

Traditional Bush Tucker Plant Fact Sheets

Acknowledgements: We would like to acknowledge the traditional Noongar owners of this land and custodians of the knowledge used in these Fact Sheets.

Illustrations and photos by Melinda Snowball, Deb Taborda, Amy Krupa, Pam Agar and Sian Mawson.

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Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

Caution: Do not prepare bush tucker food without having been shown by Indigenous or experienced persons. Some bush tucker if eaten in large quantities or not prepared correctly can cause illness.

Australian Bluebell



Scientific name: *Billardiera heterophylla*

Aboriginal name: Gumug (Noongar)



Plant habit



Leaf and stem



Flower



Fruit

About ...

This plant relies on birds to eat the fruit and then disperse the seeds. The seeds then germinate to produce a new plant.

Australian bluebells are a common bushland plant of the south west of Western Australia. This plant has been introduced to the Eastern States, where it is considered a weed; as it forms a thick mat over the native vegetation.

The plant contains toxins which can cause nausea and skin irritation, so wear gloves if handling it. (Eurobodalla Shire Council)

Aboriginal Uses

- The fleshy blue berries can be eaten when ripe and are quite sweet with a soft texture

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | PITTOSPORACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Open forest and woodland areas |
| Form | Small shrub; twiner Height: up to 1.5 m |
| Foliage | Long, leafy stems which twist around themselves or nearby plants Glossy green, leathery leaves Length: 50 mm |
| Flower | Birak to Bunuru (Summer) but can flower all year around Intense blue Bell-shaped Occur in clusters of two or more flowers Length: up to 10 mm |
| Fruit | Follow on from the flower Greenish-blue fruits Length: up to 20 mm Cylindrical in shape Contain many sticky seeds |

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Bloodroot



Scientific name: *Haemodorum spicatum*

Aboriginal name: Mardja (Noongar)



Plant habit



Plant



Flower



Root

About ...

The Bloodroot is related to the Kangaroo Paws and grows as scattered individuals or in small groups.

Three species of Bloodroots were eaten by local Noongar people.

The plant was called 'Bloodroot' because of the colour which oozes from the root when it is cut. The unusual chemicals that cause the reddish-orange colour are not found anywhere else in the plant kingdom. One of these chemicals is being researched by pharmaceutical companies due to its antibacterial and antitumour properties.

The flowers are 'Pollinated by native bees which are strong enough to push open the petals, diving head first into the flower to collect the pollen and copious nectar.' Bush Tucker Plants of the South-West.

Family

HAEMODORACEAE

Climate

Temperate

Habitat

Woodlands and heathlands of south western Australia

Form

Grass-like shrub
Height: 0.3 – 2 m

Foliage

Produces 2 – 3 round tough green leaves about 600 mm long each year
Long and slender
Turn black as they get older

Flower

Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring and Summer)
Flowering spike to 2 m
Black flowers
One flower spike per plant
Flowers never open
Fire stimulates flowering

Aboriginal Uses



- Has a red-coloured root system that is edible and is said to taste like pepper/chilli
- Eaten either raw or roasted; may be pounded and added to dishes to make them spicy
- Used to help with dysentery (diarrhoea)
- The reddish-orange colour in the roots were used as a dye

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Blueberry Lily



Scientific name: *Dianella revoluta*

Aboriginal name: Mangard (Noongar)



Plant habit



Berries



Open flower

About ...

A hardy evergreen plant which grows in clumps. It sends out horizontal roots (rhizomes) which then send up shoots for a new plant. It can form large, spreading colonies. After fire, plants can regrow from rhizomes under the ground and quickly re-colonise areas.

It is a very hardy plant which is drought and frost resistant. Blueberry Lily grows in many different conditions, in sclerophyll, woodland and mallee forests and is native to the South West of WA and across all other states of Australia except the Northern Territory.

The wiry stems, which rise above the foliage, branch into several stems, each with a flower. The flowers open one at a time and last for one day.

It grows in most soil types; however, it prefers soil high in nutrients.

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | HEMEROCALLIDACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate to dry |
| Habitat | Provides a good understorey in moist forests, dry woodlands, rainforests and along coastal dunes |
| Form | Clumping Height: 1 m Width: 1.5 m |
| Foliage | Strappy, grass-like leaves Very tough Grow to about 140 mm long |
| Flower | Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring to Summer) Small, purple, blue or lilac Six petals with a yellow and black centre Rise above the foliage on wiry stems |
| Fruit | Birak (December to January) Pale or dark blue-purple Round in shape Size: 5 – 15 mm Fleshy with 3 to 4 small, black seeds Seeds dispersed by birds |

Aboriginal Uses



- Fruits can be eaten raw; they have a sweet flavour which becomes nutty when seeds are chewed
- Roots can be pounded, roasted and then eaten
- Leaves are used to make string and cord for binding

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Bottlebrush

Scientific name: *Callistemon* sp.

Aboriginal name: Birdak (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower



Flower bud



Fruiting capsules

About ...

There are about 20 *Callistemon* species native to Australia with only two of these native to Western Australia, *C. glaucus* and *C. phoeniceus*. *C. phoeniceus* is called 'Birdak' by the Noongar people.

They mainly grow along creeks because they need plenty of water. Even though they like water, most species are frost and drought tolerant. They are closely related to paperbarks (melaleucas) which like to have their feet wet for part of the year.

The flowers can be spectacular and are very appealing to nectar-feeding birds and insects.

Botanist, Joseph Banks, introduced the Crimson Bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*) to Britain in 1789. Soon after this, the bottlebrush become a very popular garden plant. It is an easy care and hardy plant, making it very easy to look after in any home garden.

