

# Its Not Just Nuts and Berries

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## Introduction

This document created for the “Its Not Just Nuts and Berries” walk for the 2017 Guides conference. A very large amount is drawn directly from a document already on Guidesweb under ‘special walks/bushtucker walks’. Some references are included but where there is none the information (and references) can be found on the ANBG website or on Guidesweb.

## Acacia spp

### Habitat/Biology Notes

Wides spread across Aust. About 1100 species in Aust.

The main edible acacia are *A.aneura*, dominant in arid areas and *A.longifolia* (also known as *A.sophorae*) which occurs mostly on NSW coast.

Anueura is one of number of species collectively known as mulga. It is a tree well adapted to arid conditions.

### **Food Element**

47 species of acacia are considered edible (6 main ones) , others typically poisonous.

The seeds are edible as well as the sap produced after plant is attacked by an insect.

### **Story Lines**

*A.anueura* very important food source in arid areas.

Indigenous people ate the sap or dissolved it in water for a sweet drink. European settlers also ate the sap and called it 'bush lollies'.

The seeds have a low-glycaemic index.

Indigenous people sometimes ate the seed raw, a little like a green pea. More commonly, the seeds were separated from the pod. They were then moistened to make an edible paste or were dried and ground between stones to form a flour to make a damper.

An important food source for aboriginal people - the seed remains usable for over a year and after good rainfall can produce huge crops.

Botanist Peter Latz estimates a mulga yield (after good rain) of at least 100 kgs of seed per hectare. (full scale agriculture in Victoria yields 1900 kgs per hectare)

A number of projects in Niger and Senegal using Australian acacias (Typically *A.colei* - Coles wattle and variant Curley podded Coles wattle). Provides food, fire wood and soil regeneration.

In contemporary use Ground roasted acacia seeds are used for flavouring sauces and ice cream, and in breads, pasta and biscuits

## **Alocasia macrorrhizos**

(Cunjevoi)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Rainforest of NSW and Queensland.

### **Food Element**

The swollen stems are starchy and fibrous, but are POISONOUS if eaten raw, causing the mouth and throat to swell, sometimes fatally.

### **Story Lines**

Indigenous people repeatedly roasted and pounded the plant to remove the poison.

Very similar to taro – staple of pacific island people.

## **Araucaria bidwillii**

(Bunya Pine)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Mountains in south-east and northern Queensland. A conifer, but not a true pine.

### **Food Element**

When this tree is mature it bears large green cones and inside each scale of the cone is a hard-shelled nut about 5 cm long. The nuts are not unlike chestnuts when roasted in a fire. It is gluten free and can be used to make a gluten free flour.

### **Story lines**

The nuts were such popular food that aboriginal people came from hundreds of kilometres around the Bunya Mountains in Qld to feast on them. <sup>1</sup>

Bunya nuts are still sold as a food item in street-side stalls around rural southern Queensland.

## **Austromyrtus dulcis**

(Midyim or Midgen Berry, Native Blueberry)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Occurs commonly from Byron Bay, New South Wales, to Fraser Island, Queensland

A spreading shrub up to 2 m

The fruits are berries containing 3-9 pale brown seeds. Appear in autum. They are white and covered in small blue black spots, giving the fruit a mauvish appearance.

### **Food element**

The fruit are edible. They are pea to cherry sized. They have a very sweet, slightly piney taste with a cinnamon underflavour.

### **Story lines**

In 1988, in honour of the Australian Bicentenary, a midjinberry jelly was available.

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<sup>1</sup> “Bunya Mountain Gathering” , Qld Museum website

This species is not at present considered highly commercial. The fruit is difficult to harvest. The plant is reasonably prostrate and the berries, once ripe, fall off at the slightest movement of the bush.

## **Backhousia myrtifolia**

(Cinnamon/Grey/Carrol Myrtle)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Found in the rainforests of subtropical Australia from Bega in south coast NSW to Fraser Island off Queensland.

13 species of backhousia - at least 4 are a useful spice. NB seems Backhousia anisata recently moved to Syzygium.

### **Food element**

The leaves provide a cinnamon like spice. The leaves are dried then ground to a powder or shredded.

