

NEWSLETTER

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323 Philp Ave
Frenchville
Qld. 4701

12/12/2009

Dear Members and subscribers,

Another ANPSA (formerly ASGAP) biennial conference and seminar has come and gone - the latest in Victoria at Geelong. I haven't heard anything much from this one yet, as no-one from Rockhampton attended, but I'm looking forward to reading the paper on bush foods that was presented by Dr Beth Gott. However, I also need to pass on the information that Philip Robinson has stepped down as ANPSA Study Group Co-ordinator to undertake other roles within APS Victoria, and the new Co-ordinator is Geoff Lay, Vice President of APS Maroondah, also in Victoria. We sincerely thank Philip for his work and assistance over recent years, and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Also from the Conference comes the news of the passing of New South Wales APS stalwart Lyn Thompson after a short illness. Lyn was NSW Study Group Liaison Officer, and I knew her personally through attendance at many past conferences, as well as in our "official" capacities. She will be greatly missed.

On the local front, the major concern has been the prolonged dry after reasonable falls in early summer twelve months ago. As we haven't received a drop since, the countryside is looking very sad, and the town itself resembles a brown wasteland rather than the tropical green oasis of former years. The only green visible in the Berserkers (the mountains which form the backdrop to the city, separating it from the coast) are the pockets of Vine Scrub in the steeper gullies and along the creeks, as the rest of the vegetation (open grassy woodland) burnt to bare earth in the October fires, the worst in recorded history.

The one good thing to emerge from the terrible experience has been the gradual realisation by at least some of the powers-that-be that wholesale clearing or annual burning only encourages more grass, which dies off and burns fast and hot; more work is needed on identifying those fire resistant species from the edges of the Vine Scrubs which would be suitable for public plantings; and a mosaic pattern of well spaced cool burns is a reasonable management plan.

The drought and fires have also had an adverse effect on the vegetation of the surrounding areas, so that the species lists from our outings seem very shrunken when compared with past years.

While a small group of regulars have continued working in the Kershaw Gardens, it has been mainly a holding operation rather than embarking on any new projects. However, my particular little "babies" - the 2 plants of what I believe to be the true *Gardenia vilhelmii*, and a number of plants of what was formerly *Gardenia edulis* - are doing well. This is very gratifying, especially given the amount of time I have been away this year.

Mid year we spent a week in Japan with our eldest son and his family, and 5 weeks in France and UK with my sisters and their partners. (The first time we'd all been together for nearly 20 years.)

While we were in Yokohama we travelled up to Lake Nojiri in the western mountains where they have a small wooden cabin. One of the activities we enjoyed with our grandchildren was searching in the surrounding woods for "mountain vegetables" - mostly stems of a particular large leaved plant - which we brought home to be cooked as part of the evening meal.

For most of the time in France we rented an 18th century "cottage" in the village of St Leger Vauban in Burgundy, and revelled in the produce of this most bountiful countryside: summer fruits and vegetables, cheeses and wines, charcuterie and snails, wild mushrooms, raspberries and blackcurrants from our garden, tiny wild strawberries and the first of the blackberries from the hedgerows.

In Stamford in Lincolnshire we drank elderflower champagne and dandelion and burdock drink as well as cider, and enjoyed local English specialities as we visited places of interest round about.

On our return from the northern summer, we found that Rocky had endured a very cold winter, and the native raspberry canes were heavy with ripe fruit which also carpeted the ground. Even the birds hadn't made much of a dent in the abundance. So we picked and picked, ate fresh and cooked and froze for future use. It was interesting to be able to compare the 2 different types of berry so close in time.

Six weeks after our home-coming, I left again with a group of Bellydancers from Rocky on a long awaited trip to Egypt, with 5 days in Istanbul and 4 in Bangkok. This was something completely different.

In Egypt we did all the usual tourist stuff, as well as attending a private dance masterclass. I enjoyed Egyptian food, but probably the most interesting discovery in that field was the universal drink of Nubia (Upper Egypt, around Aswan). This is karkade or hibiscus tea, offered everywhere, usually at room temperature and unsweetened. It is a deep rich red, and can be drunk hot or cold. In tourist places it is often chilled, and sometimes the option of adding sugar is given. I couldn't discover what species of *Hibiscus* was used, or get to see a plant, but the colour and flavour certainly suggested products made from both cultivated rosellas and native hibiscus flowers.

