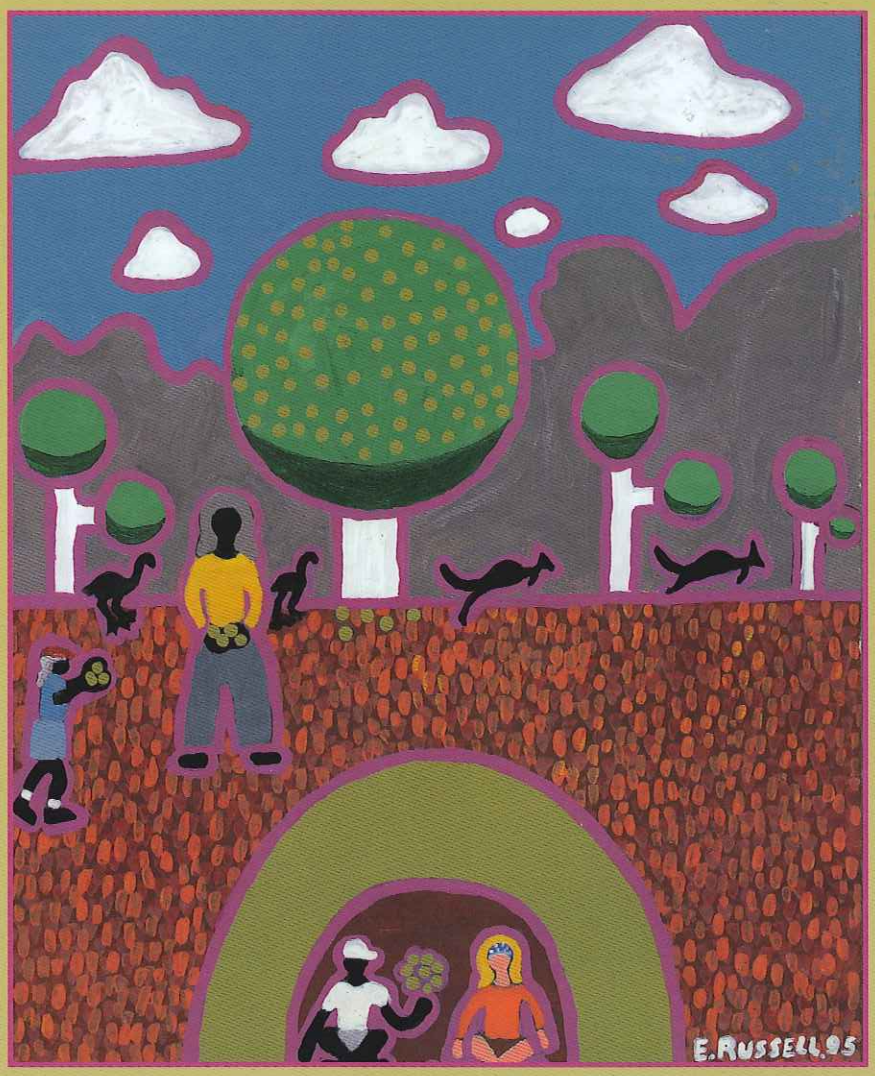
Bush Foods

OF NEW SOUTH WALES



A BOTANIC RECORD AND
AN ABORIGINAL ORAL HISTORY

KATHY STEWART

BOB PERCIVAL

Bush Foods

OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Environmental TRUSTS

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS SYDNEY

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Ruth Simms was born in Sydney and grew up on the Reserve at La Perouse. She remembers a happy childhood and teenage life of community-based living.
Barbara Timbery is an active member of her coastal community and is regarded highly as an Elder by all who know her.

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Aboriginal Language Maps:
Language Map of NSW. Full colour copies of the Language Map of NSW are available for $5.00 from the Land Information Centre, PO Box 143, Bathurst NSW 2795. Ph: (063) 328 200, Fax: (063) 318 095. In order to demonstrate the language groups more fully than can be shown here, it is recommended that teachers obtain a full-size copy.
Language map of the Sydney Region. Willmott, Eric. *Pemulwuy*, Weldons.

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Caution

Take the time to be sure of the name of plants you want to eat: not all Australian native plants are edible — some are poisonous. Plants can be identified by the Botanical Information Service at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Mrs Macquaries Road, Sydney. Phone (02) 9231 8155.

There is a bush known as the deadly nightshade and it is poisonous. If you eat that it will cause lots of problems. We've got a similar bush with blacker berries on it that we eat. We got confused once, after us eating the black berry all the time, then we came across this one. We didn't know whether we should eat this one or not. But then our old people said no, we only eat the other one — the one with the real black berries on it.

Beryl Carmichael, Broken Hill

Take special care with the plants in this book that have this symbol.

Danger

Plants in this book that have this symbol are in danger of dying out.

Endangered Species

Bush Foods

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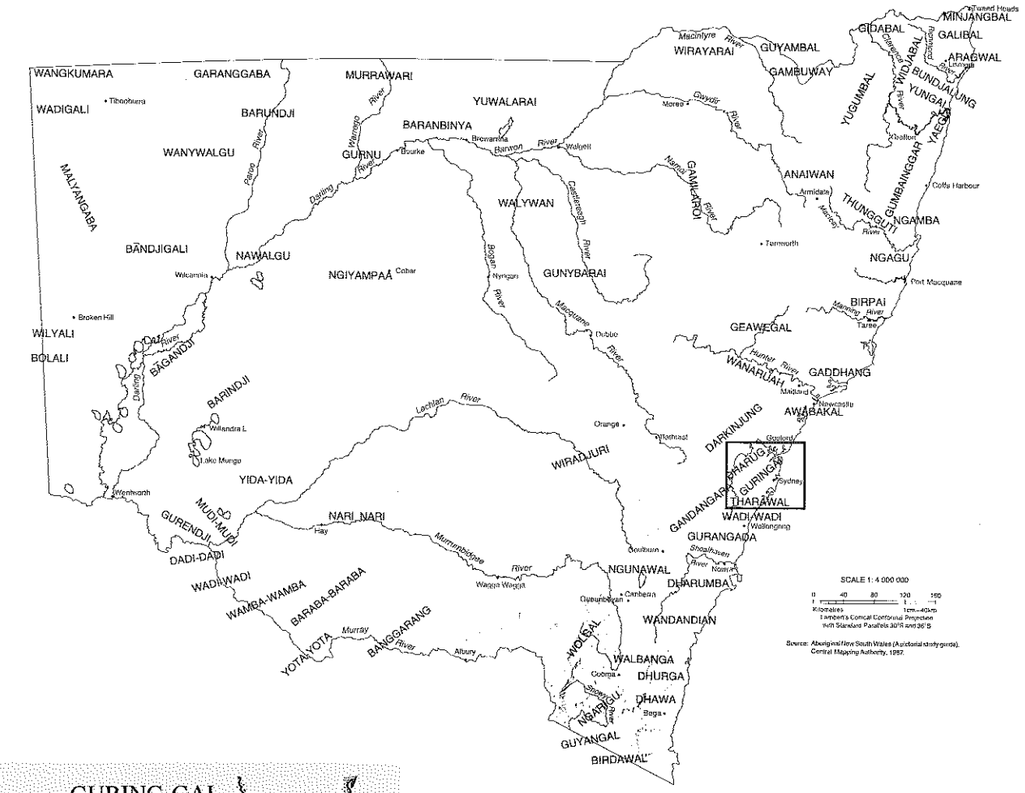
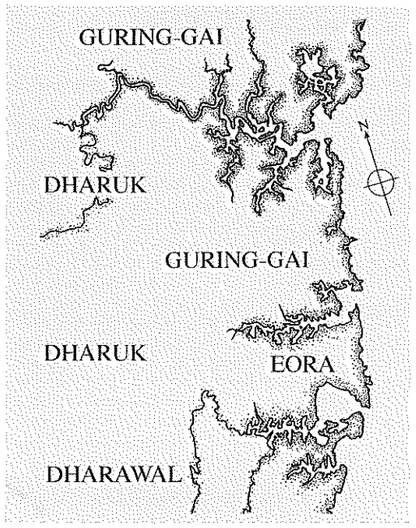
Aboriginal Language Map





Bagandji	also spelt Paakantyi
Gamilaroi	also spelt Gamilaraay
Dharug	also spelt Dharuk
Guringai	also spelt Guring-gai Kuring-gai Ku-ring-gai

Languages of the Sydney region

Foreword

My Dad was very knowledgeable in the identification of edible plants and various types of bush tucker. This knowledge and his love of the bush were passed down from his Elders during his lifetime. He had to be educated this way to enable him to be a good supporter of his wife and children, and he never missed an opportunity to gather and bring home on horseback or in a wagon whatever bush tucker he came across. This ensured that we never forgot what was available to us in the bush. The knowledge my Dad had still lives on in what I am doing now, in teaching survival skills to school groups through my Culture Camp.