### **Story Lines**

In contemporary use in savoury recipes, deserts, confectionary and herbal teas. It can be added to curries, stews and rice dishes (wonderful in steamed rice). Can also be used in biscuits, sweets and slices – anywhere cinnamon is used.

There is a great recipe for a cinnamon myrtle and macadamia liqueur.

Of the same family is Backhousia citriodora (lemon myrtle). Typically used for fish and Asian recipes. One of the most recognised commercial bush foods.

Also Backhousia anisata (Aniseed Myrtle/ Ringwood). Ground leaves give a flavour similar to anise or fennel, but with a sweetness making it suitable for both sweet and savoury purposes. There are commercial plantations in north eastern NSW.

Also Backhousia angustifolia – a curry flavour.

## **Brachychiton populneus**

(Kurrajong)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Distributed from north-eastern Victoria to Townsville and from the coast through to the semi-arid inland.

Young plants quickly develop a long tap root. Seeds are borne within woody, boat-shaped fruit 1-7 cm long and are surrounded by fine hairs that can cause skin and eye irritation

## Food element

The seeds - raw or cooked - need to remove irritating yellow hairs. A nutty taste when cooked.

The taproot of young plants – like a large carrot. Cooked or raw.

The flowers “ a mild vegetable texture with a sweet note from the nectar”

Young leaves – a green vegetable flavour. Old leaves unpleasant.

## Story lines

A popular food for Indigenous people. Usually quickly roasted over high heat to give texture like popcorn, taste like a nut. Once cooked could also be ground and used as a flour extender. The seeds stayed in the pods on the trees for up to a year to a flour

Most useful for Indigenous people were the swollen roots of young trees. A carrot like vegetable.

Kurrajong seeds are remarkably nutritious, comprising 18% protein and 25% fat and yielding high level of zinc and magnesium.

Ludwig Leichhardt found that the seeds of *B. populneus* 'produced not only a good beverage with an agreeable flavour, but ate well and appeared to be very nourishing'<sup>2</sup>

The flowers have been used in trendy restaurants.

Europeans roasted and ground the seeds to make a coffee substitute – more of a mocha-taste than a true coffee flavour.

## *Citrus garrawayae*

### Habitat/Biology Notes

*C. australasica* (Australian finger lime): occurs as understory shrub or tree in rainforests in southern Queensland and northern NSW, from Ballina to Mt Tambourine. Produces finger-shaped fruit, up to 10 cm long, with thin skin varying in colour between black, green, yellow and pink.

*C. garrawayae*: (Mount White Lime) occurs in vine scrubs on Cape York Peninsula. Produces a similar finger-shaped fruit, though shorter and thicker, with green skin and greenish-white pulp (April to November). It is considered rare in the wild due to its limited distribution.

### Food items

Indigenous people ate the fruit raw or crushed to make refreshing drink.

The clear flesh consists of sticky, juice-filled cells.

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<sup>2</sup> Cribb & Cribb, 1987:94)

## Story Lines

Various cultivars have been registered, and a northern NSW company called Wild Fingerlime markets 7 finger limes with the trade name 'Citrus Caviar' in a range of colours. Orchard production has slowly started to replace wild harvested fruit.

CSIRO has developed three different varieties of lime, by selecting and crossing native citrus with modern cultivars. The varieties have proved suitable for plantation production using standard horticultural practices and are now available for domestic gardeners. The three varieties are called 'Australian Blood' (also known as 'Australian Red Centre') 'Australian Sunrise' and 'Australian Outback' (also known as 'Australian Desert').

A major grower, Ian Douglas, says finger limes were now so popular with chefs that the US, South Africa, Thailand and Italy were already planting finger lime orchards. He cannot keep up with domestic and international demand for the fruit, which sell for \$40 a kilo.

Ochre is a multi-award winning restaurant in Cairns. They do a Salt and pepper quail, compressed watermelon with finger lime.

## Correa alba

(White correa, Cape Barren Tea)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

It grows in coastal areas from northern New South Wales to eastern South Australia and Tasmania.

### Food items

A jasmine like tea can be made from the leaves.

Leaves are also used in food smoking preparations.

### Story lines

Sealers living on islands in Bass Strait and Cape Barren Island in the 1830s made a tea substitute from its leaves, hence the name Cape Barren tea.