Turkish food was magnificent. The breakfast buffet at our hotel was incredible - fresh and preserved fruits and yoghurts, cheeses and vegetables, eggs and breads and pastries, jams and spoon sweets. And on the corner nearby was a sweet shop that had been there for more than 100 years, where a trio of avuncular men offered coffee, chocolate, apple tea and other drinks, cakes and pastries, spoon sweets, chocolates and every flavour and type of Turkish Delight imaginable. We became very good daily customers!

While in Thailand we attended an incredibly spectacular theatrical production showcasing Thai history and culture. The show was preceded by a huge buffet dinner, in which each long table featured a different national cuisine, so that you could choose your entire meal from, for example, Japanese or Indian dishes, or pick whatever you fancied from any table. Thai icecream was the really interesting offering here, in a dazzling array of flavours, from mangosteen and coconut to a strange hard bright green noodle-like additive of indeterminate vegetable taste. The produce and flower markets were really interesting places, and both pink and white lotus are grown extensively, as it is the sacred flower of the Buddha.

After all my travelling, it was hard to settle back into routine, as there always seemed to be something unexpected happening.

I repeated my Mackay talk for the Rockhampton Branch, and there are now plans afoot between the 2 branches to reproduce it next year as a small booklet with coloured photographs. It was a very successful evening with a large audience and a delicious supper of wattle seed damper and native fruit jams.

At the end of September some of our members attended the Wycarbah and District Landcare Group's Catfish Derby at Hanrahan's Crossing on the Fitzroy, setting up the plant display stand and attracting a lot of interest. There was interest in bush tucker generally and some great stories about the various tubers that occurred in the old scrub soils, and regret that some of these species might now be uncommon. We extended an offer to help members with a bush tucker/native plants identification walk in the future.

We're now about to welcome the first of a succession of house guests which will keep us busy at least until Easter. In between times I'll do my best to complete this newsletter and have it ready for copying when Robert Schwarten's office reopens after the holiday break.

There remains only to wish you the compliments of the Season, and all the best for the coming year.

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton SGAP.

E-mail: lenorelindsay@hotmail.com

The 750 year old Boab tree transplanted from the Kimberley region to Perth's Kings Park in 2008 is apparently doing well so far.

EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:

24/7/09: *Acacia macradenia* (flowers), *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seeds), *Clerodendrum floribundum* (root), *Dodonaea pposit* (capsules as hop substitute), *Grevillea wickhamii*, *Grevillea* "Billy Bonkers", *Grevillea* "Firefly", *Grevillea* "Ivory Whip" (nectar), *Hibiscus heterophyllus*, *H.splendens* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Leptospermum* "Pink Cascade" (leaves as tea substitute), *Myoporum montanum*, *Tetrastigma nitens* (fruits).

28/8/09: *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seeds), *Dianella caerulea* (fruits), *Grevillea wickhamii*, *Grevillea* "Billy Bonkers", *Grevillea banksii fosteri*, *Grevillea* "Ivory Whip" (nectar), *Hibiscus* sp., *H.heterophyllus* (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Leptospermum* "Pink Cascade", *L.flavescens* (leaves as tea substitute), *Myoporum montanum* (fruit).

25/9/09: *Acacia bidwillii* (root), *A.holosericea* (seeds), *Cassia brewsteri*, *C.tomentella* (gum from seeds), *Diospyros pposite*, *Glycosmis pentaphylla* (fruit), *Melaleuca dealbata* (nectar), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seeds).

23/10/09: *Brachychiton bidwillii* (seeds), *Dianella attraxis*, *Dianella caerulea* (2 forms), *Dianella* sp (white fruit) (fruits), *Erythrina vespertilio* (root), *Grevillea* "Billy Bonkers", *Grevillea* "Ivory Whip" (nectar), *Hibiscus* "Canoona Pink" (buds, flowers, shoots, roots), *Orthosiphon aristartus* (medicinal), *Planchonia careya*, *Persoonia amaliae*, *Psydrax attenuatum*(?), *P.odoratum*, *Syzygium* sp., *Terminalia porphyrocarpa* (fruits), *Viola hederacea* (flowers).