The close association Aboriginal people in Australia have with plants has developed since time began — countless thousands of years. Plants were their greatest resource and were widely utilised. They provided Aboriginal people with a diet rich in all vitamins and fibre necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Aboriginal people were very skilled in the selection of plants for all tasks in hand: from clothing, food and medicine to weapons, shelter and dyes.

Plants, bushes and trees provided material for string manufacturing, enabling Aboriginal people to make netting for the trapping of small animals and birds, and plants provided spear shafts, shelters of gunyahs, and gums and resins. Medicines were also extracted from identifiable plants.

Learning about the bush tucker of plants, fruits, meat, berries, roots and nuts was very important to Aboriginal people living on missions and reserves. It helped to supplement the diet between ration days.

Since the sheep and cattle industries have been developed, a lot of native vegetation has been destroyed. The hooves of these animals helped in the destruction of the top soil, and so the process of soil erosion began. Cotton farming added to the destruction of our land with the clearing of the bush and use of sprays to keep the cotton free of insects. Our bush tucker has borne the brunt of the harmful effects of the toxins used in these sprays. The damming of our natural waterways has led to the gradual loss of River Red Gums and water plants — things that our people relied on to help sustain them.

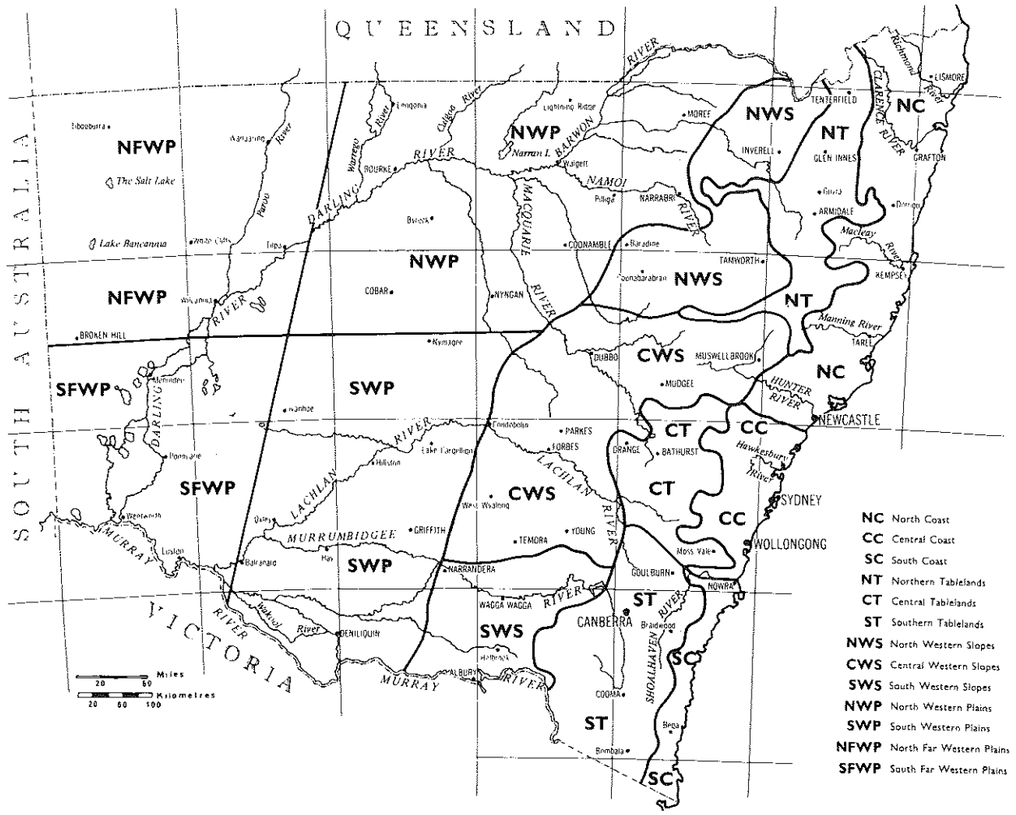
Bush tucker is vital for our survival as a nation of indigenous people. We must continue to pass on to our children the survival skills passed down to us by our forefathers and grandmothers. Knowledge of edible plants and berries will sustain our livelihood in this, our ever-changing society. No matter where we live, the passing on of this knowledge will perhaps one day save a life, whether it be a child or adult who happens to wander in the bush and become lost. The plants, berries and roots will sustain them until found.

In writing this foreword, it gives me great satisfaction to know that the love of bush tucker will continue to go on into the Year 2000 and beyond through education in schools, colleges and universities and, most importantly of all, through running Aboriginal Culture Camps where famous plants can be identified during bush walks.

Read this book, learn to identify the various plants and berries and remember — one of these plants could save a life, perhaps your own.

Beryl Carmichael

Regions of New South Wales



New South Wales can be divided into five main regions: coastal, tablelands, western slopes, western plains and far western plains. Temperature and rainfall in these regions are influenced by the mountains and highlands of the Great Dividing Range that run along the eastern side of the State. The Coastal Division, which lies on the eastern side of the mountain range, has a mild climate with good rain (750–2000 mm per year). The western half of the State experiences drought with unreliable rain (150–500 mm per year).

Introduction

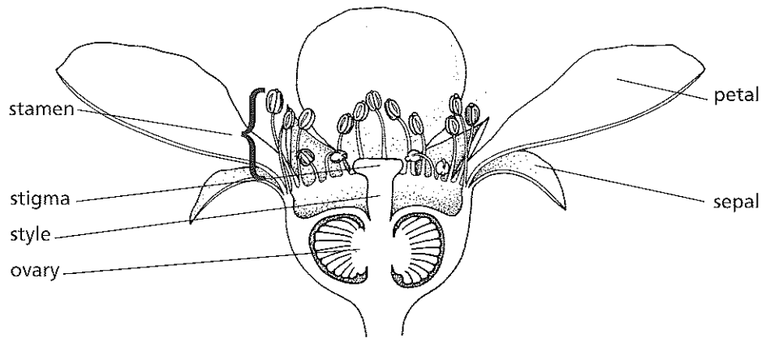
This book aims to create a meeting place for two groups — Australian Aboriginal people and Western scientists — to describe their understandings of plants. Aboriginal people with a heritage of thousands of years of experience living in the Australian environment tell their stories about using plants. In this book these stories are best read aloud to hear the voice of their tellers.

In the eyes of Western science Australia's native plants are special, with many plants unique to this island continent. Most of these plants have been found, described and named over a few generations of botanists. This book describes 30 of the most common bush food plants of New South Wales and arranges them alphabetically according to each plant's scientific name.

Joseph Henry Maiden, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens from 1896 to 1924, was one of the first Western scientists to compile a written record of how Australian Aboriginal people use plants. This work continues today with greater urgency as our environmental and cultural heritage become swallowed up by factors that seem to be beyond our control. The plants in this book include some that may become extinct in the wild if we allow present land use to continue. Contact the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, your local council, Landcare group or nursery for more information about the native plants that grow in your area for your own bush food garden!

If you are using this book to help identify plants, it is important to remember that collecting plants in national parks, state forests and nature reserves is not allowed. It is always better to take drawings and photographs and leave only footprints.

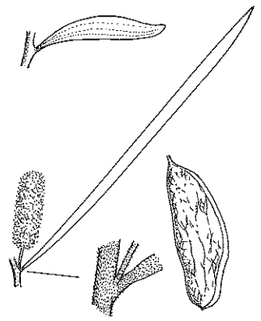
Parts of a Flower



Glossary

annual: a plant that completes its life cycle in one year; it grows from seed, flowers and then dies in one year.
frond: the leaf of a fern, cycad or palm.
habit: the general appearance of a plant: its shape, size etc.
perennial: a plant whose life span is longer than two growing seasons.
rhizome: a stem that grows under the soil.
spore: a simple reproductive unit with usually one or a few cells; it does not contain an embryo (unlike a seed)

Talking About Plants



Mulga (Acacia aneura)

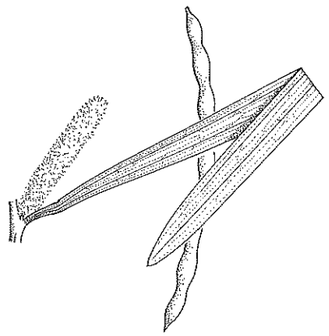
Acacia Trees

Seeds from the acacia tree were gathered extensively by women and children. They'd walk for miles until they got their dishes full and they'd take them back to the clearest, nearest clay pan and they'd sit down to grind all their seeds up to make their flour. So out of the seeds they'd produce a green-greyish-looking flour that they would make into seed cakes.