I have used correa alba as an alternative to tea leaves for Chinese style smoked fish and chicken. A little sweeter than normal tea smoke.

## Dianella spp

(flax lilly)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

All States except SA in low coastal scrub as well as open forest and rainforest at all altitudes.

15 species. A very hardy and prolific grower.

### **Food item**

Berries of most are edible, though reported to be a somewhat insipid. Some may cause dizziness and a couple possibly toxic.

Indigenous people used the roots. They would pound them then roast on hot rocks.

### **Story lines**

European settlers used the berries for jam. The "Go Native" Wild Food Cookbook contains recipes for Dianella and Raspberry jelly and Dianella jam.

While not a favourite for indigenous peoples they were a reliable food source in hard times.

## **Cyathea australis**

Dicksonia antarctica (Smooth tree fern )

Cyathea australis (Rough tree fern)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Both species are widespread growing from south-eastern Queensland, down through the NSW and Victoria coast and in Tasmania.

'Trunk' is really an erect rhizome .

The pith is the spongy inside of the root material and forming fronds.

Plant grows at about 5 cm per year.

### **Food items**

The pith was eaten cooked or raw and is a very good source of starch.

The uncurled fronds of tree-ferns, called croziers, are also edible, and have a juicy, slimy, sometimes bitter taste.

### **Story lines**

Indigenous people would split open to extract the soft starchy pith.

The Tasmanians preferred the Rough Tree-fern, *Cyathea australis*, because it tasted better.

Soft tree-fern pith, yields 61 kilocalories per 100 grams, about twice that of turnips or pumpkins.

Removing the core kills the tree. Given reduced environment and slow growth rate this is a plant with no future as a food source.

## **Doryanthes excelsa**

(Gynea Lily)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Occurs naturally along the central coast of New South Wales.

### **Food items**

The flower stems grow up to 4 m high, but were cut when young, about 0.5 m long and thicker than a man's arm, and roasted.

The roots were also roasted and made into a sort of cake.

### **Story lines**

## **Eucalyptus viminalis**

(Manna / Ribbon Gum)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Common in the mountains and foothills of the Great Dividing Range in south-eastern New South Wales and Victoria, across much of Tasmania, including King and Flinders Islands, with an outlier in South Australia on Mt Lofty Range east of Adelaide.

Bark hangs like 'ribbons' in the branches.

### **Food items**

Where holes have been made by insects in the young branches, sap flows out and dries into hard sugary drops

### **Story lines**

Both Indigenous people and European settlers were very fond of it.

'Manna' is not an Aust phenomom. Exudates are the ooze from woody plants after injury by people or animals. Around the time Europeans arrived in Aust, there was great interest in exudates. They were used for medicines, cosmetics, glue, paint, varnish, rubber, and food. Possibly why Eucalypts were known as gums.

The exudant from E.viminalis ( and E.mannifera) is remarkable though. Tim Low proposed a theory that sweet liquid is something cheap to a Eucalypt that it can afford to waste as the nutrient poor soils restrict how much sugar he the tree can use.

In 1855, Lieutenant-Colonel G.C. Mundy described one:

*It sounds strange to English ears—a party of ladies and gentlemen strolling out in a summer's afternoon to gather manna in the wilderness: yet more than once I was so employed in Australia. This substance is found in small pieces on the ground under the trees at certain seasons, or in hardened drops on the surfaces of the leaves; it is snowy white when fresh, but turns brown when kept like the chemist's drug so called, is sweeter than the sweetest sugar, and softer than Gunter's softest ice-cream.*



Others who sampled it were reminded of sweetened flour, sugar-plum and wedding cake icing. About 60 per cent sugar, it could be bountiful on as well as under trees when there was no rain to dissolve it. Men told of “upwards of 20 lb” procured from one tree, of “many bushels” gathered “in a short space of time,” of Aborigines collecting a pound in a quarter of an hour.

Australian manna became a minor marvel of the age, depicted in detail in academic journals across Europe. Manna gum plantations were proposed. – providing sugar for table and brewing.