27/11/09: *Cassia tomentella* (gum from seeds), *Euroschinus pposit*, *Austromyrtus dulcis* (fruits), *Brachychiton acerifolius*, *B.bidwillii* (seeds), *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Diospyros humilis* (fruits), *Eucalyptus coolabahs* (seeds), *Grevillea* "Billy Bonkers", *Grevillea* "Ivory Whip", *Grevillea striata* (nectar), *Leptospermum petersonii* (leaves as tea substitute), *Melaleuca leucadendra* (nectar, bark for cooking and other purposes), *Planchonia careya*, *Pittosporum spinescens* (fruits).

EXCURSIONS:

5/7/09: "Belgamba", Struck Oil, with Gladstone SGAP: : *A.salicina* (seed), *Acronychia laevis*, *Aidia racemosa*, *Alectryon pposit*, *Bridelia leichhardtii*, *Carissa ovata*, *Capparis arborea*, *Cissus oblonga* (fruit), *Corymbia intermedia*, *C.tesselaris*, *C.erythrophloia*, *Eucalyptus melanophloia*, *E.moluccana*, *E.tereticornis* (nectar), *Exocarpus latifolius*, (fruit), *Eustrephus latifolius* (root, aril), *Ficus pposite*, *F.platypoda*, *F.virens* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Gahnia aspera* (seeds), *Geodorum densiflorum* (tubers) *Diospyros australis*, *D.fasciculosa*, *Pipturis argenteus*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Psychotria daphnoides*, *Melodorum leichhardtii*, *Passiflora suberosa**, (fruit), *Sterculia quadrifida* (seed kernels), *Syzygium australe* (fruit).

1&2/8/09: Weekend at Blackdown Tableland: While there were many species in flower, few were food plants: *Acacia macradenia*, *A.podalyrifolia* (flowers), *A.oswaldii* (seed), *Banksia spinulosa*, *Grevillea longistyla* (nectar), *Dendrobium speciosum* (pseudobulbs), *Hardenbergia violacea* (leaves as a tea), *Leucopogon biflorus*, *L.muticus*, *Melastoma malabathricum*, *Elaeocarpus reticularis* (fruits), *Blechnum spp.* (rhizomes), *Livistona fulva* (palm "cabbage").

6/9/09: Stockyard Point heath and headland in Byfield National Park: *Grevillea banksii*, *Banksia robur*, *Corymbia sp.* (nectar), *Diuris sp.* (tubers), *Eucalyptus exserta* (nectar, leaves for flavouring and medicinal), *Melastoma malabathricum* (fruit), *Pandanus sp.* (fruit, seeds, leaf bases), *Melaleuca dealbata* (nectar, bark for cooking and other purposes), *Petalostigma triloculare* (medicinal), *Leptospermum polygalifolium* (leaves as tea substitute).

4/10/09: Double Heads, Capricorn Coast: *Aidia racemosa*, *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides*, *Diospyros geminate* (fruits), *Ficus obliqua* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Dodonaea lanceolata* (capsules as hop substitute).

31/10&1/11/09: Weekend in the Taroom District with members of the Dawson Catchment Co-ordinating Association, Taroom, Baralaba, Callide and Roma Landcare Groups, and the Wildlife Preservation Society, learning about the local Ooline Scrubs (*Cadellia pentastylis*), and diverting to inspect a Bogomoss (a peat swamp area formed by an uplifting artesian spring, with many endemic species of plants and small animals such as snails). While this was an incredibly interesting and enjoyable outing, we didn't actually see many native edible plants. *Grevillea banksii* (nectar), *Capparis spp.* 1,2,3 (fruits), *Alectryon pubescens* (fruit), *Livistona sp.* (palm "cabbage").