Also from the acacia tree they'd get the gum, the sweet gum, and that was edible. It comes on during the summer months, of course, and the kids used to go for a mile walk and gather the gum and eat all that up.

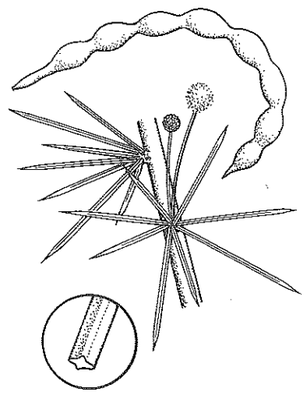
The acacia tree is also used for making weapons because it's got a nice red-coloured wood. It's a lot easier to work with. And today we find different shapes in the acacia branches that they can make into snakes and walking sticks and things like that. They're very useful, the acacia tree. They haven't got a very long life, of course. They die out really early, so you can't really prolong their life at all.

Beryl Carmichael



Sydney Golden Wattle (Acacia longifolia)

The Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*) is a 'bush calendar' — when it flowers, the Aboriginal people of the Sydney area know it is time to fish for mullet.



Dead Finish (Acacia tetragonophylla)

Dead Finish

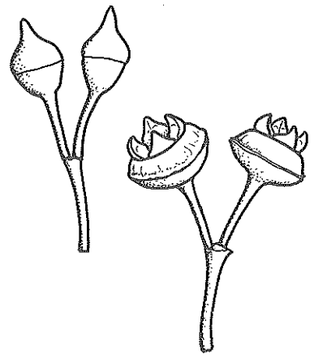
The wood of this bush is very pretty when it's polished up. It's a purply colour, and as the wood dies and gets older more purple comes through. A really deep purple will come through the middle of the wood.

Aboriginal people like to use this wood for decoration, for making shakers or clap-sticks out of it. You can also make necklaces and brooches out of it.

Beryl Carmichael

Eucalypts

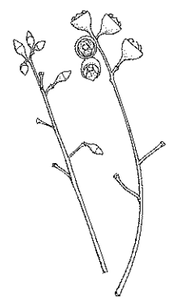
Aboriginal people have many uses for eucalypts. The fragrant oil-bearing leaves of eucalypts are used to relieve colds, headaches, backaches and fevers. Seeds, bark from young roots, nectar, galls, wild honey, water and manna from certain species of eucalypts can be eaten. Gum from eucalypts can be applied directly to sores and abrasions or boiled in water and used as a wash. The wood is used to make tools and other implements such as dishes and bowls. Eucalypt bark is used to make shelters and canoes; it can also be fashioned into fishing lines, fish nets and baskets.



River Red Gum (Eucalyptus camaldulensis)

All along the riverbanks, of course, you'll come across numerous river gums where the footprints of our people are left behind in the removal of the bark for various weapons such as the shield. As well, they'd take off the bark for their huts to make them weatherproof and they'd also use the sheets of bark to bury the dead in. They'd wrap them in the bark and take them to the closest sand dune for burial. So the bark was very important to the Aboriginal people.

Beryl Carmichael



Coolibah (Eucalyptus coolibah)

Widespread in inland Australia, the Coolibah (*Eucalyptus coolibah*) is one of a number of eucalypts containing quantities of water in their roots. Shallow roots are located and dug up, cut into pieces and up-ended into a bowl to drain. The Coolibah is known as *gulabaa* to Gamilaroi people and as *kumparla* to Paakantyi people.

Leopardwood (Flindersia maculosa)

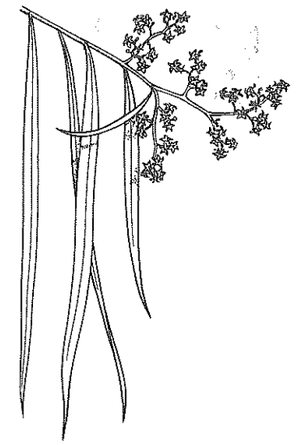
Leopardwood

We were hoping we'd find some nice sugary gum here that we could eat. It's really nice ... really sweet. You can eat it straight away. And sometimes we used to gather great clumps of it when we were kids and we'd take it home and put it in the billy with a little bit of water and boil it up and make nice syrup to drink. It is a two-fold tree — before the flower forms you get the buds and you chew and suck on that and you get a lot of nice nectar out of it. If we come back in late spring, early summer, we'll be able to get some gum off it.

Beryl Carmichael

Wilga

The wilga was used as a medicinal tree. Under the outer bark they'd scrape off all the inside and pound that up or chew it up and then let it dry. And they'd put that on open wounds, on boils or sores

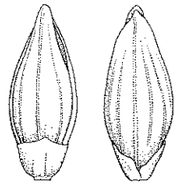


Wilga (Geijera parviflora)

and that would heal it up. The leaves were used for putting over the hot ashes and lying people on to heal the aches and pains in their joints. The wilga tree was also used extensively for weapons in regards to their spears, their nulla nullas, kudgeroos, bundis.

Beryl Carmichael

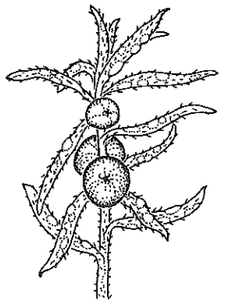
Talking About Plants



Native Millet (Panicum decompositum)

Grasses

Seeds of all native grasses are edible. On a global scale the seeds of wheat, rice, maize and sorgham are the world's most important crops. Native Millet (*Panicum decompositum*) is a widespread and common native grass. Aboriginal people made bread by grinding the seed between stones, making a paste and baking it in ashes.

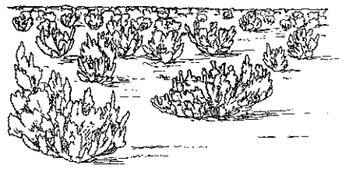


Wild Tomato (Enchylaena tomentosa)

Wild Tomato

These are very small here, but as you go to a better climate in other areas closer to the coast, you'll find they grow much bigger. But they go through different colours from orange, yellows, purples, reds — all colours — and they're edible. At the bottom of the tomato bush you'll find the moon grub, and the moon grub, he loves to eat the bark from the bottom of these trees or bushes. The moon grub was also used extensively by the Aboriginal people for fishing.

Beryl Carmichael



Old Man Saltbush (Atriplex *sp*)

Old Man Saltbush

Leaves from the Old Man Saltbush [known as *panparla* or *paalaka* to Paakantyi people] can be chewed to extract enough salt to satisfy the body's requirements. These leaves, when mixed with leaves of the Emu Bush [known as *thiku* to Ngiyampaa people], can be boiled to make a powerful medicine for dabbing on open wounds, boils, scabies, school sores and cold sores.

Beryl Carmichael

Yadah Pan

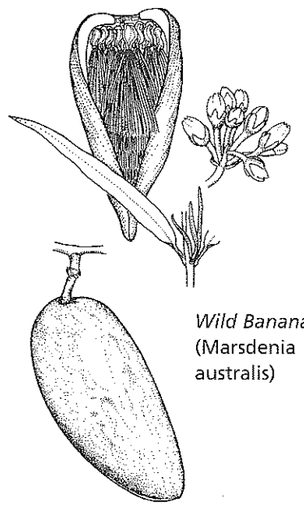
This little plant that's got purple, pinky coloured leaves on it is known as the *yadah pan*. It has red berries on it, with a shiny black eye in the middle, and they're very sweet to eat. They're different from a bush tomato. The bush tomato is a bit salty but these are very sweet. You'll find these clumped around the trees or anywhere on the flood plains.