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | MYRTACEAE |
| Climate | Tropical to temperate |
| Habitat | Damp or wet conditions along creek beds or in areas which are prone to floods |
| Form | Shrub or small tree Height: 0.5 m – 4 m |
| Foliage | Long, narrow mid-to-dark green leaves Very tough and can be spiky |
| Flower | Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring and Summer) Dense cylindrical spikes or brushes made up of many individual flowers Pollen forms on the tip of the long coloured stalks Colours include red, pink, white, yellow and mauve |
| Fruit | Each flower produces a small woody fruit containing hundreds of tiny seeds Form in clusters along the stem The seeds are usually not released from the fruits for several years, but in some species the fruits open after about a year |

Aboriginal Uses

- Flowers are sucked for their nectar
- Flowers can also be made into a sweet drink when soaked in water

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Bull Banksia



Scientific name: *Banksia grandis*

Aboriginal name: Poolgarla (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower spike



Leaf growth



Seed cone

About ...

There are about 173 species of banksia, of which 58 are native to the south-west of Western Australia. They like to grow in poor sandy soils. They are named after Sir Joseph Banks, the English Botanist, who came with Captain Cook to explore Australia around 1770.

The leaves and flowers of the Bull Banksia are the largest of all the banksias. In 1843, Lieutenant Richard Dale witnessed 'natives gathering the flowers and extracting a sweet juice resembling honey' near what is now called Albany.

The seed cone releases the seed and a new plant will establish from seed. However, the plant grows very slowly and can live as long as 150 years.

Aboriginal Uses

- The flower spikes can be used to make a drink of honey-sweet mead known as 'mangite' or 'mungitch'
- The nectar can also be sucked directly from the flower
- Grubs which burrow into the flower spikes can be gathered and eaten
- Seed cones were used to carry smouldering coal when travelling

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Bulrush



Scientific name: *Typha domingensis*

Aboriginal name: Yangeti (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower (young and mature)



Base of stem



Root

About ...

Also known as 'Narrow Leaf Cumbungi'.

There are two species of Bulrush found in the Perth area, the native *Typha domingensis* and the introduced *Typha orientalis*.

Bulrush is a common native plant found in many healthy waterways. It captures silt and sediments, stabilises channels, provides habitat for native animals especially birds, is an important part of the instream food web and slows the flow rate of water reducing erosion. However, in waterways that have suffered impacts from settlement, the introduced *Typha orientalis* can become a serious weed. It thrives in shallow, poor-quality water with high nutrient and sediment loads.

Aboriginal Uses

- Roots are eaten after being treated by pounding the white rhizomes to remove the fibrous parts, then moulding the remaining paste and roasting into cakes that taste like asparagus
- Centre of the stem at the base is edible
- Young flowering spikes are eaten raw or cooked though the hard centre of the spike is inedible.

Family

TYPHACEAE

Climate

Temperate to tropical

Habitat

Permanent and ephemeral freshwater wetlands, creeks and rivers

Form

Large clumping plant
Height: 1 – 3 m

Foliage

Long, strap-like leaves
Length: up to 2 m
Width: up to 20 mm

Flower

Birak to Bunuru (Summer)
Separate male (upper) and female (lower) flowers on one spike
Female spike: 120 – 400 mm long; 20 mm diameter
Male spike: 150 – 350 mm long; 5 – 10 mm diameter
Light brown

Seed

Follows from flower
May produce up to 200 000 seeds
Small; fluffy
Dispersed by wind or water



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Centella



Scientific name: *Centella asiatica*

Aboriginal name: Unknown



Plant habit



Foliage

About ...

Also known as 'Gotu Kola' or 'Pennywort'. Centella is found growing wild over large areas of North America, South America, Asia and Australia.

Centella is used as a medicinal herb in ayurvedic medicine, traditional African medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. It has anti-inflammatory properties as well as improving circulation and strengthening blood vessels. Described as 'a pharmacy in one herb' centella contains vitamins A, B, C and D and minerals including calcium, chromium, cobalt, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, sodium, potassium, selenium, silica and zinc.

The raw leaves are bitter. Blanched leaves taste better. Adding lemon juice and butter makes the dish more flavoursome.

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | APIACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate to tropical |
| Habitat | Grows in swampy areas and winter-wet depressions from North Queensland to South Western Australia |
| Form | Creeping, stoloniferous (runners) perennial, herb, 0.05-0.4 m high |
| Foliage | Kidney shaped leaf The leaf sizes can vary from 1 cm to 7 cm |
| Flower | Minute pink/purple-red/white flowers Djilba (Aug to Dec) or Birak to Djeran (Jan to Apr) Flowers on a 1 cm stalk |
| Fruit | Flattened discs, 3 mm in diameter and occur in upright groups of three |

Aboriginal Uses



- Centella can be added to salads, eaten raw or infused as a tea.
- There are many medicinal claims about centella including help with memory loss, burns, skin diseases, arthritis (eat two leaves a day) and longevity. It can be used as a general tonic.

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Coastal Pigface



Scientific name: *Carpobrotus virescens*

Aboriginal name: Bain (Noongar)



Plant habit



Foliage



Flower

About ...

Living in coastal conditions, this plant is able to tolerate moving sand. It goes between being covered by sand or having the sand around it blown away. It has evolved to cope with such harsh conditions. It is a great plant to stabilise coastal sand dunes. *Carpobrotus edulis*, commonly found in tuart and banksia woodlands, is a pigface species from South Africa that is now considered naturalised in the Perth Region.