6/12/09: Christmas Break-up at Emu Park, Capricorn Coast, with Emu Park Community Bushcare Group: *Alectryon pposit*, *Arytera divaricate*, *Carissa ovata*, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, *Diospyros geminate*, *Drypetes deplanchii*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *E.uniflora**, *Euroschinus falcate*, *Exocarpus latifolius*, *Lantana camara**, *Mallotus pposite*, *Planchonia careya*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Pouteria sericea*, *Cassytha filiformus*, *Passiflora foetida**, *P.suberosa**, *Trophis scandens*, *Amyema mackayensis*, *Opuntia stricta** (fruits), *Clerodendrum floribundum*, *Ipomoea pes-caprae* (roots), *Corymbia tessellaris* (nectar), *Dodonaea pposit* (capsules as hop substitute), *Ficus pposite*, *Ficus sp.* (fruit, shoots, medicinal sap), *Melaleuca dealbata*, *M.leucadendra*, *M.quinquenervia* (nectar, bark for cooking and other purposes), *Geijera salicifolia*, *Petalostigma pubescens* (medicinal), *Livistona decora* (palm "cabbage"), *Pandanus sp.* (fruit, seeds, leaf bases), *Canavalia maritima* (treated seeds), *Geitonoplesium cymosum* (shoots), *Dendrobium discolor* (pseudobulbs).

Murdering Point Winery, north of Tully between Silkwood and Kurramine Beach, specialises in tropical fruit wines, made from both exotic and native fruits, including Lemon Aspen (a white) and Davidson Plum (a red). We found them delicious.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Carinya Haven Flowering Forest
Roma. Qld. 4455.

Ph: 0746223759

16/7/09

Dear Lenore,

Thank you for the newsy newsletters. They are the only contact I have on Australian food plants. I live 500 kilometres west of Brisbane on a property which contains Mitchell grass plains and scattered softwood scrub, 25 km west of Roma.

With a once upon a time average rainfall of 22 inches and a temperature range of -5 C to 45 C we are in a semi-arid region.

Some bush tucker and medicinal plants naturally found on the property are:

Capparis arborea, *C.lasiantha*, *C.mitchellii*, *Carissa ovata*, *Casuarina cristate*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Geijera parviflora*, *grevillea striata*, *Owenia acidula*, *Pittosporum phillyraoides*, *Santalum lanceolatum*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, *Eremophila debilis*, *Cymbidium canaliculatum*.

During the last ten years a lot of native and exotic food plants have been introduced into a "rainforest area" to test their adaptability. There have been many pleasant surprises, and the garden will be open to public viewing 12-13 June 2010.

We welcome any bush food enthusiasts any time they are in the area.

Regards,
John M. Aisthorpe.

We look forward to reading about some of John's pleasant plant surprises in future newsletters. (Ed.)

Lawnton. Qld. 4501.

Dear Lenore,

.... I made a very nice jam recently from the fruit of *Halfordia kendack*. It came out a rich cherry red. I had not thought of using the fruit before, but when I tasted it, it was rather like *Acronychia wilcoxiana*, which makes a nice jam; so I thought I would try it. Pine River members voted it a good one.

Regards,
Jan Sked.

Myponga. S.A. 5202.

Hullo Lenore,

I live about 70 km south of Adelaide, and have been growing bushfood plants since 1986. I was introduced to 'wild peaches' (quandong) which grew prolifically in the mid-north of South Australia when I was a child.

I have grown many species including *Macadamia*, Lemon Myrtle, *Planchonella*, *Syzygium*, *Brachychiton*, *Podocarpus*, Midyim, Muntries, Mountain Pepper, Native Tamarind, Davidson's Plum, *Billardiera* species, *Acronychia*, Bunya...

I have 26 acres but only a small area planted to bushfood plants.

I am looking forward to exchanging ideas with other interested growers.

Thank you.

Rob Conley.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The latest issue of the newsletter of the Hibiscus and Related Genera Study Group (of which Rockhampton SGAP is a member) contains an appeal for information from the leader, Geoff Harvey.

Issue 15 of *SubTropical Gardening and landscaping in warm climates* contained an article which stated that Native Rosella (*Hibiscus heterophyllus*) should not be eaten.

This is concerning, not only to a number of members of the Hibiscus Study Group, but also to our group. Many people make and enjoy drinks, syrups and jams made from the blooms of *Hibiscus heterophyllus* and its crosses. Others enjoy the tangy acid flavour obtained by chewing a young leaf.