Beryl Carmichael

Yadah Pan (Einadia nutans)

Wild Banana

Around some of the dry mulga you'll find the wild banana creeper. The root of the wild banana, of course, was eaten and we call it the *karkooloo,* and the wild banana is called the *thupa*. The fruit is dark green to a grey-green colour

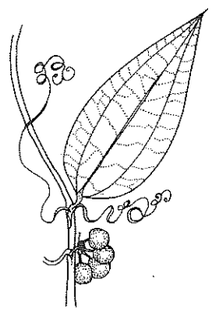


Wild Banana (Marsdenia australis)

and you peel the skin off it and you'll find a cluster of seeds down the bottom, covered with fine silky hair, similar to cotton. You can eat the whole banana, cook it in ashes and eat it whole, or you can just peel it and eat the seeds off it. It's really rich in vitamins, so it will be a bit bitter until you acquire the taste for it. So wherever you find some mulga you'll also find not far away the wild bananas growing on the dead mulga trees.

When we were kids you'd just eat them off the tree or we'd gather enough and take them home and cook them in the ashes — they were much better then, they were similar to avocado inside, as well as the tip of the asparagus spears. None grew on the mission, but they grew within 30 km of Menindee, the town and the mission. And the most I've ever found is around Broken Hill here, in the hills. It's the ideal place here for them.

Beryl Carmichael



Sarsaparilla (Smilax glyciphylla)

Sarsaparilla

We use the sarsaparilla [*waraburra* to Eora people] for medicine, drinking. It cures internal pains like belly-ache. You boil up the water, put the leaves in it and let it boil. You let the leaves just go cold in it and then you bottle it. People are selling it now for bush medicine and some people have been using it for cancers.

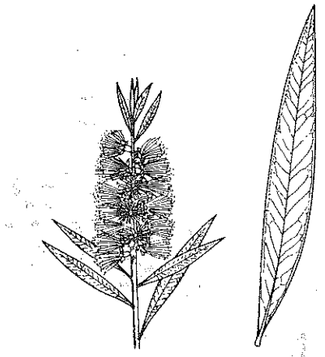
Ruth Simms

Nectar-bearing flowers

Waratah (Telopea speciosissima)

Nectar-bearing flowers are common throughout Australia. Aboriginal people harvest nectar from flowers including

Honeysuckle Spider Flower (Grevillea juncifolia)



Willow Bottlebrush (Callistemon salignus)

waratahs, callistemon, grevillea, banksia, hakea. Flowers can be sucked or eaten whole. A sweet drink can be made by immersing nectar-bearing flowers in water.

Native Cherry

Native Cherry's a beautiful bush with a very soft leaf. The fruit is yellow and when it gets ripe it turns this bright orange and you discard the little green pip thing at the end. There's no seeds in it, you just eat it.

Ruth Simms

Native Cherry (Exocarpus cupressiformis)

Acacia sophorae

Fabaceae-Mimosoideae

Coastal Wattle

There are more than 900 species of *Acacia* Australia-wide, making them the largest group of flowering plants in Australia.

Description

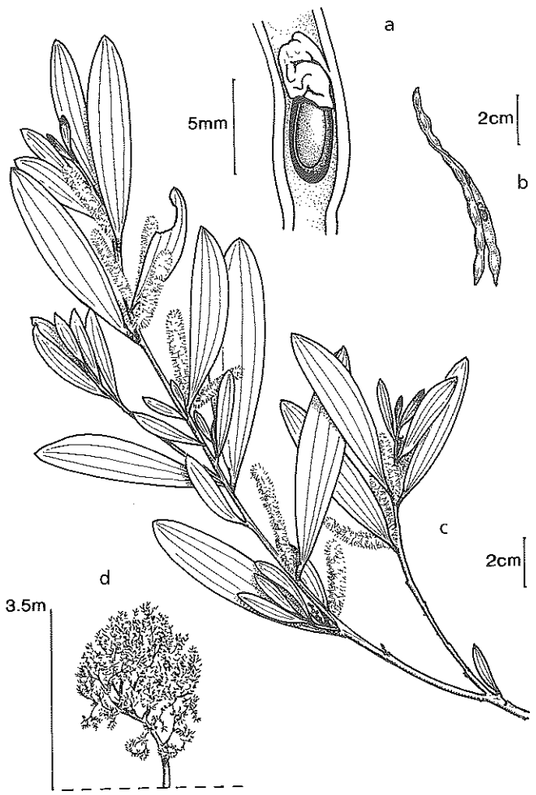
This shrub grows 0.5–3 m high. It is very similar to the Sydney Golden Wattle *(Acacia longifolia)* except that its trunk grows along the ground. The 'leaves' of this wattle — like other flat-leaved wattles — are really flattened, modified leaf stalks. Flowers are in golden-yellow cylindrical heads and appear July to September.

Where it is found

The Coastal Wattle occurs in heath and open forest on coastal headlands and adjacent alluvial flats. It is widespread in coastal districts of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

Uses

- The seed pods are harvested while green, then steamed whole. The protein-rich young seeds are then picked out and eaten.
- The wood is white, hard and durable.
- A liquid made from the bark was used for tanning skins and fishermen's sails and nets (Maiden 1889).
- This wattle is useful for sand stabilisation on beaches. It grows quickly, binding sand and fixing nitrogen with its roots, as well as providing shelter — making it a very useful plant to help re-establish native sand-dune plant communities.



Acacia sophorae
a) seed; b) seed pod; c) flowers and leaves; d) habit

Banksia species

Proteaceae

Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander collected the first banksia specimens in Australia in April 1770 after landing at Botany Bay with Captain Cook.

Description

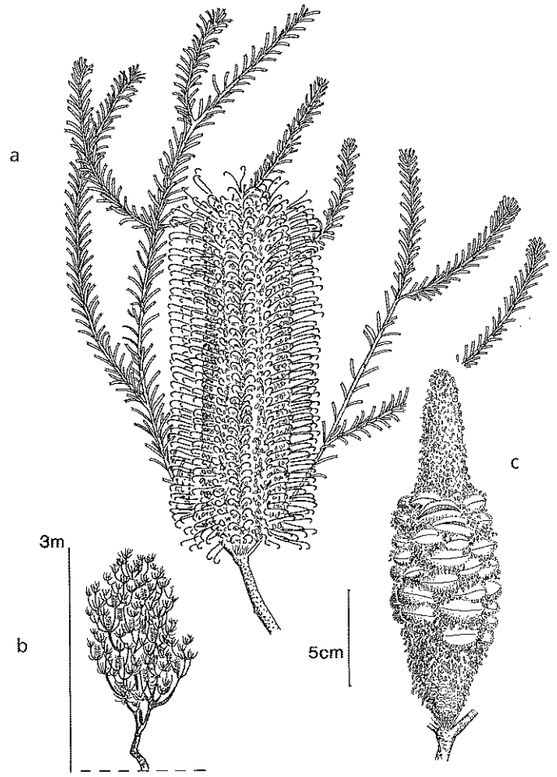
There are 72 known species of *Banksia,* all of which occur in Australia. All are woody, evergreen plants ranging in shape from shrubs growing along the ground to trees up to 25 m tall. The leaves are usually hard and leathery. Banksia flowers are pollinated by birds, small mammals or insects. After fire some banksias regenerate from a lignotuber (a woody swelling at the base of the stem) while other species are killed and regenerate from seed.

Where it is found

In New South Wales, banksias occur along the coast and tablelands and grow in a variety of environments except for coastal rainforests and the arid far west of the State. In most cases, banksias grow in well-drained areas such as exposed coastal soils on sand-dunes or on headlands. Other banksias occur on very dry sand plains.

Uses

- Sweet nectar can be sucked out of the flowers or shaken onto your hand and licked off, or the flower spikes can be soaked in water.
- Banksias were used to carry fire because the smouldering cones could be carried for long distances.



Banksia ericifolia
a) flower spike; b) habit; c) cones

Brachychiton acerifolius

Sterculiaceae

Illawarra Flame Tree
or
Flame Tree

DANGER

Irritating hairs

Description

This tree grows to 35 m and loses its leaves in the dry season. The vibrant flowers are bell-shaped and bright coral red. They appear in spring on leafless branches. The dark seed pod contains numerous seeds embedded in interlocking hairs in a honeycomb-like husk.

