pandanus tectorius*, *Pipturis argenteus*, *Melastoma malabathricum*, *Psychotria loniceroides*, *Xanthorrhoea latifolia*, *Enchylaena tomentose*, *Myoporum acuminatum*, *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, *Trachymene incisa*, *Canavalia rosea*, *Dioscorea transversa*, *Rubus rosifolius*.

I cannot praise this Centre too highly, and have no hesitation in recommending it as a wonderful place to visit if you ever have the opportunity to do so. It is also a concept many other local Councils could learn from. [www.indigiscapes.com.au](http://www.indigiscapes.com.au)



While this is a copy of a copy, it does give a good idea of the variety of size, shape and colour to be found in one species in one location. The ones growing in my garden are pure dark purple, with no white anywhere at all.

*Viola betonicifolia*  
flowers, Deagon Wetlands

Photograph B.Henderson

### Desert Kurrajong (*Brachychiton gregorii*)

Based on an article by Christine Howells in *Eucryphia*, July 2009

Genus name from *brachys*-short, and *chiton*-a Greek garment, referring to the seed coat. Species named after Sir Augustus Charles Gregory (1819-1905, born in England, Australian explorer and surveyor, Surveyor-General of Queensland 1859-75).

*Brachychiton* belongs to the family Sterculiaceae and the tribe Sterculieae. There are around 30 species of *Brachychiton*, mostly Australian, with habitats ranging from rainforest to the dry inland. They include the Illawarra flame tree, bottle trees and kurrajongs. All members are ornamental, with some popular and well known around the world. Some are suitable for container and indoor use, but most require a warm to hot climate to be at their best.

*Brachychiton gregorii* or Desert Kurrajong is found scattered through the desert areas of Central Australia. A small tree to about 8m, usually with a dense crown and distinctive, bright green, finely lobed leaves, the colour makes it a stand-out in the desert where most plants have much duller foliage. The flowers are small cream to yellow, bell-shaped and about 2cm long. The fruit is a decorative, leathery follicle about 5cm long, and the seeds are covered by a hairy coat.

It has always been of great value to the Aborigines, early settlers and explorers. Water can be obtained from the roots, and rope and string can be made from the bark. The tree is widely used for cattle fodder and lopped when needed. The Aborigines roasted the seeds and ate them whole, or ground them to make cakes. They also ate the tap root of seedlings. They found seeds and seedlings - where crows had dropped them - beside the inland waterholes. Early explorers made a 'coffee' from the ground-up seeds.



*Melodorum leichhardtii*.  
Photo E.Anderson