Tim Low says the insects responsible in Australia have not been identified with certainty.<sup>3</sup>

## **Eustrephus latifolius**

(Wombat berry)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Dry and wet forests and heaths of Queensland, NSW and Victoria. It also occurs in New Guinea and New Caledonia.

Evergreen climber. Only member of its genus.

### **Food items**

The fruits contain a small amount of crisp white pulp which was eaten. Not particularly nice.

The tubers are sweet and juicy and have an earthy sweet flavour. Eaten raw or baked.

### **Story lines**

The seeds within the fruit are quite a strong laxative – go easy.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous people would carefully dig out tubers. Perhaps leaving wombat like holes – speculation.

## **Exocarpos cupressiformis**

(Native or wild cherry or Ballart cherry)

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Low, “Exuding Abundance 2/12/12, Published on Birdlife

<sup>4</sup> ‘BushcraftOz’ website

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

This small tree is found as an understorey tree of open Eucalypt forest and woodland, often in drier and better drained situations.. It grows in eastern Australia, including Tasmania and South Australia.

It is hemiparasitic on the roots of other trees. i.e. its roots attach themselves to the roots of other plants and obtain nutrients from them, whilst also obtaining nutrients through its own photosynthesis.

Of the Santalaceae family – like the quondong (*Santalum acuminatum*) which is also hemiparasitic.

### **Food item**

Each small, green, hard fruit is supported on a larger, swollen, fleshy stalk. It is the fleshy stalk which is eaten. When the stalks are yellow, they are bitter but when they turn deep red and very ripe are very sweet.

Considered by indigenous and European settlers as a treat rather than a solid food source. Eaten raw by Aboriginal and European settlers. Need to be very ripe.

### **Story lines**

Naturally sparse. Are considered toxic to cattle therefore – made sparser!

Fruits ripen a little unpredictably – but generally around Christmas.

Used to make a jelly, similar to redcurrant jelly, which is nice served with meats such as saltbush-fed lamb.

Hold the fruit by the seed and bite off the stalk! When the English first settled in Australia, they made much of it as an “upside-down, back-to-front” place. Swans were black instead of white. The trees lost their bark in summer, instead of their leaves in winter. And the cherries had their seeds on the outside!

Can be found in several Canberra suburban reserves.

## **Kunzea pomifera**

(Muntries / Native apple/ emu apples/ native cranberries)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Woody creeper of coastal dunes from Portland (Victoria) to the Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island (SA), found also in clearings in mallee and desert woodlands, in areas with a natural rainfall of 500–800 mm per year.

A prostrate or occasionally semi-upright shrub.

### **Food item**

The furry-skinned berries form clusters of 3 to 9 tiny apples, contain many seeds and ripen February to March.

The taste is somewhat like apples with a touch of sultana flavour. The fruit is rich in antioxidants. (reportedly 4 times that of blue berries)<sup>5</sup>

Colour is a mosaic of green, red and purple and they range in size from 5–13 mm in diameter.

Naturally a groundcover, can be grown on a trellis.

### **Story lines**

The berries were probably a staple food of Aborigines between Yorke Peninsula and Portland Bay. Around the Glenelg River, Aborigines came from afar during the muntiri season.

In South Australian Indigenous people pounded and dried excess fruit, shaped it into large cakes and dried it in the sun. They were stored for eating during winter, when other foods were scarce, or were traded.

Higher antioxidant content than blueberries.<sup>6</sup>

European settlers made them into jams and chutneys.

Used extensively in modern bush tucker. Its modern uses include jam, chutney, pies, fruit straps, wine, desserts, sweet and savoury sauces, fruit salad, salads and chocolates.

Can be used in place of apples or sultanas.

Can be frozen for later use or dried.

There are commercial plantations in SA, Victoria and NSW.

Commercial chutneys and sauces available. Can buy 1kg frozen for about \$45.

## **Linospadix monostachya**

(Walking stick palm)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Rainforests from mid-north coast of NSW to Gympie in SE Queensland.

Produces long strings of red berries.

### **Food items**

The red berries are sweet with a peppery aftertaste.

The bud of new shoots were eaten raw or cooked by indigenous people.