Where it is found

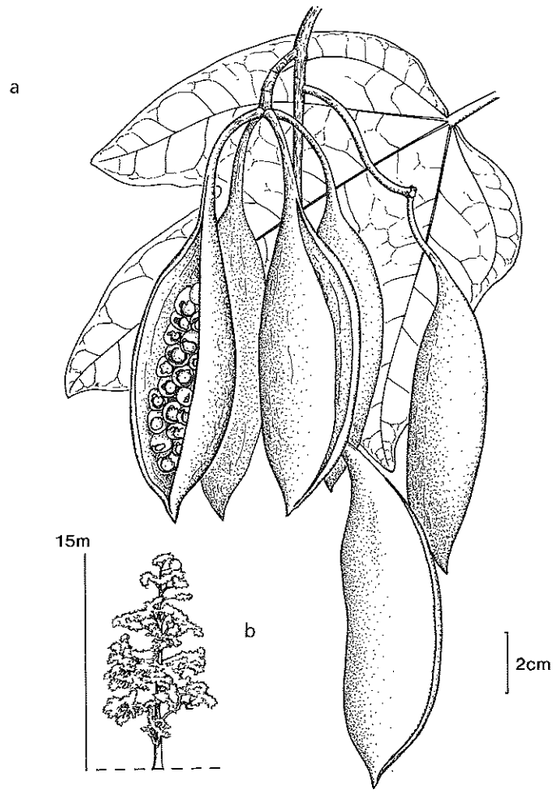
The Illawarra Flame Tree is widespread in subtropical rainforest on the coast to the escarpment, north from the Shoalhaven River into Queensland. It is a popular street tree, grown for its brilliant red flowers.

DANGER

Extreme caution must be taken with the dangerous, irritating hairs inside the seed pod. The hairs irritate the skin, are easily inhaled and have been known to cause blindness.

Uses

- The yellow seeds can be roasted and eaten, but Aboriginal people took special care with the preparation of seeds because of the dangerous hairs inside the seed pod.
- Fibre from the inner bark was used to make twine for fishing nets and fishing lines.



Brachychiton acerifolius
a) leaves and seed pods; b) habit

Cymbopogon obtectus

Poaceae

Silky Heads

Description

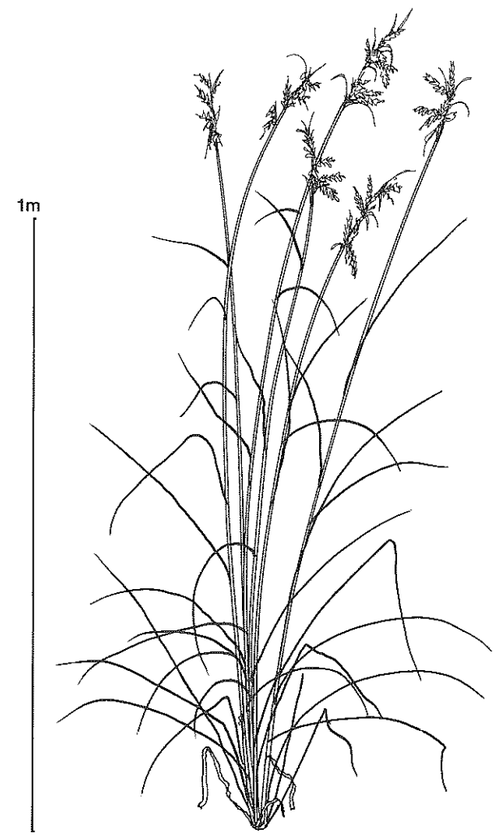
This aromatic herb grows to 1 m high. The leaf blades contain aromatic oils and can be narrow, flat or folded. Flower heads, appearing in summer, look shaggy, having long fluffy hairs. *Cymbopogon* species include the Asian lemon grasses, which are used as spices and teas.

Where it is found

The plant is widespread near watercourses across mainland Australia. In New South Wales, Silky Heads are found on the north coast, tablelands, slopes and plains, central slopes and southern plains.

Uses

- *Traditional Bush Medicines* (1988) describes the preparation of medicine by chopping the aromatic leaves finely and boiling them for 5 to 10 minutes in a litre of water. The resulting yellow-green liquid is drunk as often as needed to relieve coughs and colds. The liquid can also be used as a liniment for sore muscles or headaches, and as an antiseptic to treat sores.
- The leaves can be rubbed into a ball and placed in the nostrils to relieve colds.
- A liquid made from the root can be poured into the ear to relieve earaches.



Cymbopogon obtectus *(habit)*

Dendrobium speciosum

Orchidaceae

Rock Lily

***wargaldarra* (wer-gal-derra) and *buruwan* (ba-ro-wan) to Eora people**

The small underground tubers and stems of many orchids can be consumed raw or after roasting.

Description

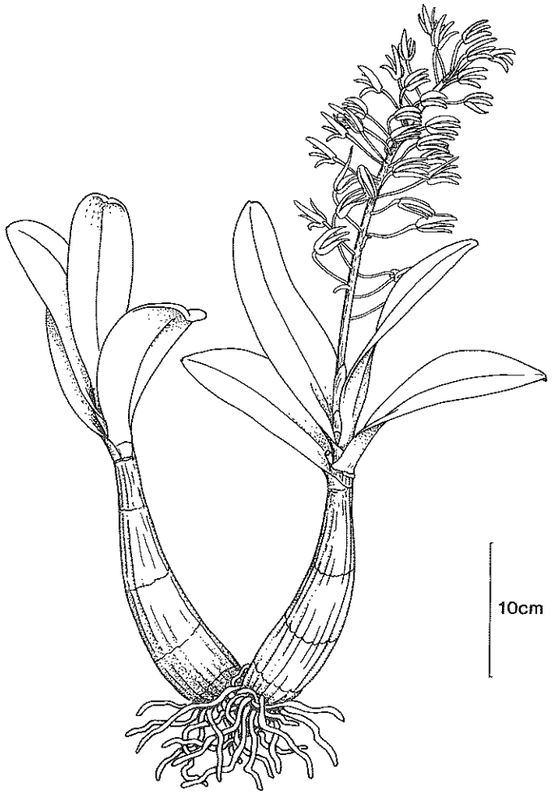
The Rock Lily is an orchid that has succulent spreading stems thickest near the base and tapering markedly towards the top. Its roots are smooth and creeping and its leaves are smooth and leathery. Beautiful flower spikes appear in August through to October and contain 20–115 light yellow flowers.

Where it is found

This orchid usually grows on rocks in open forest, particularly on sandstone. Occasionally it also grows on the branches of rainforest trees. In New South Wales it is found chiefly in coastal districts south from the Newcastle area into Victoria and inland to the upper Hunter Valley.

Uses

- The starchy stems are roasted and eaten.
- Stems from a variety of *Dendrobium* species are chewed and rubbed into sores, burns and wounds.



Dendrobium speciosum *(habit)*

Dianella species

Phormiaceae

Blue Flax Lilies

Description

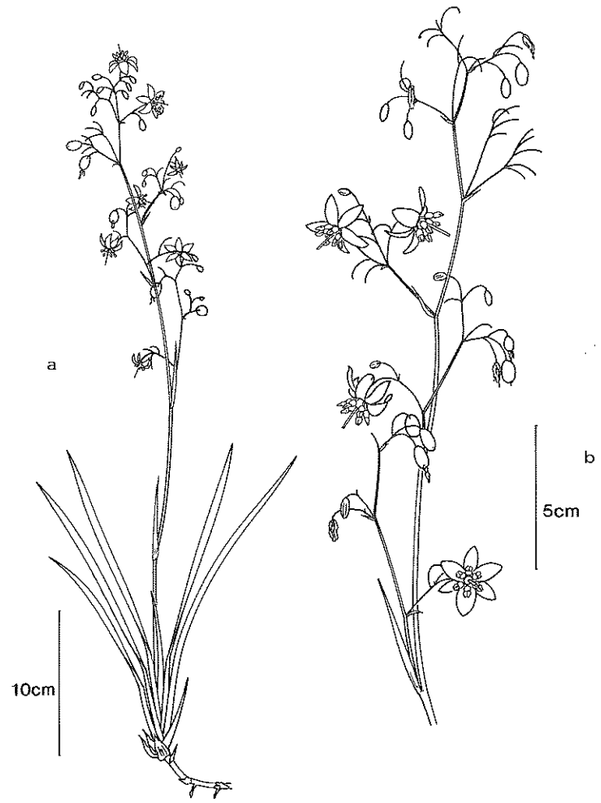
There are 15 species of *Dianella* found across Australia. These hardy plants have blue berries containing shiny black seeds. The blue, purple or white star-shaped flowers have six yellow, thickened stamens. Flowers appear in spring through summer.

