

# Adnyamathanha plant uses



Images and information compiled courtesy of Rosemary Pedler's *Wildflowers of the Northern Flinders Ranges* and *Wildflowers of the Southern Flinders Ranges*, Australian National Botanic Gardens and Adele Pring.

# *Acacia aneura*



## **Mulga**

(**Malka** or **Marlka**)

The wood was used for weapons and tools. The common name Mulga refers to the narrow wooden shield of this name, made from this species. The seed (Marlka vipi) cannot be eaten raw but is ground and used in damper.

# *Acacia kempeana*



## **Witchetty bush**

(**Nulpu**)

Witchetty grubs are obtained from the roots and eaten raw or lightly roasted

# *Acacia oswaldii*



**Umbrella wattle**

**(Ulka)**

Both the seeds and the gum can be a food source

# *Acacia rivalis*



## **Silver Wattle**

(**Nguriwarta**)

The gum which exudes from the stems is chewed and can also be used as a glue. The name Nguri applies to acacia gum generally.

# *Acacia tetragonophylla*

## **Dead Finish**

(**Vara** or **Vada**)



The hottest firewood – “boils the billy quickly”. Seeds ground for flour and mixed with water to make a paste and eaten raw or baked as a damper. Roots and bark soaked to make a cough medicine. The needle-like leaves used in removing warts.

# *Acacia victoriae*



**Elegant wattle**

(**Minga**)

Both the seeds and the gum can be used as a food source

# *Allocasuarina verticillata*

**Sheoak**

(**Vurpi**)

The cones can be  
sucked to quench  
thirst



# *Alyogyne huegelii*



## **Native Hibiscus**

The fibre from the stems was used to spinning and knotting into nets for trapping emus, mammals and ducks.

# *Amyema preissii*

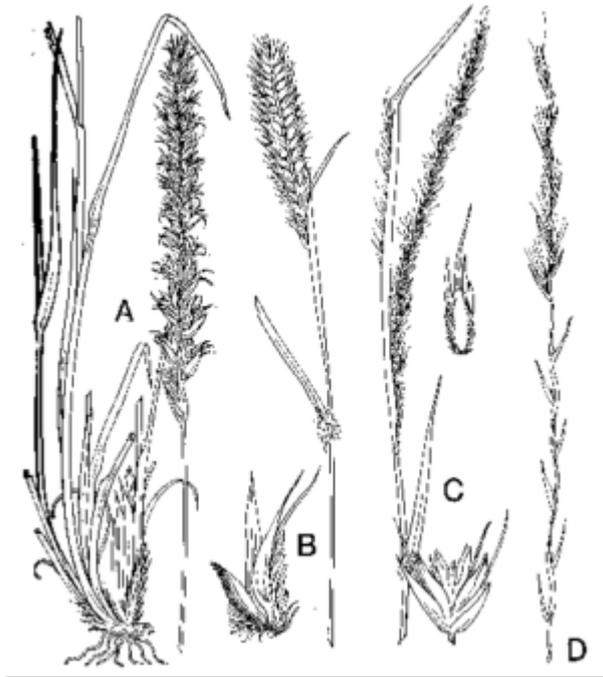


## **Wire Leaved Mistletoe (**Vaatapi**)**

The fruit is relished,  
being careful not to  
bite into the bitter  
seed.

[www.chariot.net.au/~rbg/amyema\\_preissii2.jpg](http://www.chariot.net.au/~rbg/amyema_preissii2.jpg)

# *Astrebla*



## **Mitchell Grass**

Seeds were collected,  
ground up and used to  
make a damper or  
bread.

# *Capparis mitchellii*



## **Native Orange**

### **(Iga)**

The fruit is eaten; it contains many seeds (like a passionfruit) and usually ripens in summer and is known to be a rich source of Vitamin C and Thiamine. The dry fruit can be stored for later use.

# *Cassinia laevis*

## **Curry Bush or Cough Bush**

The roots can be peeled and plaited to make a necklace worn to keep colds away; also beneficial to teething babies.