After flowering, the petals fall off and the fruiting base of the flower swells to produce the purplish-red fruit.

The fruit is highly regarded by local Aboriginal people who freely eat it when it becomes available. Early European settlers also enjoyed the fruit, adding it to their meagre diet and making jam out of it.

Aboriginal Uses

- After flowering, the plant produces fruit with a juicy centre of seeds in a white pulp which can be eaten fresh or dried.
- The juice from the leaves can be used to treat stings, scalds and burns
- Leaves are also boiled and eaten as greens

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | AIZOACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Beaches, dunes, cliffs and inland areas of south-west Australia |
| Form | Low ground cover Long branches to 2 m long |
| Foliage | Thick, triangular shape Grow from red stems Sometimes has red tinges Approximately 10 – 30 mm long |
| Flower | Djilba (August to September) Bright pink-to-purple with yellow centre Turning yellow as the flower ages Many long, fine petals |
| Fruit | Birak (around Christmas time) Purplish-red outside, white pulpy flesh inside Tastes similar to a zucchini |



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

Coastal Sword Sedge

Scientific name: *Lepidosperma gladiatum*

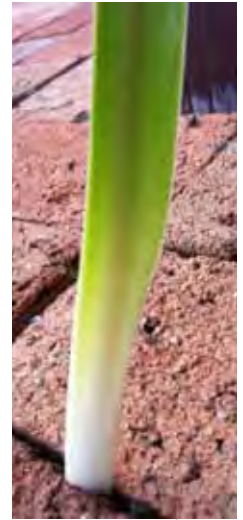
Aboriginal name: Kerbein (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower



Base of leaf

About ...

The Coastal Sword Sedge is also known as 'kerbein'. It was first described by French botanist Jacques Labillardière in the early 1800s, after he visited the south-west of Western Australia while on a voyage to explore Oceania. This plant also grows in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

The strong leaves are ideal for weaving, making strong rope and string for many different purposes. The toughness of the leaves also helps to protect the plant from salt near coastal areas.

Aboriginal Uses

- Leaves used to make rope and string for Mia Mia (shelter)
- The white base of the leaf is edible and can be eaten raw or roasted
- Plants in wetter areas are more succulent

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | CYPERACEAE |
| Climate | Coastal, temperate |
| Habitat | Coastal sand dune areas, coastal woodlands and in tuart forests |
| Form | Clumping plant Height: up to 1.5 m Width: up to 1.5 m Sends out underground stems which form new plants |
| Foliage | Sword-like leaves approximately 25 mm wide Long, rigid stems Dark green and thicker at the centre Very tough |
| Flower | Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring to Summer) One or two brown flowers on spikelets among foliage Grow to about 8 mm |
| Fruit | Birak to Bunuru (January, February, March) Small oval nut about 3 mm long Pale-to-dark brown |

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Desert Lime

Scientific name: *Citrus glauca*

Aboriginal name: Unknown



Plant habit (juvenile)



Leaf and stem



Fruit



Flower

About ...

The Desert Lime is part of the citrus family (orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit).

The young Desert Lime is a thorny plant; however, as it matures, the thorns disappear. It begins to produce fruit when the plant is about four years old. The mature plant generally produces a large number of fruits. The fruit has a soft rind and juicy pulp.

Due to its ability to grow in semi-arid areas, Desert Lime is of interest as a grafting rootstock to possibly extend the range of commercial citrus crops. There is also potential for breeding to develop new citrus varieties. They are tolerant of heat, frost, drought and salinity.

Aboriginal Uses

- The fruits are edible and can be eaten whole, having a strong citrus flavour with a bitter aftertaste
- The fruits can be used in drinks, marmalades, jams, dipping sauces, simmer sauces and desserts

Family RUTACEAE

Climate Semi-arid

Habitat Dry forest, scrub and along creek lines in arid parts of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia

Form Shrub or small tree
Height: 2 – 6 m

Foliage Tough, light grey-to-green leaves
Length: 50 mm
Width: 5 mm
Leaves fall off during dry periods

Flower Kambarang (Spring)
White flowers with a citrus aroma

Fruit Kambarang to Birak (late Spring and Summer)
Small, lime green-to-yellow rounded fruits
Length: 10 – 20 mm
Sour taste

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Emu Plum



Scientific name: *Podocarpus drouynianus*

Aboriginal name: Koolah (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower and leaf form



Fruit

About ...

This species, also called Emu Bush or Wild Plum, is related to conifers and has male and female parts on separate plants.

Emu Plums produce the largest edible fruits in the South West of Australia. Emus eat the fruit, then pass the seed out in their scat. From this, a new plant is able to grow.

It is able to survive and regenerate after fire and is able to re-establish itself in disturbed areas. This makes it a very hardy plant.

Its habitat is restricted to the south-west of Western Australia, with small clusters occurring near Perth.

Its foliage is now widely used in the cut flower industry.

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | PODOCARPACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Jarrah and Karri forests Lower slopes or lowlands near streams |
| Form | Shrub or tree Conifer like Multi-stemmed from ground level Height: 3 m |
| Foliage | Narrow, pale green leaves Needle-like Length: 40 – 80 mm |
| Fruit | Djilba to mid-Djeran (August to April) Female plant produces the fruit Berry-like cones with a fleshy, edible purple fruit (grape like) Approximately 20 – 25 mm long |

Aboriginal Uses



- The large flavourless fruit can be eaten

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Grass Tree



Scientific name: *Xanthorrhoea preissii*

Aboriginal name: Balga (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower Spike



Flowers



Flower Stalk

About ...