Where it is found

These plants are found in all States, in a variety of habitats from heath to open forests and woodlands. In New South Wales the lilies grow all along the coast and inland on the tablelands to the far south-western plains.

Uses

- The attractive blue fruits and shiny black seeds of most *Dianella* species are eaten raw. They have a sweet flavour, which becomes nutty once the seed is chewed.
- The roots of some of these lilies can be eaten after pounding and roasting.
- A strong fibre for string was made from leaf fibres of some species (Maiden 1889).



Dianella caerulea
a) habit; b) flowers

Dicksonia antarctica

Dicksoniaceae

Soft Treefern

Toxic fronds

Description

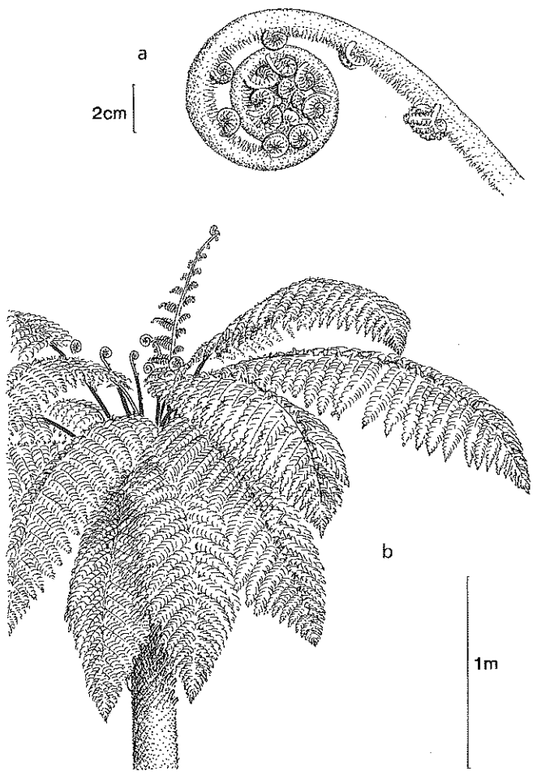
This fern has a trunk that grows to 4.5 m high and is 30 cm in diameter. The treefern trunk is densely covered with dark, red-brown hairs towards the crown and with coarse, brown, fibrous roots towards the base. The fronds (leaves) are mostly 1–3 m long and quite leathery. They are dark glossy green above and paler underneath. Spore cases found on the under surface of fronds are green, maturing to brown.

Where it is found

In New South Wales the Soft Treefern grows on the coast and tablelands. It is widespread in mountain gullies, usually along creeks, and especially in cooler rainforest in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. In South Australia it appears to be extinct.

Uses

- The soft, pulpy tissue at the top of the trunk is very starchy and can be roasted or eaten raw. Low (1989) reports that this tissue, containing about 12 per cent starch, was probably a staple food for Aboriginal people. However, removal of this growing heart kills the plant.
- Uncoiled young fronds can be eaten after roasting or steaming to remove toxins.



Dicksonia antarctica
a) coiled frond; b) habit

Dioscorea transversa

Dioscoreaceae

Native Yam
***midiny* to Eora people**
***wanka-parlu* to Paakantyi people**

Description

This vine has twining stems (2–4 m long) growing out of a tuber. Although the cylindrical tuber is rarely more than 10 mm in diameter, it grows deep into the soil. The heart-shaped leaves die back during the winter. The yam has separate male and female plants. Male flowers produce pollen and occur on spikes 3–6 cm long; female flower spikes are usually 10–20 cm long with tiny (2 mm), greenish flowers.

Where it is found

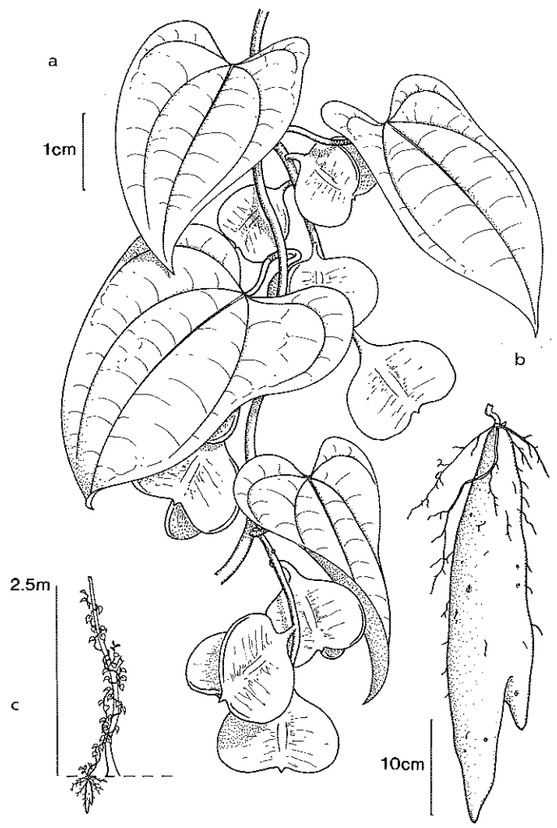
The Native Yam occurs in New South Wales on the northern and central coast and on the northern tablelands, chiefly in warmer rainforest and moist open forest north from the Sydney area. It also occurs in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Uses

A liquid made from the vine has been used in the treatment of skin cancer (Cherikoff & Isaacs 1990)

Yams are root vegetables found in loamy soil as well as on sand-dunes in far western New South Wales around Menindee. After a good season of rain they are plentiful. After finding the vegetation on the surface you then dig underground to a foot deep to gather all the juicy roots. The roots can be eaten straight away, after brushing all the soil off.

Beryl Carmichael



Dioscorea transversa
a) vine with leaves and fruit; b) yam; c) habit

Doryanthes excelsa

Doryanthaceae

Gymea Lily
or
Giant Lily

Description

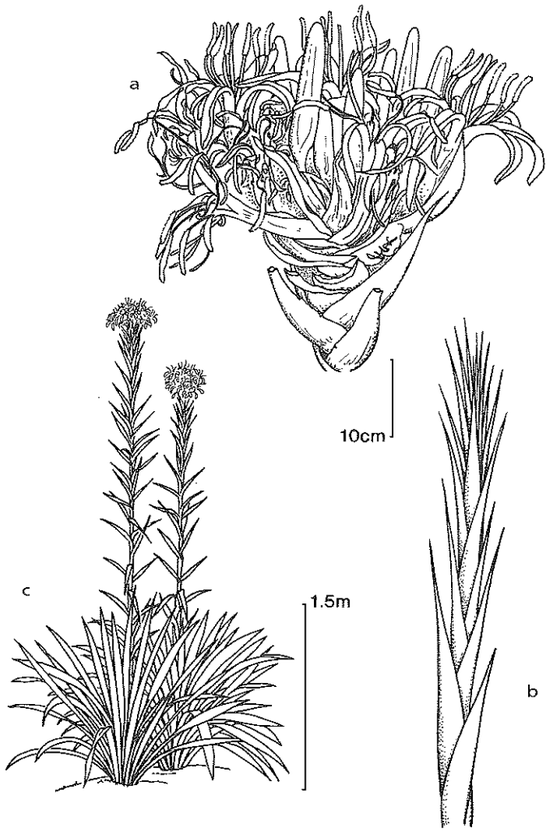
This giant plant has many sword-shaped leaves up to 2.5 m long and 10 cm wide. The flower spike grows to 5 m high and bears a striking head of red flowers.

Where it is found

The Gymea Lily grows in open forest and woodland sandy soils containing some clay. It occurs only in New South Wales along the coast from Karuah near Newcastle to Mount Keira near Wollongong. In Sydney it is often planted in parks and along road sides.

Uses

- The roots can be harvested, roasted and made into a cake.
- The young flower spikes (when approximately 0.5 m high) can be roasted and eaten.
- The leaves contain fibres, which have been used for brush making and matting (Maiden 1889).



