

# **Its Not Just Nuts and Berries Route**

## **Clockwise, starting Grassy Woodland**

### **For the Guide**

#### Route overview

This walk starts in the grassy woodland, takes the bitumen road up to the Eastern Mallee, crosses the rainforest at the northern bridge comes out to the edge of the rock garden then back into the rainforest ending at the clock. It includes steps, some slopes and assumes a moderate walking pace.

#### Topic

The topic is specifically Australian plants as food. The objective is to demonstrate the abundance and variety of food sources in Australian plants. The story line is that 'its not just nuts and berries'.

#### Delivery

The focus point for each plant is the part of the plant that is eaten, how it was gathered and prepared and what nutrition or culinary benefit it offers. The walk includes many plants and so for timing, content needs to be restricted to just food.

The document "Its not Just Nuts and Berries" gives details and story lines for each plant listed on this walk. Brief dot points only are included here.

The walk aims to look at more than one plant per main stop wherever possible. Currently 26 plants in the walk. It assumes a couple will be edited out for timing and dependent on what looks most interesting at the time.

### *Gather at the Grassy Woodland, in the circle*

#### **Introduction**

Welcome and intro.

- People have lived off the fauna and flora of Aust for over 40,000 years. They didn't do this on macadamia nuts and berries.
- The plants of Aust offer material rich in variety and quality.
- Today's tour is looking specifically at Aust plants as food. We will be visiting a range of ecological and geographic plantings within the gardens and looking at a few interesting food examples.
- There are over 600 species considered edible - many dozen in the gardens so I might not point out some that you recognize.

- Wondering why here? Not exciting? Example of an ecological garden. Refer to sign. OK loss of ecosystem but very important re food.
- Over X Aust plants are considered edible. Many are growing here in the garden. This walk looks specifically at a few of these plants and how they were used as food.
- While we will all be familiar with macadamia nuts the Indigenous peoples of Australia found a wide variety of food types in the plants of this land.
- On this walk we look at a few of these plants and see a range of different plantings within the gardens.

### **Grassy woodland**

- Wondering why we are here ? Note sign “At the time of European settlement . . . . .Less than 1% of the original area of Australia’s grassy ecosystems remains.”
- This is ecological planting.
- ANBG works with local authorities in the use of native grasses and recently advertised positions to undertake research in grassy woodland seed biology and ecology. This is part of ANBG research activity as the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research
- Loss of ecosystem more meaningful when you are talking about food.

*In pot immediately in front of you*

### **Microseris lanceolata (Murnong/yam daisy)**

- Were widespread Vic, S.A, ACT, southern SW – now scarce.
- Tuber could be eaten raw or usually baked. Very sweet.
- Early settlers reported dense colonies of plants. Early Govt official noted that the basalt plain known as Spring Plains (up around Walgett) 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”
- Tubers selectively harvested - expanding colony.
- Highly susceptible to grazing.

*In pot to left*

### **Themeda triandra (kangaroo grass)**

- Found in all States and Territories as well as Africa and some parts of Asia. A common part of grasslands.

- Member of Poaceae or grass family – 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.
- Seeds ground to a flour and made into either a paste and eaten or cooked to a type of bread.
- Bread is gluten free and has a nutty flavor. An important food source of the Ngunawal people.
- Current project to develop a harvester.

*Ascend steps, stop at bottom of cascades*

### **Typha spp (bulrushes, Cumbungi)**

- Found on the edge of water ways in all States.
- A 'staff of life' along the Murray Darling.
- The rhizomes (subterranean stem) were steamed in an earth oven. It is a gluten starch similar in property to wheat and tasting like potato.
- The young shoots were eaten raw – pea flavour.
- The mature male flowers contain large quantities of edible yellow pollen.

*Ascend next steps, stop at top of cascades*

### **Correa alba**

- leaves are used when smoking meats or fish.
- Mostly known as a tea substitute – Cape Barren tea - sealers.

*Turn left & go up bitumen road towards mallee  
On curve, at right on ground*

### **Kunzea pomifera (Muntires, Native Apple)**

- Berry probably a staple in Yorke Peninsula. Grow in masses.
- Eaten raw or pounded and dried and stored for the winter.
- A taste a cross between apples and sultanas. Rich in antioxidants.
- Commercial plantations in SA, NSW and Vic.

*Go up hill to just past fire hydrant  
On right*

### **Triodia scariosa (porcupine grass)**

- Seeds ground to make a flour.
- Found in abundance in arid areas.

- Fragments of grindstones date to 28,000 BC - Egyptian grindstones date to 8000 BC.

*On left*

### **Exocarpos cupressiformis (Native or Wild Cherry)**

- It is the stalk of the fruit which is swollen fleshy and juicy.
- The small hard seed is discarded.
- Makes a jelly similar to redcurrant jelly - nice with meats.

*Continue uphill take bark chip path on right toward verge  
Just in on left*

### **Acacia aneura**

- 47 species considered edible, others typically poisonous
- seed – remains usable for over a year – an important all year staple, ground to make a flour
- sap

*Continue down path towards verge, between the two large  
E.macrorhyncha, turn left up hill. Continue uphill to section 214  
At right*

### **Brachychiton populneus (kurrajong)**

- Several immature specimens
- Tap roots of young trees
- Seeds of mature plants – green roasted, or coffee like drink.
- Seeds are remarkably nutritious - 18% protein and 25% fat and yielding high level of zinc and magnesium.