The Grass Tree is native to the south-west of Western Australia and has been used by the local Noongar people for thousands of years.

The plants are resistant to fire, which is known to stimulate flowering. The blackened trunks can resprout within a few months of a fire. Coloured bands caused by melting resin along the stems of Grass Trees can be used to age plants.

Grass Trees only grow between 10 – 20 millimetres each year.

Aboriginal Uses

- Gum from flowering spikes can be made into cakes
- Flowers can be used to make a sweet drink
- Dead flowering spikes used to make fire or used as spear shaft
- Bardi grubs are collected from trunks of dying trees
- The black resin from the trunk can be used as an adhesive to attach spear heads to a shaft or to start a fire
- Bunches of dried leaves were made into torches
- Leaves used as thatching material for the roof of a hut

Family

XANTHORRHOEACEAE

Climate

Temperate

Habitat

Ranges, coastal plains and watercourses on grey/black sands, loam or gravelly clay

Form

Medium tree

Height: 5 m

Trunk is formed from old leaf bases and is often crooked

May branch into several crowns of foliage

Foliage

Long, slender brittle leaves

Diamond shaped

Medium green, changing to brown

Flower

Kambarang to Birak (November to January)

One flower spike per crown

Grows to 3 m

Thousands of small white flowers produced on each flower spike

Pollinated by insects

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Harsh Hakea



Scientific name: *Hakea prostrata*

Aboriginal name: Janda (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower



Woody fruit

About ...

There are about 120 species of Hakea in Australia with 80 species native to the south-west of Western Australia.

Hakeas are named after the German botanical patron, Baron von Hake (1745 – 1818).

Harsh Hakea gets its name from its prickly leaves. It is one of Perth's toughest plants and if damaged will resprout readily. The seedlings are hardy.

Species native to areas where fire regularly occurs often have a 'lignotuber'. This is a woody swelling at or below ground level from which the plant can regenerate if the above ground stems are destroyed. However, this species of Hakea does not have lignotubers.

Aboriginal Uses



- The woody fruits are placed in an open fire, then the seeds are eaten
- They are said to taste like roasted almonds
- The bark was burnt into a white ash that was used to heal wounds
- The nectar was used to make a sweet drink

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | PROTEACEA |
| Climate | Tropical, temperate and arid |
| Habitat | Heathlands with medium to low trees, hill slopes, granite outcrops, coastal dunes, floodplains and winter-wet flats |
| Form | Shrub or small tree Can grow upright or low to the ground Height: 0.3 – 5.0 m Width: 1.5 – 2.0 m Bark rough, grey-brown |
| Foliage | Leaves alternate on each side of the stem Oval shaped, flat and prickly Length: 20 – 70 mm Width: 5 – 50 mm |
| Flower | Makuru to Kambarang (Winter to Spring) Small, occurring in clusters White-to-cream with honey-like nectar Insect and bird attracting |
| Fruit | Follow on from flowers Tough, woody exterior Open once a year to release the seed Winged seed contained inside Seed is 18 – 20 mm long |

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Lilly Pilly

Scientific name: *Syzygium australe*

Aboriginal name: Galang-arra (NSW)



Plant habit



Fruit



New leaf growth

About ...

This Lilly Pilly, also known as the Brush Cherry, is native to eastern Australia. There are 52 species of lilly pilly in Australia and they all have edible fruit.

It is a hardy tree growing in most temperate and subtropical climates in most states of Australia. It grows well in sandy soils however, prefers rich, moist soils. They are moderately frost tolerant and grow well on the coast.

Lilly pillies were one of the first native fruits that the European settlers ate. The ripe fruits contain large amounts of vitamin C.

Aboriginal Uses

- They have succulent fruits with a tangy, acidic flavour
- Indigenous people ate the ripe fruit raw
- European settlers made the fruit into jam, jelly, sauces, preserves and wine

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | MYRTACEAE |
| Climate | Subtropical to temperate |
| Habitat | Coast regions, rainforests, along creeks southern NSW to central Queensland |
| Form | Bushy shrub or small tree Flaky bark Height: 3 – 10 m Width: 2 – 3 m |
| Foliage | Glossy, deep green Oval in shape Leaves grow in pairs on opposite sides of the stem New growth is red in colour |
| Flower | Mostly Djilba to Kamarang (Spring) White petals about 4 – 6 mm long Open to white stamens about 15 – 20 mm long |
| Fruit | Follows flowers Pinky-red oval shaped Length: 10 – 20 mm Contains a seed |

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Macadamia

Scientific name: *Macadamia integrifolia*

Aboriginal name: Boombera (NSW)



Plant habit



Nuts



Flower spikes

About ...

Macadamia's are native to the south-east of Queensland and the north-east of New South Wales; however, this plant does really well in the clay soil along the Swan and Canning Rivers and north to Carnarvon. It thrives in nutrient-rich, moist soil.

The average trunk diameter is around 300 mm. The root system is dicot; producing a tap root upon germination followed by lateral roots to stabilise the plant.

It takes around 185 days for the nuts to mature. The macadamia tree can have flowers, nutlets and mature nuts growing simultaneously, for most of the year.

This evergreen was once considered the only Australian native plant ever developed as a commercial fruit crop. In 1927, Herbert Ramsey (nurseryman) fulfilled an order for 10 000 macadamia seeds for the United States.

Aboriginal Uses

- Nuts are eaten raw or after cooking and can be used in many food dishes
- They are prized for their high energy and fat content

Family

PROTEACEAE

Climate

Subtropical to warm temperate

Habitat

Rainforests of northern NSW and southern Queensland. Can be grown from Perth to Carnarvon.