Doryanthes excelsa
a) head of flowers; b) young flower spike; c) habit

Eleocharis dulcis

Cyperaceae

Spike-rush

Description

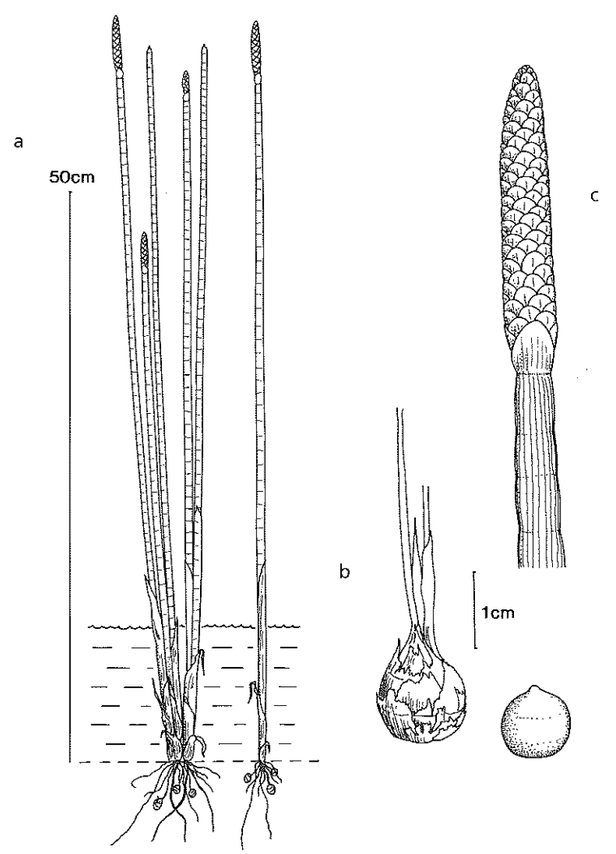
This leafless rush grows to 1.5 m high and sometimes bears tubers that can be up to 10 mm in diameter. Its hollow cylindrical stems are divided internally by fine partitions.

Where it is found

The Spike-rush occurs in dense stands in permanent water bodies north from Murwillumbah on the New South Wales north coast. It is also found in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Uses

- The delicious onion-shaped tubers are dug out at the end of May to early June when the swamps are drying out. Older tubers are roasted, but the younger tubers are eaten raw.
- The rushes are used medicinally in Groote Eylandt where they are collected from saltwater swamps and soaked in sea water. The liquid is poured onto open wounds, and the soft hollow stems are then packed over the injury where they adhere to and seal the wound (Isaacs 1987).
- *Eleocharis dulcis* is cultivated in Asia for its edible tubers, which are known as Chinese Water Chestnuts.



Eleocharis dulcis
a) habit; b) tuber; c) flower spike

Eucalyptus agglomerata

Myrtaceae

Blue-leaved Stringybark

There are more than 800 species of *Eucalypt* found across Australia. They are our second largest group of flowering plants.

Description

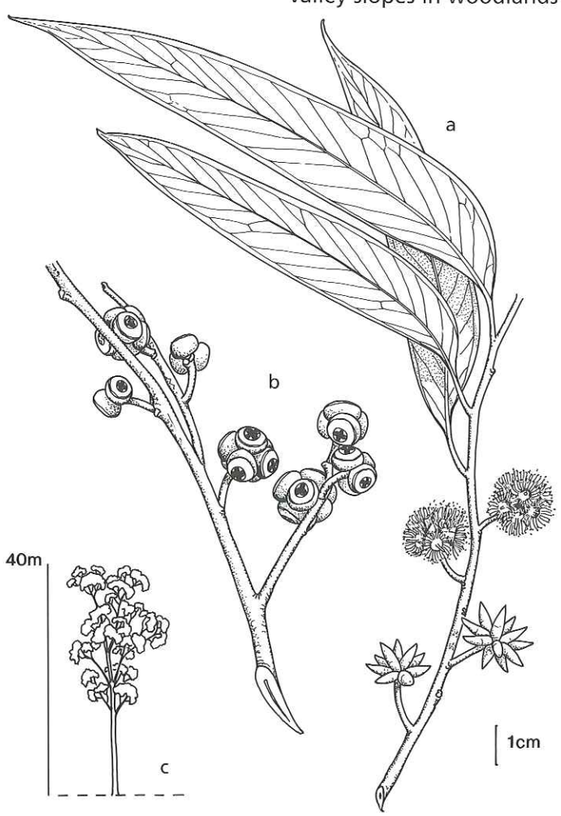
The Blue-leaved Stringybark grows 20–30 m high. Its bark, which is grey over red-brown, is thick, fibrous and stringy. The white flowers occur in groups of 11 or more and appear from March through to August. The round, woody fruits crowd together in a ball shape.

Where it is found

This Stringybark occurs on valley slopes in woodlands and forests on the central and southern coast, and on the central tablelands of New South Wales, extending south to the north coast of Victoria.

Uses

- The bark was used by the Aboriginal people of the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system to make canoes (Turbet 1989).
- Sydney's Aboriginal people prepared twine for fishing nets by rolling the fibres of soaked bark against their thighs and twisting two strands together; the fishing net was a mesh of large loops without knots. Fishing lines were made from bark strengthened by soaking it in a solution of the Geebung *(Persoonia laurina)* bark in water. The soaked bark was pounded between rocks, two strands of the fibre were rolled tightly together, and the line soaked in the sap of the Red Bloodwood *(Eucalyptus gummifera)* to prevent fraying (Turbet 1989).
- The bark from stringybarks can also be used to make huts, shields and water carriers.



Eucalyptus agglomerata
a) leaves, buds and flowers; b) fruit; c) habit

Right: Protein-rich seeds of the Coastal Wattle (Acacia sophorae) *are eaten after steaming the green pod.*

Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Below: Illawarra Flame Tree (Brachychiton acerifolius)*. Water-bearing roots of the kurrajongs* (Brachychiton *species*) *of the Central Desert can be tapped during times of drought.*

Right: The leaves and roots of Silky Heads (Cymbopogon obtectus) *are used for medicines. The leaves contain aromatic oils.*

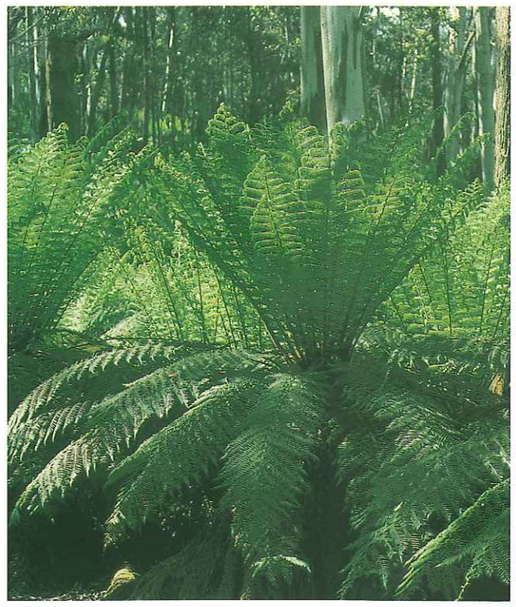
Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

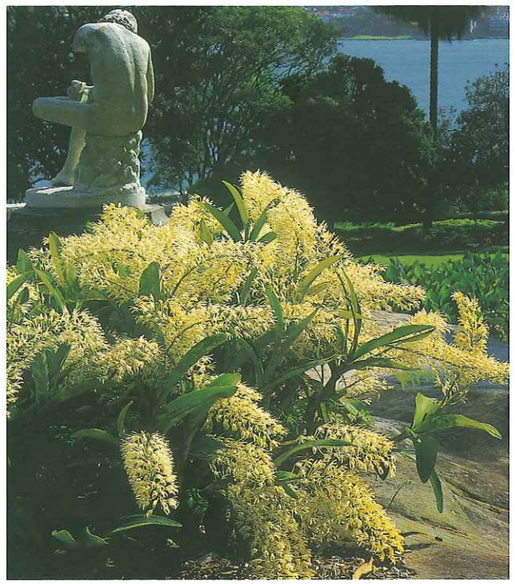
Above: Banksia integrifolia, *photographed at Bradleys Head Sydney, was known to Eora people as* courriddjah.