However, there is a claim online that one person sustained kidney damage through drinking large quantities of tea made from *Hibiscus heterophyllus* leaves.

This claim seems to be the source of the galloping assumption in the horticultural community that the plant contains high levels of oxalates and is therefore poisonous.

If anyone has any other information on the topic, Geoff would like to hear from you.

In the meantime, Hibiscus Study Group members Dr Dion Harrison and Dr Ross McKenzie have worked out a proposal for the sampling of selected *Hibiscus heterophyllus* populations for an analysis for oxalates. *Hibiscus splendens* and *H.divaricatus* are also to be included in the sampling process. Dr Dion Harrison, with Peter Bevan and Colleen and Geoff Keena, will collect the samples for analysis. Dr Ross McKenzie will organise the analysis of the collected material.

RECIPES

Lemon Myrtle Syrup: *Backhousia citriodora* (Colleen Keena)

5 grams lemon myrtle leaves
1¼ cups boiling water
1¼ cups sugar

1. Roughly chop lemon myrtle leaves after washing.
2. Pour over boiling water.
3. When mixture has cooled slightly, discard the leaves by straining the mixture.
4. Add the sugar to the lemon myrtle liquid and stir.
5. Bring mixture to the boil.
6. Lower heat and simmer gently until the volume is reduced by a third (about an hour).
7. Pour into a sterilized jar and store in the fridge. Keeps well.
8. Serve the syrup with fruit and/or custard or icecream.

NOTE: It is important to discard the leaves and just use the liquid that remains, otherwise the taste will be unpleasant.

Quandong Clafoutis: (Maggie Beer)

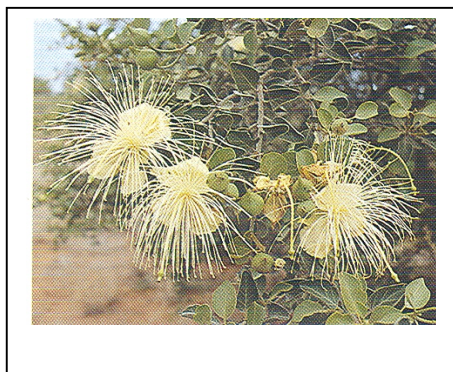
100g dried quandongs
125ml verjuice
125g sugar
50ml medium dry sherry or Boronia (optional)

30g unsalted butter
15g plain flour
20g sugar
2 eggs
1 egg yolk
200ml milk
3 lemon myrtle leaves
½ cup macadamias chopped

1. Soak the quandongs in verjuice overnight. Strain and reserve juices.
2. Add sugar and alcohol (if desired) to these juices to make a syrup. Simmer for 5 minutes then add quandongs and simmer for a further 5 minutes or until quandongs are cooked but still intact.
3. Lightly butter a small non-stick baking dish and place the quandongs minus the syrup on the bottom of the tin.
4. Add the lemon myrtle to the milk and bring to a simmer, then turn the heat off and leave to infuse until needed.
5. Heat the butter till nut brown then leave to cool slightly.
6. Preheat the oven to 190 C.
7. Sieve the flour and sugar into a medium mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre and crack the eggs into the well.
8. Using a whisk, gradually incorporate the flour and eggs, then add the warm infused milk. Whisk to combine and once incorporated add the nut brown butter and stir to combine.
9. Pour the mixture over the quandongs, sprinkle on the macadamia nuts and bake for about 30 minutes or until just set.
10. Cool slightly, then serve with cream.

Wild Orange: *Capparis mitchellii*

Jan Sked (reprinted from SGAP Qld Region BULLETIN, September 2008).



Flowers and cross section of fruit photographed by Peter Bindon.

Also known as Native Pomegranate and Bumble Tree, *Capparis mitchellii* was named after the explorer, Major Mitchell, who was the first white man to see the tree. According to Mitchell, the fruit had an agreeable perfume. Aboriginal people ate the raw fruit which is a good source of vitamin C and thiamine.