Form

Tall tree with a smooth trunk

Height: 8 – 20 m

Width: 4 – 10 m

Foliage

Tough, glossy, deep green leaves growing to about 200 mm

Leaves have spines along the edges

Grow in circular groups of three

New growth is pale green with purple tips

Flower

Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring to Summer)

Creamy white, drooping feather flower

spikes to about 250 – 300 mm long

Sweet smelling

Pollinated by bees

Nut

Djeran to Djilba (Autumn to Winter)

Shiny brown spherical shaped measuring

20 – 30 mm in diameter

Very hard

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Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

Caution: Do not prepare bush tucker food without having been shown by Indigenous or experienced persons. Some bush tucker if eaten in large quantities or not prepared correctly can cause illness.

Maroon Bush



Scientific name: *Scaevola spinescens*

Aboriginal name: Murin Murin (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower

Berries

About ...

Also called the 'Prickly Fan Flower'. This plant is found in all mainland Australian States except Victoria.

Young growth is soft and hairy; older, established plants have a prickly foliage.

From the late 1940's to the late 1980's there was considerable interest in the Maroon Bush in Western Australia. Towards the end of this period, and for more than a decade, the Western Australian Health Department supplied the 'bush tea' to cancer patients. It was effective in reducing the negative side effects of other treatments like chemotherapy. It is now well known that chemical compounds within the tea have a positive influence on the mood and wellbeing of people taking it. Its use in WA is now 'Prescription Only', and the plant is a protected species.

Aboriginal Uses

- The tea like extract was traditionally used by Aboriginal people for the treatment of cancer, heart disease, intestinal trouble, urinary problems, kidney trouble and general illnesses
- Roots were boiled in water; the infused water was then drunk to reduce pains in the digestive system
- Purple berries are edible



| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | GOODENIACEAE |
| Climate | Semi arid |
| Habitat | Sandplains, scrublands |
| Form | Medium-sized shrub Height: up to 2 m |
| Foliage | Thin, long oval leaves Come off the main stem in clusters Length: 9 – 36 mm Width: 1 – 6 mm |
| Flower | Most of the year Creamy white to yellow Petals spread open like a fan in a semi-circular shape rather than a full circle, like most flowers |
| Fruit | Follows from flower Small purplish oval berries Contain a single seed Length: 5 – 8 mm |

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Marri



Scientific name: *Corymbia calophylla*

Aboriginal name: Marri (Noongar)



Plant habit



Resin



Foliage and nut



Flower

About ...

Also known as a 'Red Gum' this tree is native to the south-west of WA; however, small pockets are also found north of Perth up towards Geraldton.

It is resistant to 'dieback' disease (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*).

The 'honky nuts' were made famous by May Gibbs, author of the classic story, Snugglepot and Cuddlepie. 'Marri' comes from the Aboriginal Noongar language, where it is known as a medicine tree because of the red gum or 'kino'. This was sprinkled onto wounds to prevent bleeding or mixed with water as a mouthwash or disinfectant as the tannin has antiseptic qualities. Large quantities of the powdered gum were used to tan kangaroo skins.

Aboriginal Uses



- Resin or 'kino' can be used as a medicine to treat an upset stomach
- Mixed with water, the resin can be rubbed on skin to treat eczema
- Seeds can be eaten
- The blossoms (called 'Ngumbit') are soaked in water to make a sweet drink

Family MYRTACEAE

Climate Temperate

Habitat It is an important part of the Jarrah and Karri forests of Western Australia. It also occurs on the coastal plain on a range of soils

Form Large tree
Height: 40 - 60 m
The bark is rough, brown to grey-brown, and often has reddish gum or resin

Foliage Mid-to-bright green leaves with red stems
Tough
Evergreen

Flower Birak to Djeran (December to May)
Creamy white or pink flowers
Bee attracting

Nut Also called 'Honky Nuts'
Large, carrying large seeds
Urn-shaped
Start out green and change to brown

Developed by SERCUL for use with the Bush Tucker Education Program.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Milkmaids



Scientific name: *Burchardia congesta*

Aboriginal name: Kara (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower



Seed formation

About ...

This plant, *Burchardia*, was named after German botanist, Johann Heinrich Burckhardt.

Milkmaids grow prolifically around the Perth area. They grow in all Australian States and in Western Australia range from Northampton to Cape Naturaliste. Due to their abundance they were a substantial part of the Noongar peoples diet in summer and autumn.

Once the flower has died, the plant looks like any other grass and the Aboriginal people would dig over large areas of soil to locate the tubers. Only the tubers that were at least four millimetres thick were good to eat.

Aboriginal Uses

- The tuberous roots can be eaten raw or roasted; when eaten raw, the tubers taste like a succulent potato
- Nutritionally valuable due to its high protein content

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | COLCHICACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Jarrah and banksia woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain Darling Scarp |
| Form | Tall, open, lily-type Usually a single stem Height: 40 – 80 cm |
| Foliage | Very slender Grass-like |
| Flower | Djilba to Kambarang (August to November) Cream to white petals Yellow centres and stamens Forming a spray of several small flowers from a single stalk |

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Old Man Saltbush



Scientific name: *Atriplex nummularia*

Aboriginal name: Tyulern (Vic)



Plant habit



Leaf form



Male flower

About ...

There are about 61 different species of Saltbush growing across Australia. Old Man Saltbush or Giant Saltbush is a very adaptable plant found in many soil types across Australia. It is a fast-growing, evergreen shrub.

This plant is frequently used as food for cattle and sheep and is often planted near property homesteads as a shelter. It provides a useful windbreak which, along with readily visible leaves at night, makes it suitable for roadside plantings. The leaves are also fire retardant.