# *Eremophila longifolia*



Pauline Coulthard, an Adnyamathanha woman makes a very effective skin ointment from the ashes of the bark mixed with fat, using the weeping emubush *eremophila longifolia* shown in the photographs.

Photos by Adele Pring.



## **Emu Bush, Plum Bush** **(Varti Vaka)**

Regarded as an important plant. Fresh foliage of Vartivaka is laid over dead bodies before burial. The bark, reduced to ash and mixed with emu fat, is used as an ointment for sores and skin complaints.

# *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*



**River Red Gum (Wira)**  
Bark was used for dishes. A moth larvae (Warra-vati) obtained from the root is eaten. A moth larvae (Witati) “Witchetty” found in the trunk and branches is eaten either raw or cooked. Sugar lerp (Awarri) can be harvested from the leaves and stored for later use as a sweet snack.

# *Eucalyptus socialis*



## **Red Mallee**

(**Madla**)

Sweet nectar can be obtained from the flowers and water from the roots

# *Exocarpos cupressiformis*



## **Native Cherry**

The fruit are eaten.

# *Carpobrotus rossii*



(**Arkarla**),  
the fruit of  
the pigface  
plant was  
eaten.

# *Hakea leucoptera*

***Hakea leucoptera*** R.Br.  
(HAKE-ee-a)

PROTEACEAE (protea family)

**Description**

A many stemmed shrub or small tree 3–4m. The needle-like silver-grey leaves, 3–9cm long, are rigid and sharply tipped. The creamy-white flowers are in rounded clusters. The woody seed vessels open to release two seeds with pale papery wings.

**Flowering Time**

Late winter, spring, mid summer.

**Habitat and Range**

Common and widespread in all mainland States.

**Aboriginal Uses**

The roots can be a source of water by being cut into lengths and then placing one end into a small fire. [Called **NAPPA-KOPAREE** at Mt Lyndhurst; **KULUA**, Lake Eyre.]

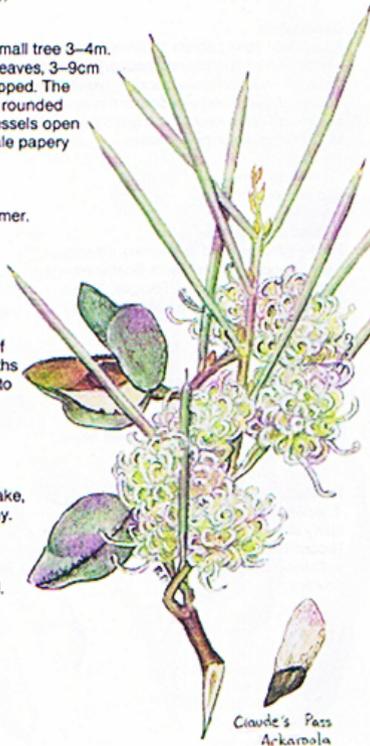
**Hakea:**

named after Baron von Hake, a German patron of botany.

**leucoptera:**

Gk. *leucos*, white; *pteron*, wing; alludes to the pale wing attached to the seed.

Needle Wood  
**VANA**  
(**VAARNA**)



## Needle Wood

(**Vaarna** or **Vana**)

The roots can be a source of water by being cut into lengths and then placing one end into a small fire.

# *Lysiana exocarpi*

*Lysiana exocarpi* (Behr.) Tieghem.  
ssp. *exocarpi*  
(ly-see-AH-na)

Harlequin Mistletoe  
VAATAPI

LORANTHACEAE (mistletoe family)

## Description

A parasitic plant which attaches to a branch of various host plants. The tangle of stems and smooth green leaves form a thick clump. The brilliant red and green or occasionally yellow flowers are followed by glossy red to almost black fruit with sweet sticky flesh.