It is a tall shrub or small rounded tree, 5-8 metres in height, with a dense crown and black, deeply fissured bark. Young plants are straggly and very thorny, but older plants become more erect and have fewer thorns. Dull green, oval, rigid leaves, 2-6cm x 1-3cm, clothe the woolly, spiny branches.

Flowers can be found at any time of the year. They are beautiful, large white or creamy yellow blossoms with long protruding stamens. Each flower only lasts for a day.

The fruits that follow are rounded and green and hang from the branches on long curved stalks. When ripe they are purplish or dull orange, soft to the touch, sweet smelling, and generally about 4-7cm across. The pulpy yellowish flesh is the part to eat. It is quite tasty, although a bit astringent.

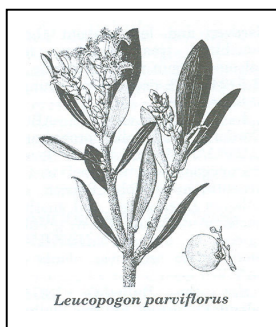
The seeds are peppery and should be removed from the flesh. The skin is bitter and inedible. Fruit can be eaten raw or used in desserts such as ice cream or mousse. It can also be added to savoury dishes like casseroles, curries, rice and couscous. The best time for fruit tends to be mid to late summer.

Wild Orange occurs naturally in the drier parts of inland Australia in open savannah forest and grassland, generally on heavier textured soils. It is suitable to grow in drier area and will tolerate a range of soils including limestone. However, it will not tolerate bad drainage. It is slow growing. Full sun is preferred. Plants are drought and frost tolerant.

Propagation is from seed or cuttings of firm wood.

C. mitchellii is a host plant for the Caper White Butterfly, the larvae of which can seriously defoliate it. Birds also relish the fruit.

Bearded Heath: *Leucopogon parviflorus*.



A beachfront heath species whose range extends from south-east Queensland where it is a medium shrub to the southern coast of Victoria where it can be a very large sturdy shrub, adopting artistically gnarled shapes moulded by strong seafront winds. The flowers are the typical tiny white fluffy-throated tubes. It has small edible fruits, and would be an excellent choice for coastal gardens.

Barbara Henderson (Leader: Wallum & Coastal Heathland Study Group)
(Drawing reproduced from DPI Advisory Leaflet No.1438)

Native Nettles.

Most people interested in food plants are aware that the exotic stinging nettle, in spite of its ability to inflict extremely painful stings, is not only edible when cooked, but extremely nutritious. It is rich in Vitamins A and C and iron, and there is a long history of its use in Europe, in tonics, tea, wine, beer, soup and as a green vegetable and pot herb.

What many people don't know, however, is that there are Australian members of the *Urticaceae* which are also edible, and they don't all sting either. However, some members of the family are the worst stingers of all!

These are the feared Stinging Trees; the *Dendrocnide* species, whose fruit is reportedly edible, but which I have never risked sampling. A much preferable relative is the Native Mulberry, *Pipturis argenteus*, whose small, soft, whitish fruits are sweet and juicy.

The Native Stinging Nettle, *Urtica incisa*, shares the attributes of its exotic cousin, being both nutritious and possessing stinging hairs, and can be used in exactly the same ways after taking the same precautions.

However, there are other edible native nettles that are minus the sting, and make equally tasty cooked green vegetables. These are plants of damp shady places, preferably with rich soil, and include the Smooth Nettle or Native Shade Pellitory, *Parietaria debilis*; the Smooth Shade Nettle, *Australina pusilla*; and Rainforest Spinach, *Elatostema reticulatum*, whose stems are particularly delicious.

Savoury Rainforest Spinach. (Jan Sked)

2 cups chopped *Elatostema* stems ¼ cup Macadamia oil
2 medium onions chopped 2 tablespoons grated parmesan
Sprinkle of garlic powder (or finely chopped clove of garlic)

Cover onions and spinach with boiling water and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain. Heat oil in pan. Add onions, spinach and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes. Serve topped with shaved or grated parmesan.

News from ANFIL (Australian Native Food Industry Limited).

ANFIL has been working closely with RIRDC to develop a package of research initiatives designed to help all of us become more informed and professional. The projects listed were to be tackled during the year 2008-09.