*Continue uphill to bitumen road, near entry to rainforest  
On left*

### **Livistona fulva**

- Top leaves are stripped back to reveal heart of palm. It is the growing bud of the plant.
- Sweet taste like a Spanish chestnut. Capt. Cook described it exquisitely sweet. 2.5 % protein and a source of thiamin and vitamin C

## *Behind you*

### **Eucalyptus viminalis (manna gum)**

- When attacked by insects, the younger branches produce an exudent (or sap) which dries into hard sugary drops – lollies. (manna from heaven)
- Favourite of Aboriginal peoples and new settlers
- Reminiscent of wedding cake icing - 60% sugar
- European settlers imagined plantations to produce it

## *At entry to rainforest, on right*

### **Tasmannia insipida (Brush pepperbush)**

- Mostly known for small black, peppery seeds (fruit also edible)
- Aboriginal people known to stuff roasting meats with it
- Early settlers used it as pepper

## *Enter rainforest stop just before bridge*

### **Citrus australasica (Australian finger lime)**

(Citrus Garrawayae (Mount White Lime) is just before steps)

- fruits contains shiny pearls of lime flavor (photo)
- Fruits eaten raw or crushed for a refreshing drink
- Cultivars developed for a commercial, exotic fruit appearing in restaurants.

## *Cross bridge. At exist of rainforest on left*

### **Syzygium smithii (previously Acmena smithii) (Lilly Pilly, Brush Cherry)**

- Berry
- Common aboriginal food, contemporary fruit for jam
- Not as sweet or as juicy as Syzygium australe

## *Straight ahead on bitumen. On right*

### **Prostanthera rotundifolia (Native thyme / mintbush)**

- Leaves are dried and ground and used as a herb – especially with poultry, pork and lamb.

*Immediately after section marker 78 turn right onto small path  
Straight ahead*

### **Macrozamia (cycad)**

- Females produce red or orange cones which seeds were source of quality starch
- Poisonous unless properly prepared – weeks of soaking
- Surplus could be prepared then fermented for later use.
- Density of populations suggest significant source of food

*Turn left  
On left*

### **Podocarpus elatus (Brown Pine/Illawarra Plum)**

- A seed on a fleshy stalk. Both eaten.
- Described as a pine-wine flavor – has a gummy texture raw – takes some getting used to.
- Europeans preferred it as a jam. Curently popular for a chutney or rich plum like sauce.

*On right*

### **Eustrephus latifolius (wombat Berry)**

- Berries look good - are OK but not great and seeds are laxative
- tubers are sweet and juicy - eaten raw or whole baked.

*Proceed toward rock garden, at Aboriginal Plant Use trail turn right  
About 10 meters in look left*

### **Doryanthes excels (gynea lilly)**

- Flower stem was cut when about 0.5 m long and roasted.
- Roots were roasted and used to make a type of cake.

*Proceed to main path  
Straight ahead*

### **dianella tasmanica and sp. (flax lilies)**

- Berries look great but are just ok there are 15 species ranging in taste, a couple believed to cause dizziness and probably not edible.
- the roots are nutritious and a good backup in hard times

*Turn right, On left*

**Persoonia pinifolia (Geebung)**

- a drupe (fleshy fruit, around single seed). The flesh eaten, seed discarded.
- Popular Aboriginal food in Qld, eaten fresh in great quantities when in season.
- In Kimberly region *P.falcata* were sun-dried by Aborigines, roasted in ashes, and stored for future eating.
- Sometimes eaten by the early colonists.

*Continue on main path, cross road  
On left*

**Austromyrtus dulcis (midyim/Midgeb berry or native blue berry)**

- sweet berry – somewhat piney with slight cinnamon underflavour.
- Makes a good jam
- Not currently commercial due to difficulty to harvest.

*And just beyond*

**Alocasia brisbanensis (previously *A.macrorrhizos*] (Cunjeoi)**

- Swollen stems are roasted – are starchy
- Highly poisonous if not treated correctly.
- Very similar to taro of Oceanic countries

*Enter rainforest, turn right. Opposite sign is*

**Linospadix monostachya (Walking stick palm)**

- Autumn berry – credited with having kept alive survivors of Stinson airplane crash, Lamington, 1937
- Buds of new shoots also eaten
- Berries are sweet with a peppery after taste

*Cross bridge. Straight up ahead*

**Araucaria bidwilli (Bunya )**

- Bears large green cones, each scale is a hard shelled nut – 5cm long
- Aboriginal tribes/families would gather when nuts were mature
- Not unlike chestnuts. Still sold in stalls in rural southern Qld.

*Turn left, downhill*

### **Cordyline petiolaris (broad leaf palm lily)**

- Neither palm nor lily, actually member of Asparagus family (Asparagaceae)
- Red berries are edible when very ripe
- Young shoots are the tasty bit!
- Leaves are used (traditionally, Northern NSW and fancy restaurants anywhere) for wrapping food for cooking and presenting.

*When path turns into boardwalk, exit to bitumen  
Turn left downhill. On left*

### **Backhousia myrtifolia (cinnamon/grey/carrol myrtle)**

- Leaves are crushed to a spice very like cinnamon. Can be used in biscuits, curries, great in steamed rice, can be used to make a wonderful cinnamon and macadamia liquor.
- Became very popular in the 1980s and 1990s
- These days Backhousia citriodora (lemon myrtle) is potentially one of the most commercial bush foods. Used more for fish and asian recipes

*Continue down about 10 meters. On left*

### **Cyathea australis (rough tree fern)**

- Yields 61kcal per 100 grams (twice turnips/pumpkins)
- Main edible part is the pith – cells that transport nutrients and water.
- Eaten raw or cooked
- Due to density and habitat range, probably a mainstay of some indigenous peoples.
- No longer a food source

### **Conclusion**

Finished with a source of food no longer in use and one which may have a big future of the past and one of the plant .

Growing in the base of the tree fern is a *Tasmania insipida* - demonstrates diversity and richness of food sources.

*Down stairs to main path.*