Note: The fruit is relished by birds and animals, including the tiny mistletoe bird which then excretes the sticky seed onto a branch where it attaches and grows. Mistletoe clumps are a favoured nesting site for many small birds.

## Flowering Time

Summer, throughout the year.

## Habitat and Range

Very widespread on a wide range of hosts which include many *Acacia* species, also *Eremophila*, *Santalum*, etc, but never on *Eucalyptus*. SA generally, all mainland States.

## Aboriginal Uses

The fruit is relished, being careful not to bite into the bitter seed.

## *Lysiana*:

Gk. *lysis*, loosening, alluding to the dividing the genus from *Loranthus*.

## *exocarpi*:



## Harlequin Mistletoe (Vaatapi)

The fruit is relished, being careful not to bite into the bitter seed.

# *Marsdenia australis*



## **Native pear**

(**Mayaka** or **Mayaaka**)

An important food plant. Young leaves and nectar rich flowers, as well as the young green seed pods, are eaten raw. Adult fruit can be boiled or cooked in the ashes. The yam-like roots called (Ngandi Wari) are eaten either raw or gently cooked. Great care is taken to leave enough of the root for continued growth of the plant.

# *Marsilea drummondii*

## **Nardoo**

Spore cases were collected when water dries up, they are roasted, cases discarded and spores ground up and used to make a damper



Australian National Botanic Gardens

Murray Darling Basin Commission



Nardoo

# *Paraceterach reynoldsii*



## **Sleep Dust Fern**

(**Miya-vuta**)

Miya-vuta means “sleep dust”. Fronds are brushed softly over the eyelids of young children to make them go to sleep. (This may refer to more than one fern species.)

# *Pleurosorus rutifolius*

*Pleurosorus rutifolius* (R.Br.) Fee.

Blanket Fern

(ploo-ro-SOR-us)

ASPLENIACEAE (a fern family)

#### Description

A pretty little fern with soft erect fronds up to 15cm long. The fan-shaped pinnae (leaflets) have sori (containing spores) on the underside in short radiating lines.

Note: Very drought resistant. The fronds may dry and curl but revive again with rain.

#### Habitat and Range

Most commonly found in rock crevices, also on banks, often in open situations. Common in the Flinders, Gawler and Mt Lofty Ranges and throughout SA generally. Also all mainland States and New Zealand.

#### Aboriginal Uses

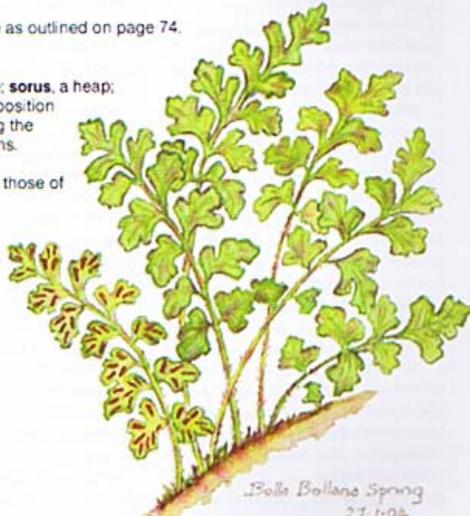
Possibly the same as outlined on page 74.

#### *Pleurosorus*:

Gk. *pleura*, side; *sorus*, a heap; alluding to the position of the sori along the sides of the veins.

#### *rutifolius*:

with leaves like those of a member of the genus *Ruta*.



## Blanket Fern

As for (**Miya-vuta**)

fronds are brushed softly over the eyelids of young children to make them go to sleep.