1. Preparing the native food industry for national and global challenges by researching and preparing background material for regulatory authorities to consider for recognition of more native food species.
2. Development of Native Food Profiles (Website Fact Sheets), initially for each of the 10 main native food crops.
3. Develop Nutritional and Food Safety Profiles which can be used to support applications to international regulatory authorities.
4. Development of aroma flavour descriptions for Australian native foods using recognised and authenticated terminology appropriate to the genre.
5. Support of Health Benefits Exploration, particularly the research work of Food Science Australia.
6. Future Projects: Storage and shelf life parameters for native foods, assessing the impacts of various processing techniques and packaging solutions.

Health Benefits phase 2, looking at incorporating native food ingredients into the general diet.

Interest by Indigenous Native Food Growers.

Following the ABC Landline segment aired in December 2008, which showed the Outback Pride Native Food Projects at Mimili and Amata in the APY Lands (far north west SA), a number of Indigenous groups around Australia have approached Mike and Gayle Quarmby re the possible development of Native Food Production Enterprises on their community lands.

Naturally, there is still a lot of work to be done before these projects can become a reality. Areas such as selection of commercially viable species for the locality, climate, soil, water, workforce, infrastructure, transport, and of course funding and administrative issues have to be evaluated.

The benefits to communities are significant, not only in job creation and career pathway development, but also in community health, and Mike and Gayle feel positive about the progress made.

Have you ever tried eating the tender Spring weeds in your garden? People from many different cultures traditionally looked forward to the nutritious greens after the long gloomy winter, but with our good transport networks and well-stocked supermarkets, Australians have

mostly forgotten this free food source. Dandelion, chickweed, sowthistle, cleavers, purple Emilies, warrigal greens, nettles are some of the available choices. Make sure to identify them correctly.

Air layering made easy.

Based on information supplied by Rich Parker of the Sub-Tropical Fruit Club of Qld Inc in their Aug-Sept 2009 Newsletter.

The best time to propagate by air layering is after the tree has fruited and before you prune for shape and size. Branches that you would prune off in the shaping process anyway can be used to reproduce your trees.

Pick an upright branch about the thickness of a marker pen. Avoid hanging side branches, which will tend to always act as side branches, even when separated from the parent tree. A branch that gets sun will air layer better.

Pick a spot on the branch that will allow you to cut below the future root ball so the new feeder roots will be at the top of the container destined for the new plant. Make sure your tools are clean (sterilise with bleach or methylated spirits) and sharp.

Using a knife or special cutter, make a clean straight cut through the bark to the wood. Make a second cut about 2 cm from the first. Grab the bark between the cuts with a pair of pliers and twist off. Scrape the wood (with the pliers) to cut the cambium layer.

Prepare a rooting medium by soaking sphagnum moss in water to which a small amount of rooting hormone has been added. Wring it out so it is moist, not wet.

Tear off a foot long piece of aluminium foil and lay the moss out in a 8 x 4 cm layer on the foil held in your hand. Then wrap the area of exposed wood completely with the moss, using the foil to hold it in place. Twist and squeeze to make it as tight as possible round the branch and moss. This keeps ants out and increases your chances of success. If the foil rips, simply put another sheet over the top of it.

A tight, moist not wet, ball of moss will give faster and better results. Be patient. You can usually tell how it is going after 4-6 weeks by gently squeezing the foil and feeling for roots. If roots are present, it feels hard, not squishy.

Once roots have formed, cut off the branch 8-12 cm below the root ball, and place your cut branches in a bucket of water without removing the foil. This keeps the roots wet and helps chase out any bugs.

Trim and shape your new tree a little.

To plant, remove the foil carefully and position in the container, making sure the root ball is close to the top. The tag end of the branch goes to the bottom of the pot to provide support. Carefully fill with soil and water in. Do not push the soil down or pack it in, as this is liable to damage the brittle new roots.

Place the new plant in a shady area or mist house and keep the whole plant moist. Make sure the soil is moist and well drained, not mud. When new growth appears, you can begin introducing your new plant to the sun, and gradually harden it off.

Summary of Final Report on Research Project

Cultivation of Native Potatoes (*platysace spp*).