Due to its ability to withstand saline and drought conditions, Old Man Saltbush is being trialled as a solution to Australia's increasing salinity problem.

Aboriginal Uses

- Woody branches used as fuel for fires
- Used as a windbreak
- Collected the minute saltbush seeds to grind and roast for damper
- Large fresh blanched saltbush leaves used as a wrap around meat or fish, in salads or as a leafy bed for grilled meat or vegetables
- Dried saltbush flakes can be added to damper

Family

CHENOPODIACEAE

Climate

Semi-arid to arid regions

Habitat

Found in many different habitat types
Found on saline, clay soils in low lying areas like flood plains
Very adaptable to most soil types
Frost and salt tolerant

Form

Large multi-stemmed shrub from near ground level
Height: 3 m
Width: 2 – 4 m

Foliage

Leaves have a salty, scaly coating which gives them a silvery-grey colour
Elliptical to almost circular in shape
Soft leaves between 10 – 30 mm long
High salt content

Flower

Produced throughout the year
Wind pollination
Male and female flowers on separate plants
Female: dense clusters about 200 mm long
Male: separate globules at end of stems



One-sided Bottlebrush



Scientific name: *Calothamnus quadrifidus*

Aboriginal name: Kwowdjard (Noongar)



Plant habit



Leaf form



Flower



Fruiting capsules

About ...

Calothamnus quadrifidus, also known as the Common Net Bush, grows naturally in the south-west of Western Australia where it is widely distributed. It commonly grows among granite outcrops, in sand or sandy-gravel, however it adapts well to other soil types such as loam, and even clay. *Calothamnus* is a genus of more than 40 species, all are found in the SW of WA. 'Calothamnus' comes from the ancient Greek kalos, meaning 'beautiful' and thamnus meaning 'a shrub' while quadrifidus means 'divided into four parts' which refers to the number of flower parts. They are a good garden plant due to their long lasting, showy, bird attracting flowers and soft foliage. They can also be used as windbreaks.

The species was named by botanist Robert Brown who collected a specimen from Lucky Bay near Esperance in 1802.

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | MYRTACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Wide variety of soils and habitats |
| Form | Shrub or small tree Height: 0.5 m – 3 m Width the same |
| Foliage | Grey-green or green needle-like leaves 30 mm long and 1-2 mm wide Usually hairy |
| Flower | Makuru to Birak (Winter through to Summer) Clustered in one-sided spikes or 'brushes' Brightly coloured stamens, usually in red, are fused together in bundles, known as staminal claws Usually red but can be white or yellow |
| Fruit | Each flower produces woody capsules that remain on the plant The seeds are usually not released from the fruits for several years |

Aboriginal Uses

- Flowers are sucked for their nectar
- Flowers can also be made into a sweet drink when soaked in water

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Peppermint Tree



Scientific name: *Agonis flexuosa*

Aboriginal name: Wonnil (Noongar)



Plant habit



Bark



Flower bud



Flower

About ...

Also called the 'Willow Myrtle', this species is native to the south-west of Western Australia.

This species is highly adaptable to a range of climates and soils. Because of this, it is often planted along verges and in parkland areas. It is a common street tree in many Perth suburbs including Peppermint Grove which is named after the tree.

Its flowers look similar to the native tea tree.

Peppermint Trees are named after the peppermint odour of the leaves when crushed.

Mature trees provide hollows that are used by birds and possums for nesting.

Family MYRTACEAE

Climate Temperate

Habitat Coastal and bushland areas close to the coast and lower Swan Estuary in sandy/limestone soils

Form Tree
Fibrous, rough grey bark
Large, gnarled trunk
Height: 10 – 15 m
Width: 6 m

Foliage Weeping foliage
Mid-to-bright green
Long, slender leaves
Evergreen

Flower Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring and Summer)
Sprays of several small white flowers
Width: 1 cm
Flowers have five petals
Insect attracting

Aboriginal Uses

- Leaves were used for smoking and healing
- Oil used to rub on cuts and sores



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Quandong



Scientific name: *Santalum acuminatum*

Aboriginal name: Dumbari (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower



Unripe fruit and leaves



Ripe fruit and kernel

About ...

Also called 'wild peach' or 'native peach' the Quandong is considered good eating. They are found in all Australian states.

It is a hemiparasitic plant. This means that it attaches to the roots of another plant and uses it as a water and nutrient source. One Quandong plant can attach to a number of host plants for survival.

European settlers used the Quandong fruit to ward off scurvy as they are high in vitamin C. Emus are fond of them also.

Aboriginal Uses



- Succulent bright red fruits make a tasty snack and can be made into pies, jams and jellies
- The outer peel is removed to uncover a kernel which is cracked open to reveal the nut, this is then roasted and eaten
- Seeds contain oil used for moisturising the skin
- Seeds also ground up and mixed with water to treat skin sores
- Seeds can be used as beads for jewellery
- Pounded leaves were used to treat diseases introduced by European settlement

Family

SANTALACEAE

Climate

Temperate to arid

Habitat

Desert sandhills and spinifex plains, near watercourses and salt lakes and in mulga country of inland Australia

Form

Evergreen shrub or small tree

Height: 4 – 5 m

Width: 1 – 2 m

Foliage

Olive green leaves

Long and slender to 90 mm

Tapers to a point

Looks a bit like a drooping eucalypt

Tough

Flower

Birak to Bunuru (Summer)

Clusters of tiny, fragrant flowers

Green and brown

Attract insects

Fruit

Djilba to Kambarang (Spring)

Round and succulent

Width: 2 - 4 cm

Green then turn bright red when ripe

Single seed

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Red-eyed Wattle



Scientific name: *Acacia cyclops*

Aboriginal name: Wilyawa (Noongar)



Plant habit



Leaf



Flower



Fruit pods and seeds

About ...