# *Santalum acuminatum*

*Santalum acuminatum* (R.Br.) A.DC.  
(SANT-al-um)

Quandong

SANTALACEAE (sandalwood family)

#### Description

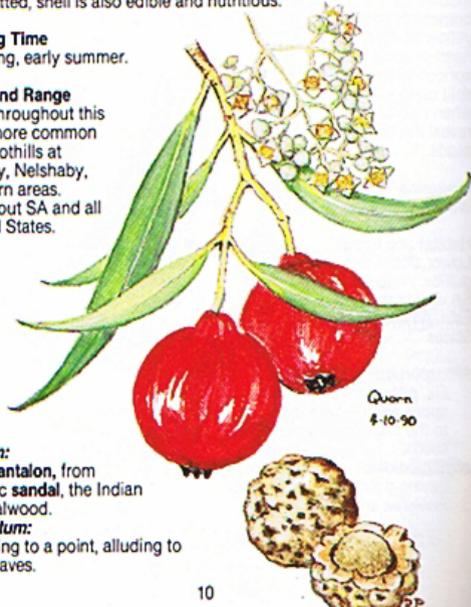
A small tree or shrub usually under 5m. It is a root parasite. The smooth, grey-green leaves are opposite. The small cream flowers are in terminal panicles. The shiny, globular, bright red fruit is edible either raw, or more usually cooked in pies, tarts or jams. The nut inside the hard, deeply pitted, shell is also edible and nutritious.

#### Flowering Time

Late spring, early summer.

#### Habitat and Range

Occurs throughout this region, more common on the foothills at Napperby, Nelshaby, and Quorn areas. Throughout SA and all mainland States.



#### *Santalum:*

Gk. *santalum*, from Arabic *sandal*, the Indian sandalwood.

#### *acuminatum:*

tapering to a point, alluding to the leaves.

## Quandong

(Uti)

The fruit is eaten fresh or dried.

The kernel is eaten and possibly used for medicinal purposes.

# *Santalum lanceolatum*

*Santalum lanceolatum* R.Br.

(SANT-a-lum)

SANTALACEAE (sandalwood family)

Plum Bush  
MANAWARRA  
(MARNAWARRA)

#### Description

A graceful small tree to 4m, partially parasitic on the roots of other plants. The grey-green leaves are in opposite pairs and the scented pale-apricot flowers hang in terminal clusters. The small dark blue plum-like fruit is sweet and edible.

#### Flowering Time

Late winter, spring, summer. Under favourable conditions Plum Bush can flower and fruit all year round.

#### Habitat and Range

Common in the more arid areas of this region. Occurring in creeklines and depressions and on rocky slopes. All mainland States.

#### Aboriginal Uses

The fruit is relished. The liquid from bark shavings, boiled in water, is used to relieve coughs and colds and to treat pain and eye disorders. Leaves are also boiled and the water used as an external all-purpose remedy.

#### *Santalum*:

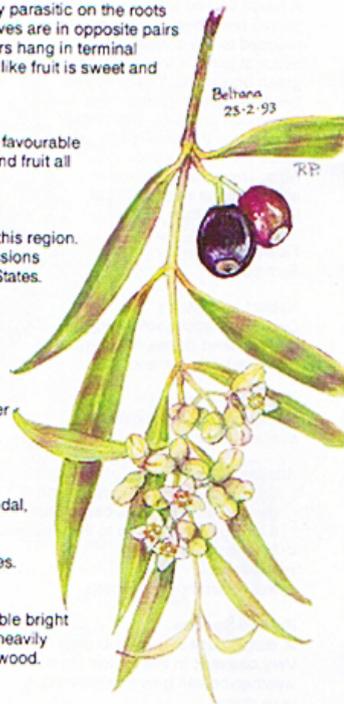
Gk. *santalum*, from the Arabic sandal, the Indian sandalwood.

#### *lanceolatum*:

alludes to the lance-shaped leaves.

#### Related Species

*S. acuminatum*, Quandong, with edible bright red fruit. *S. spicatum*, Sandalwood, heavily exploited in the past for its fragrant wood.



## Plum bush (**Manawarra**)

The fruit is relished. The liquid from bark shavings, boiled in water, is used to relieve coughs and colds and to treat pain and eye disorders. Leaves are also boiled and the water used as an external all-purpose remedy.