Woodall, G.S.(1), Moule, M.L.(1), Eckersley, P.(2), Boxshall, B.(1), and Puglisi, B.(1)

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The flora of Western Australia contains an extraordinary number of species that form root tubers. Over 85% of 153 tuberous species recorded in Western Australia occur in the south west of the state. This diversity provided an unparalleled resource from which new horticultural crops could be developed.

Field observation and available information were used to make an assessment of species in regard to their unambiguous history of consumption, vegetative vigour, reproductive vigour and likely ease of propagation. Attributes such as size, colour, flavour, texture and abundance of the potential product were also assessed. This approach suggested that a target group comprised of *Platysace deflexa*, *Ipomoea calobra* and *Haemodorum spicatum* were worthy contenders for further study.

Propagation systems for all three target species were developed and a commercial field production developed for *Ipomoea calobra*. *Platysace deflexa* is in pilot production trials, and both *I.calobra* and *P.deflexa* have been readily accepted by consumers. *Haemodorum spicatum* has been less readily accepted, because of its fibrous texture and bitter taste.

Extra notes from a talk by Geoff Woodall given to Perth Branch of WSWA in July 2009. Reprinted from WSWA Newsletter November 2009.

A species of *Platysace* can now be established reliably; it needs occasional drip irrigation through the first summer. It produces a good yield of a tuber with a pleasant taste, and is close to being commercial.

A species of *Ipomoea* (sweet potato) has been grown at Carnarvon with yields of up to 30 tonnes per hectare. The tubers taste good and are highly nutritious, but are produced at depths greater than 1 metre and are therefore difficult to harvest.

Less successful have been attempts to commercialise *Haemodorum* (Bloodroot). It produces a chemical in the roots that is similar to that of curry powder.

STOP PRESS: It's raining in Rocky!!!! It's rained every day between Boxing Day and New Year: sometimes a little, sometimes a lot, and already the place is looking cleaner and greener. We couldn't have received a better Christmas gift.

BOOK REVIEW by Dr Elwyn Hegarty: *Aboriginal People and Their Plants*

By Philip A. Clarke. Published 2007 by Rosenberg Publishing, NSW.
191 pages, A4 size hardback, slip cover.

Some commercially successful Australian plant bushfoods have received lots of publicity in recent years. However, much less information has been available about how traditional aboriginal groups found, selected and used native plants to sustain their daily life. Such experience had been developed during many millennia of isolation from news of overseas developments such as metal tools, pottery, permanent written records, domesticated farm animals and staple grain crops.

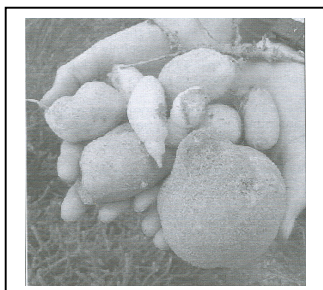
Today's online databases are unlikely to reveal the detail or even the existence of many records of traditional usage made during the decades of white settlement, often by Government officers or explorers. These records were locally or regionally based, as with our State floras. Written records of aboriginal usage have only been made over the last 200 years or so, at the same time as many of the traditional oral records were being lost, or only slowly sought and divulged.

In this book, the author could only present representative examples of traditional uses of plants, but he has done so on an historical, Australia-wide canvas. Excellent illustrations of aboriginal life show the collection and use of plants for medicines, nutrition, decoration, implements and weapons, together with colour photographs of many plants.

While there is a lack of detailed maps of regional areas, which could disadvantage readers not familiar with Australian geography, perhaps its greatest value is in the massive reference list of sources of information. Over 900 are detailed and indexed within the text, together with cross-indexed lists of the common and scientific names of all plants mentioned.

The author is based in South Australia, and has had many years of field and Museum-based experience in recording aboriginal plant uses in inland Australia and elsewhere, most recently while holding senior Museum research positions.

The text is arranged in easy-to-follow chapters, essentially non-technical; the illustrations are numerous, and the result is an expert summary of aboriginal life and its many forms of dependence on Australian native plants. (Reprinted from SGAP Qld BULLETIN Dec 2009)



Ipomoea & Platysace tubers