Also known as the 'Western Coastal Wattle'. This *Acacia* species is found in sandy and limestone soils along the coast from Eneabba to the Great Australian Bight where it extends into South Australia. It is a problem weed in South Africa where it has been introduced.

Its scientific name, *Acacia cyclops*, refers to the mythical one-eyed giant Greek legend-'Cyclops'. The unusual appearance of the seed is the reason behind the name.

The seeds are eaten by birds and small animals and then dispersed in their droppings. The seeds then germinate to produce a new plant.

It is used to stabilise coastal sand dunes and is also grown overseas for its dense and high quality fuelwood.

Aboriginal Uses

- Seeds are ground into flour, then mixed with water and cooked as bread
- Green seed pods release a sticky juice (when crushed) when mixed with water makes sunscreen, insect repellent and a treatment for eczema
- Gum from the stem can be eaten
- Bardi grubs which burrow in the stems as larvae are a sought after and nutritious food

Family

MIMOSACEAE

Climate

Temperate

Habitat

Coastal heathlands and dry scrublands

Form

Dense shrub or small tree

Height: 1 – 4 m

Shorter, more spreading habit near the coast

Taller habit when growing inland

Foliage

Leaves are not true leaves, they are flattened leaf stalks

Length: 40 – 90 mm

Thick and leathery

Alternate simply along the stem

Long and narrow

Flower

Djilba to Bunuru (September to March)

Golden-yellow flowers

Grow in small round clusters

Arranged in pairs at the base of the leaf

Fruit

Kambarang to Birak (late Spring, early Summer)

Long, flat pods

Length: up to 150 mm

Twist and coil around after opening

Seeds are dark brown to black and

encircled by an orange-to-red fleshy circle



Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Scarlet Runner



Scientific name: *Kennedia prostrata*

Aboriginal name: Kabin (Vic)



Plant habit

Seed pod

Flower

About ...

Also known as the 'Running Postman' because the colour of the flowers match the colour of post boxes. The genus is named after Lewis Kennedy, an eighteenth century English nurseryman.

This plant is native to the South East and South West of Australia.

The plant's ability to cover large areas of ground over a short period of time helps to retain moisture within the ground. It is considered a 'living mulch'.

Scarlet Runner is quite a hardy plant which is able to resist light frost and dry periods.

Flat seed pods, about 50 mm long, follow after the flower has died.

Aboriginal Uses

- The flowers provide a source of sweet nectar that can be sucked straight from the flower
- Leaves are used to make a tea-like drink, which has a pleasant liquorice flavour
- The stems of the plant are used as twine

Family

PAPILIONACEAE

Climate

Temperate

Habitat

Open forests and sandy plains of the south west of WA

Form

Low ground creeper
Can cover an area of 1 – 3 m
Stems grow out from a central point and can wind throughout an area to entangle other plants

Foliage

Leaves grow in threes from the long stems
Mid-to-dark green leaves in a round heart shape
Broad, soft and crinkly

Flower

Kambarang to Bunuru (Spring and Summer)
25 – 30 mm long
Delicate, red and pea-like
Yellow centre
Described as 'butterflies on stems'

Fruit

Hairy and green
Turn red then brown



Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Stout Paperbark



Scientific name: *Melaleuca preissiana*

Aboriginal name: Moonah (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower and foliage (Photo: Sian Mawson)

About ...

The Stout Paperbark is native to the south-west of Western Australia. It is found from the Geraldton Sandplains along the Swan Coastal Plain to Esperance.

Melaleuca preissiana was first formally described by Johannes Conrad Schauer in Johann Georg Christian Lehmann's 1844 *Plantae Preissianae* from a specimen collected by James Drummond. Preissiana honours Johann August Ludwig Preiss (1811 – 1883) who collected in WA from 1839 – 1841 upwards of 2,700 plant species.

There are nearly 300 species of melaleucas, commonly known as paperbarks or tea-trees, with the south-west of Western Australia having the greatest density of species.

Melaleuca oil has antibacterial and antiseptic properties.

Aboriginal Uses

- The young leaves were crushed and inhaled to treat headaches and colds.
- The bark was used to wrap food for cooking, as bandages to bind wounds and for sanitary purposes as a natural toilet paper.

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | MYRTACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Sand in swampy, seasonally wet areas on coastal sandplains |
| Form | Shrub or tree 2 - 9 m height White, papery bark |
| Foliage | Thin, pointed leaves Leaves are arranged alternately and are 6–14 mm long |
| Flower | White-cream bottlebrush type flowers on the ends of branches Kambarang to early Bunuru (November to February) Flowers are up to 20 mm in diameter with 7 to 21 groups of flowers in threes. |
| Fruit | Woody capsules, 2.5–3 mm long |



Twining Fringe Lily



Scientific name: *Thysanotus patersonii*

Aboriginal name: Tjunguri (Noongar)



Plant habit



Flower and flower buds

About ...

This fast-growing plant is found throughout many States of Australia and is widespread through the southern half of Western Australia.

This plant grows from seed contained in a dry capsule. The flowers are hermaphrodite, meaning they have both male and female components.

The plant dies back to a tuber after flowering which can be difficult to find. The white edible tubers are between 20 and 50 mm in length. They remain dormant until the following winter.