### **Story lines**

Not known to be harvested commercially.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Australian Native Foods and Botanicals' website

<sup>6</sup> Aust. Govt. website :Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation

The fruit of this palm is credited with having kept alive two survivors from the crash of a Stinson airliner in an inaccessible spot on Lamington Plateau in 1937. They were not found for many days and then only because Bernard O'Reilly had a hunch. While waiting for rescue one of the survivors walked and crawled over difficult terrain to obtain water and carried back in his teeth the long strings of palm fruit which kept them alive until help finally arrived.<sup>7</sup>

## Livistona spp

(Cabbage Palm, Fan Palm)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

NSW, QLD, VIC and Central Australia. Livistona is a particularly wide ranging palm, being found in well-watered gorges and gullies as far apart as Palm Gorge in Central Australia, the Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland, and the Orbost district in Victoria. Also in south coastal NSW rainforest.

Removing the 'heart' kills the plant.

### Food items

The bud at the top of the tree is obtained by removing the older leaves until the 'cabbage' is left. This may be eaten raw or boiled or roasted in the ashes.

Indigenous people also ate the young leaves.

### Story lines

European settlers harvested 'palm cabbages' to supplement meagre rations.

An early writer described it as having a 'white and rather spongy texture, which possesses the sweet taste of the Spanish chestnut and is often eaten by whites as well as by the Aborigines'.

The palm hearts were known to 18th century mariners and Captain Cook sampled palm cabbages at Endeavour River, including one that tasted 'exquisitely sweet'.

The small cabbage component is quite tasty though as it kills the tree it gained the name 'Millionaire's Salad'.]

Composition is reported in part (Low, p.201) as: 86.4% water, 2.52% protein, 0.36% fat, 53 mcg Thiamin/100g, trace of Vitamin C.

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<sup>7</sup> "The Story of the Stinson Wreck as told by Bernard O'Reilly" on Queenslandhistory.com

## Macrozamia spp

Several species, member of cycads

### Habitat/Biology Notes

NSW, QLD, Central Australia, NT, WA. Most species (14) occur in eastern Australia.

The seeds are borne in a large cone on the female plant, have a red or orange outer coat and are large (3-8cm long).

### Food items

The seeds are quite nutritious and starchy but poisonous (high levels of alkaloids) if not prepared correctly. The seed needs to be broken down and the alkaloids destroyed.

### Story lines

Different Indigenous groups had different ways of preparing the seed. Two main ways: mashed then placed it in woven baskets in streams to wash thorough for three weeks or buried in aerobic conditions to ferment.

After treatment the product could be cooked, dried and ground or stored for later use.

Indigenous peoples could trigger seeding by use of fire creating a super seed crop. This could sustain large social gatherings for weeks or even months at a time.

The immediate effect of the poison is ataxia, sometimes called 'zamia staggers' due to its effect on cattle. It is a highly potent carcinogen.<sup>8</sup>

Analysis of seed shows it is around 28.3% starch. (Compare to potato which is 18-25 % starch).<sup>9</sup>

Cycads tend to produce at end of late dry seasons heading into cold periods when other foods are scarce.

## Microseris lanceolata

murnong / yam daisy

### Habitat/Biology Notes

Were widespread in Victoria, South Aust, ACT and southern NSW. Highly vulnerable to grazing animals , relatively scarce now.

Each plants produces a tuber each year.

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<sup>8</sup> "Living Archeology", R.A. Gould p101

<sup>9</sup> "Some Plant Foods of the Queensland Aborigine" by F.S Colliver

## Food items

Small tuber. Could be eaten raw but when cooked in an oven are very sweet, slight coconut flavour, very nice to eat.

The tuber is ready when the flower appears.

## Story lines

A food of the Ngunawal people.<sup>10</sup>

*Microseris lanceolata* was the preferred staple food in Victoria.<sup>11</sup>

In 1841, George Augustus Robinson, the Protector of Aborigines, noted that the basalt plain known as Spring Plains was covered with millions of Murnong and described women “spread over the plains as far as I could see them — and each had a load as much as she could carry”<sup>12</sup>

Indigenous women could carefully dig out the plant, take that year’s tuber and replace the plant with last years tuber and the new one developing. This would also ‘til’ the soil.<sup>13</sup>

The carbohydrate is fructose which has a low glycemic index.