# *Solanum ellipticum*

***Solanum ellipticum*** R.Br.  
(sol-AIN-um)

Velvet Potato Bush  
**YUMARA (YUMARRU)**

SOLANACEAE (nightshade family)

#### Description

Small sprawling bush 15cm tall, densely covered in pale creamy or greyish-green woolly hairs. The leaves to 10cm are deeply folded along the midrib and can be tinged purple at the tips. Stems and backs of leaves have many pale prickles up to 1cm long. Fruit a pale yellowish-green.

#### Flowering Time

Most of the year with a peak late winter, spring.

#### Habitat and Range

Usually associated with rocky outcrops in open situations. Very common and widespread in the drier areas of SA. Also WA, NT, Qld and NSW.

#### Aboriginal Uses

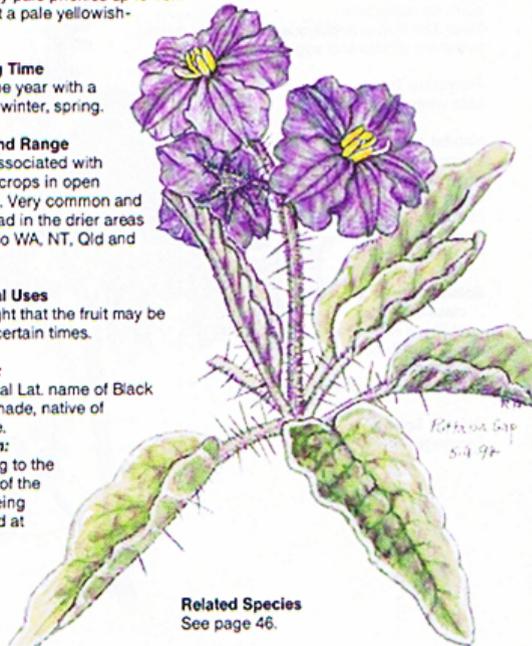
It is thought that the fruit may be eaten at certain times.

#### *Solanum*:

classical Lat. name of Black Nightshade, native of Europe.

#### *ellipticum*:

alluding to the shape of the leaf, being tapered at both ends.



**Related Species**  
See page 46.

## Velvet Potato Bush

(**Yumara** or **Yumarru**)

It is thought that the fruit may be eaten at certain times.

Several similar plants are poisonous.

# *Cyperus bulbosus*



(**Arla**)

“We used to eat **arlar**, like a small potato which would grow in creek beds. When the green part of it died, we’d go and scoop out the dirt and get these **arlar** and cook them in the ashes.” Gordon Coulthard, Port Augusta, 1984

Read more from an Arrernte perspective at [http://www.clc.org.au/OurLand/land\\_management/reports/report1-b-limestone.asp](http://www.clc.org.au/OurLand/land_management/reports/report1-b-limestone.asp), the source of pics at left.

# *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata*

*Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* F. Muell.  
(zanth-o-REE-a)

XANTHORRHOACEAE (yacca family)

## Description

Woody stemmed perennial to 2m. In old plants the dense crown of long thin leaves radiates from the top of the rough thick trunk which is sometimes partly obscured by a curtain of dead foliage. Young plants are stemless. The cylindrical stalk to 1m carries a dense terminal spike which bears tightly packed, creamy flowers.

## Flowering Time

Autumn, winter.

## Habitat and Range

Inhabits dry rocky sites, ridges and gullies throughout this region. Also Mt Lofty Ranges, Murray Lands and South-East of SA. Endemic to SA.

## *Xanthorrhoea*:

Gk. *xanthos*, yellow;  
*rheo*, I flow, alluding to the resin in the stem.

## *quadrangulata*:

leaves having four angles.



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## Yacca

The fleshy base of the leaves could be eaten.

Nectar could be obtained from the flowers.

The stems were used for fire-making.

Smoke from the soft wood of the flower spike was used to relieve chest complaints and congested breathing passages.

It flowers first on the north side so helps in direction finding on a dull day.