Aboriginal Uses

- The tubers, which look like tiny potatoes, are commonly eaten raw or roasted
- The stems and flowers are also edible
- Occasionally, the flowers and stems were roasted, made into powder and eaten with the York Gum
- Other species of *Thysanotus* can also be eaten
- The root is best eaten just before or just after flowering, as it contains more energy at this time

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | ANTHERICACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Grasslands, Riparian scrub and woodland |
| Form | Perennial climber Height: up to 1 m Leaf and stems die off over Birak (Summer) and come back over Makuru (Winter) |
| Foliage | Long, spindly stems that either twine around nearby plants or trail along the ground 1 – 2 long thin leaves at the base of the stem Mid to bright green |
| Flower | Makuru to Kambarang (Winter and Spring) Purple flower with three largish petals surrounded by a 'feather-like' edge, alternate with three narrow sepals |

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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Warrigal Greens

Scientific name: *Tetragonia tetragonoides*

Aboriginal name: Unknown



Plant habit



Foliage and flower bud

About ...

The name, Warrigal Greens, seems to be made up from two older names, Warrigal Cabbage and Botany Bay Greens. Warrigal was the Eora (Sydney area) Aboriginal name for the native dog or dingo.

In 1788, the nutritious plant was added to the rations of the first British settlers at Sydney Cove. Seeds of the plant were then distributed to all colonies throughout Australia to supply extra nutrition for settlers.

In the late 1700s, Warrigal Greens was the first Australian native food plant to be introduced into Europe.

Warrigal Greens are adaptable plants, growing in hot, dry and sandy soils. Once the plant is established, it can resist salt spray and drought. However, it does not tolerate cold or frost conditions.

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | AIZOACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate to tropical |
| Habitat | Sandy and stony beaches, sand dunes and salt marshes along the coasts of Australia; also inland plains |
| Form | Low, spreading vine with thick, succulent stems |
| Foliage | Leaves are bright green and spear shaped Grow between 20 and 120 mm long Soft, flat and shiny |
| Flower | Flowers during Kamarang, Birak and Bunuru (Spring and Summer) Tiny, yellow, star-shaped flowers at the base of the leaves |

Aboriginal Uses

- Young leaves can be eaten raw in salad
- It is best to boil older leaves for 1 – 2 minutes and discard the water, as the leaves contain oxalic acid



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

Woody Pear



Scientific name: *Xylomelum occidentale*

Aboriginal name: Danja, Dumbung (Noongar)



Flowers and foliage



Fruit



Plant habit

About ...

The Western Woody Pear is native to Western Australia and is found in the south-west, near the coast from Yancheep to Augusta. The Eastern Woody Pear, *Xylomelum pyriforme* is native to the eastern states of Australia.

The Woody Pear was first described by Robert Brown in 1830. *Xylomelum* is from the Greek words *xylon*, meaning wood, and *melon*, meaning apple or fruit generally. *Occidentale* is from the Latin word *occidentalis*, meaning western.

The fruit of the Woody Pear are pear shaped, hence the name of the plant, and require fire to open, or for the tree to die.

Woody Pears are rarely cultivated, as it can take up to 20 years for them to bear fruit but the fruits are picked for the cut flower industry.

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | PROTEACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | White and grey sand in coastal or near-coastal areas |
| Form | Shrub to small twisted tree 2 - 8 m height Dark, flaky bark |
| Foliage | Oak-like leaves Elliptical when the plant is mature and serrated when young |
| Flower | Long, up to 8 cm, creamy-white spiky flowers In clumps at the end of branchlets Birak to early Bunuru (December to February) |
| Fruit | Pear shaped with large woody seeds, two-winged seeds 9 cm long |

Aboriginal Uses



- Infusions of the leaves and bark were drunk to relieve pain.
- Seeds from the fruit were roasted and eaten.

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

Caution: Do not prepare bush tucker food without having been shown by Indigenous or experienced persons. Some bush tucker if eaten in large quantities or not prepared correctly can cause illness.

Zamia



Scientific name: *Macrozamia riedlei*

Aboriginal name: Jeerjji (Noongar)



Plant habit



Seed cone



Seed (Photo: Pam Agar)

About ...

This plant is a cycad and thus has separate male and female plants. The male plant produces the pollen, while the female plant produces the seed. Only the female cones were eaten by the Noongar people.

Early European settlers became ill after eating the seeds without proper preparation, due to the level of toxins and carcinogens.

Proper care must be taken to prepare the seeds (through a lengthy process) for eating!

Aboriginal Uses

- The toxic seeds were used as a food by Aboriginals after extensive processing, European explorers were poisoned from eating them raw
- After treatment, the pulp which encases the seed is roasted before eating, it tastes similar to a tomato
- Raw seeds were ground into a powder and used to 'stun' fish in local waterways to make the fish easier to catch
- The woolly material found around the base of the fronds on top of the trunk was used as fire tinder or as an absorbent fibre for hygienic purposes

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | ZAMIACEAE |
| Climate | Temperate |
| Habitat | Jarrah forests south of Perth to Albany Banksia woodlands |
| Form | Medium-size shrub Short trunk with leaves from the base Palm-like Height: 0.5 – 3 m |
| Foliage | Few leaves radiating from trunk Glossy with narrow leaflets Tough Bright-to-deep green Length: 1 – 2 m |
| Seed | Produced Djilba to Kambarang (September to October) Oval-shaped seed cone Length: 25 – 35 cm Width: 14 – 18 cm Ripe Bunuru (February to March) |

Developed by SERCUL for use with the *Bush Tucker Education Program*.



Used as food



Used as medicine



Used as resources



Local to SW WA

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