## Persoonia pinifolia

(Geebung / snottygobbles)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

Geebungs are shrubs or small trees of heaths and woodlands on sandy and stony soils.

About 100 species occur in temperate Australia, and one (*P.falcata*) in the tropics. The genus is represented in all States.

### Food item

The fruit is a drupe (a fleshy fruit with a single stone containing the seed, eg a peach), with the colour ranging from green when forming to purple when mature.

The pulp is sweet and inside is a very hard stone, which is discarded.

The geebungs were popular Aboriginal food and there are records of how they were ‘greatly relished’ by the Brisbane tribes. They collected dillies full of them in season.

In the Kimberley region the fruits of the tropical geebung (*P.Falcata*) were sun-dried by Aborigines, roasted in ashes, hammered to crush the seeds, and stored in paperbark for future eating.

Geebungs were sometimes eaten by the early colonists.

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<sup>10</sup> Website ‘Ngunawal – past present and future’

<sup>11</sup>Beth Gott, 1983

<sup>12</sup> Presland ,1980, cited by Beth Gott 1983

<sup>13</sup> “land of Sweeioing Plains, Marshall, William & Morgan 2015

When opened, the small, sweet fruit is mucous-like and green hence the first part of its rather singular name. The 'gobble' part apparently originated when pioneers observed pigs hastily consuming the fruit. Perhaps – not a strong source.

## Podocarpus elatus

(Brown pine, Qld Plum Pine, Illawarra Plum)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

NSW, QLD. Occurs in coastal and subcoastal rainforests in north-eastern and south-eastern Qld and eastern NSW. Most wild stands were felled or cleared in the 1800s.

### Food items

The seed is borne on a purple-black fleshy stalk, which was eaten. It is sweet but mucilaginous – 'gummy'.

Fruit has a plum-wine flavour. Best eaten fully ripe.

Has 3 times the antioxidant activity of blue berries as tested by CSIRO and Food Science Australia.<sup>14</sup>

### Story Lines

The juicy pulp of the fruit is rich and plum-like in taste with subtle pine and mild resinous flavours. Apparently enhanced by cooking. Commonly served in wild food restaurants as a sauce.

In southern NSW Indigenous and European settlers rated it highly as a fruit but in QLD, where the choice of bush fruits is much wider, it was not highly regarded.<sup>15</sup>

European settlers made it into a jam or jelly.

Fruit are typically used as a compliment for chilli and garlic, as well as sweet dishes, and are especially popular in sauces, preserves, muffins, cheesecakes and fruit compotes. Sauces from the fruits may be used as a finishing topping for meat and vegetables, a dipping sauce for crudites or satays, a marinade or a visually different pizza sauce.<sup>16</sup>

Both the seeds and fruits of *P. elatus* have only very low contents of vitamins and minerals except for vitamin C (11mg/100g), and contain small amounts of fat and protein. Water content is around mid-range (61g/100g) and the energy provided by the seeds is quite high, at 728 kilojoules per 100 gram serve.<sup>17</sup> (100 g of apple is about 203 kilojoules)

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<sup>14</sup> Published in the British Journal of Nutrition.2013

<sup>15</sup> Low 1991

<sup>16</sup> Field 1998

<sup>17</sup> ANU, Fenner School of Environment and Society website

## **Prostanthera rotundifolia**

(Native Thyme / round leaf mint)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Eastern subtropical Qld, eastern NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. Occurs in high rainfall areas, cool moist gullies along river banks.

### **Food items**

Leaves dried and ground, used as a herb, especially with poultry, pork, lamb. Also goes well in desserts and cakes.

### **Story Lines**

Used by my Grandmother.

Is very strong flavour. A bit rubbed into chicken before baking makes quite a difference.

## **Syzygium austral/ S. smithii**

(Lilly Pilly, Brush Cherry, Scrub Cherry)

(*Syzygium smithii* was previously *Acemena smithii*)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

Subtropical and warm-temperate rainforests of New South Wales and Queensland.  
About 60 species in Australia.

### **Food items**

The edible fruit can be eaten raw.

High level of antioxidants – similar to blueberries.

### **Story Lines**

Indigenous people ate them raw.

The early colonists made jam with it and experiments making wine.

A native nursery in northern NSW sells 23 species of *Syzygium* which it promotes as edible fruit.

The fruits of coastal (especially seashore) growing Lilly Pillies are the least tasty - often quite small and tough.

High concentration of antioxidants, amino acids and vitamins A, E and C



## Tasmannia insipida

(Brush Pepperbush, Pepper Tree)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

Queensland and New South Wales, on the coast and ranges, usually in or near the rainforest, from Moruya to the north coast of Queensland.

### Food items

The flesh of the purple-black fruit is edible but not tasty (probably the insipid part). Each fruit has a few small black seeds. These are very peppery

### Story Lines

Aboriginal people have been recorded of using it to stuff the cavity of roasting game to flavour the meat.

Early settlers made pepper with the tiny peppery seeds.

## Themeda triandra

(Kangaroo grass)

### Habitat/Biology Notes

The species has a particularly wide distribution; in Australia it is found in all states and territories, overseas it is found in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. It commonly grows in grassland and open woodland communities.

### Story Lines

Is a member of the Poaceae (grass ) family which includes cereal grains such as maize, wheat, rice, barley, millet. Aust is only continent that does not have commercial agriculture of its own native grasses.

Bruce Pascoe (author 'Dark Emu') with help from a crowd funding campaign has purchased a specialized harvester to demonstrate the viability of harvesting the grain of themeda triandra. <sup>18</sup>

Bread made with kangaroo grass is gluten free and has a nutty flavour.<sup>19</sup>

A food source of the Ngunawal people.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce Pascoe on ABC Country Hour, 9 Jan 2017

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Pascoe on SBS TV, 6/10/16

Indigenous people used grinding stones ( a large bowled sandstone and a smooth river cobble for a topstone) to grind the seeds. Fragments of grinding stones dating back 30,000 years. Have been found <sup>21</sup> Egyptians typically credited with being early bakers. Their grindstones date back 8,000 BC.

## **Trachymene incise**

(Wild Parsnip)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

East coast - Queensland and NSW, temperate to subtropical, especially in sheltered woodland, especially gullies.

Erect herb to 50 cm with white flowers in summer. Grows in large colonies in dense numbers.

In Apiaceae family - the celery, carrot and parsnip family.

### **Food items**

The thickened taproot is edible. Indigenous people ate it raw or cooked in fire coals or earth oven. Tasting rather like a carrot, softer than a parsnip.

### **Story Lines**

Are not pulled out (it breaks) but are dug out with a stick.

Taproot can grow for many years. A tap root about the size of your little finger would be about 3 years old.

Described by biologist and author Tim Low as one of Australia's tastiest native foods, warranting further development as a vegetable crop.

NB ONLY ONE PLANT IN ANBG- SOON TO BE RELOCATED TO NURSERY

## **Triodia scariosa**

(Porcupine grass)

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<sup>20</sup> website 'Ngunawal – past present and future'

<sup>21</sup> Australian Museum exhibit

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

A member of poaceae (grass) family. Often called spinifex – but not a spinifex.

Grows in more arid areas. Mallee.

Triodia is one of 17 species of triodia – all endemic to Aust.

### **Food items**

Grass seed collected and ground with grinding stones. Eaten as a paste or cooked to a bread or damper.

### **Story Lines**

At one point native grasses covered almost a third of the continent.

Australia is the only continent that does not commercially produce its native grains. It is in the grass family – like wheat, rye and millet but unlike them it is a perennial plant and does not need to be replanted each year.

Seeds could be stored for long periods and were an important staple of indigenous people in more arid areas. Seeds were harvested and stored in large animal skin bags.

## **Typha spp**

(Cumbungi, Bulrushes)

### **Habitat/Biology Notes**

In and on the edges of water in all states

### **Food items**

The rhizomes (subterranean stem) were eaten by Indigenous people. They would steam these in earth ovens. It is a gluten starch similar in properties to wheat and tasting like potato.

The tall central stem carries both male and female flowers. The male flowers contain large quantities of edible yellow pollen.

The young shoots which appear in early summer were eaten raw. They have a pea flavour.

Due to density in the Murray-Darling river system probably a major food source for indigenous people there.