Above: The sweet blue fruits of the Blue Flax Lily (Dianella caerulea) *are edible, as are its roots.*

Below: The starchy inner trunk of the Soft Treefern (Dicksonia antarctica) *can be roasted and eaten.*

Photo: David Hardin at Ben Hall's Gap





Above: The starchy stems of the Rock Lily (Dendrobium speciosum) *are edible. The stems from a variety of other species of* Dendrobium *are crushed and applied to sores, wounds and burns.*

Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Above: The Gymea Lily (Doryanthes excelsa) *is a source of food and fibre. At one time there was interest in using the leaf fibres commercially.*

Photo: Jaime Plaza at Mount Annan Botanic Garden

Above: The leaf and papery fruits of the Native Yam (Dioscorea transversa) *signal a delicious tuber growing underground.*

Photo: David Hardin in the Laurieton district north of Taree

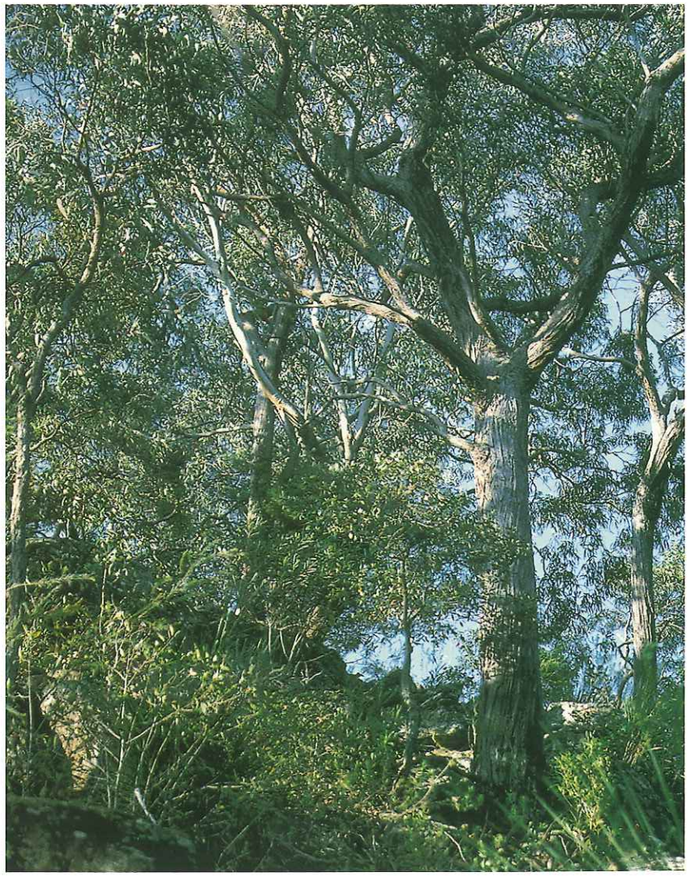
Above: Tubers revealed after much digging! Native Yams (Dioscorea transversa) *are eaten raw or roasted and have a flavour similar to that of a potato.*

Photo: Tony Rodd in the Newcastle district

Above: Stout roots of the Gymea Lily (Doryanthes excelsa) *are roasted and eaten.*

Right: Aboriginal people of the Sydney area used bark from the Blue-leaved Stringybark (Eucalyptus agglomerata) *to make canoes. Their word for eucalypts is* yarra.

Photo: Tony Rodd in the lower Blue Mountains area



Above: The delicious fruit of the Sandpaper Fig (Ficus coronata) *is eaten raw when it is ripe. The rough leaves can be used as sandpaper.*

Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Above: Delicious tubers of the Water Chestnut (Eleocharis dulcis) *can be eaten raw or roasted.*

Photo: Surrey Jacobs at Fogg Dam

Left: These sweet fruits of the Bolwarra (Eupomatia laurina) *are as big as an infant's fist.*

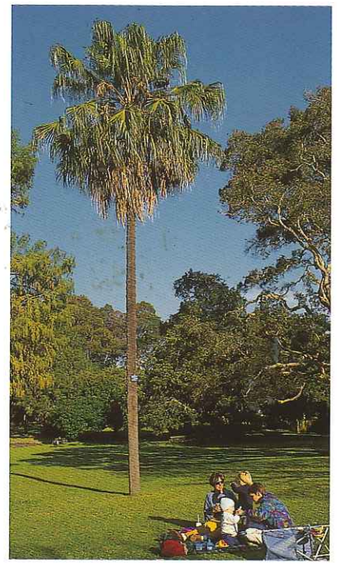
Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Above: Macadamia fruits almost ripe for picking.

Photo: Kathy Stewart at a macadamia farm near Gosford

Left: Seeds and leaf bases of the Saw-sedge (Gahnia aspera) *are edible. Watch out for the sharp leaf margins.*

Photo: Tony Rodd



Above: The growing tip of the Cabbage Tree Palm (Livistona australis) *is edible. Its fibrous bark is used to make fishing lines. Palms play an important role in Dreaming stories of the Aboriginal people of the NSW coast.*

Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Left: The Spiny-headed Mat-rush (Lomandra longifolia) *is a common sight, especially along the NSW coast. Its leaves are used to make baskets. This photo was taken at Coogee, NSW in 1954.*

Left: A female Burrawang (Macrozamia communis) *with cones. The toxins in cycad seeds can be absorbed through the skin — it is not a good idea to handle them at all.*

Photo: Ken Hill at the Royal Botanic Gardens

Above: Nardoo (Marsilea drummondii) *is a fern with leaves that look like a four-leaf clover. You can see the spore cases at the base of the plant.*
Photo: Jaime Plaza at Mount Annan Botanic Garden

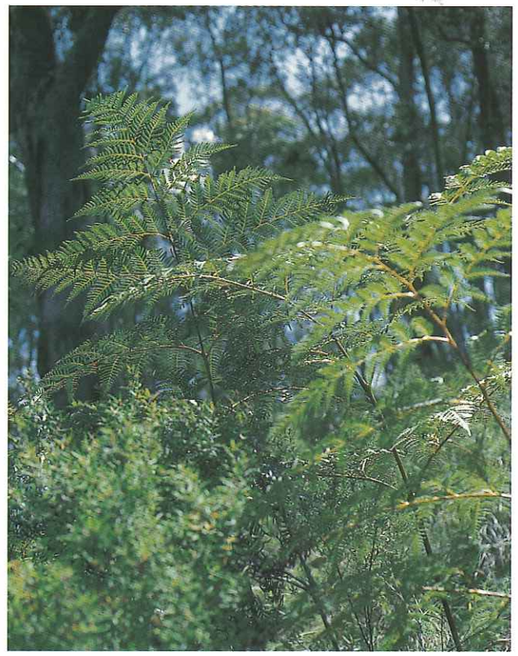
Above: Ruth Simms showing geebungs (*Persoonia* sp).
Photo: Bob Percival

Below: The Paperbark (Melaleuca quinquenervia) *growing along the shores of Two Mile Lake, Myall Lakes National Park.*
Photo: Jaime Plaza

Above: Flower of the Giant Waterlily (Nymphaea gigantea). *Most of the plant is edible, including the leaf and flower stalks, which can be peeled and eaten raw.* *Photo: Surrey Jacobs*

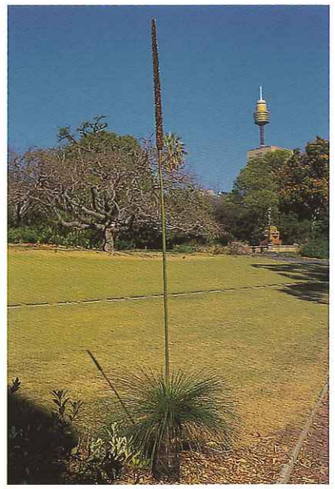
Above: The Screw Pine (Pandanus tectorius) *is a common sight on the headlands of the north coast of NSW into Queensland.*
Photo: Tony Rodd

Above: The seeds, leaves and stems of Pigweed (Portulaca oleracea) *are edible. Aboriginal people across the outback call it* munyeroo.
Photo: Tony Rodd



Above: Rhizomes of Bracken (Pteridium esculentum), *harvested in late summer, can be chewed to extract the starch but they must be roasted first to destroy the toxins.*
Photo: Tony Rodd

Left: The delicious green vegetable New Zealand Spinach (Tetragonia tetragonioides).
Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney



Left: Grass Tree (Xanthorrhoea johnsonii). *Woody flower spikes, used as spear shafts by Eora people, were called* galun *(callum).*
Photo: Jaime Plaza at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Above: Resin collected from a species of Xanthorrhoea. *This material can be used like a glue to make a range of tools and weapons. These specimens of resin, held by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, are over 100 years old and are referred to in Joseph Maiden's book* The Useful Native Plants of Australia *(1889).*
Photo: Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Above: Beryl Carmichael holding Sweet Quandongs (Santalum acuminatum). *Photo: Bob Percival*

Above: Fruit of the Magenta Lilly Pilly (Syzygium paniculatum).
Photo: Tony Rodd

Above: Rhizomes, young shoots and flowers of the common and widespread Cumbungi (Typha orientalis) *are edible.*
Photo: Surrey Jacobs on the Georges River, Sydney

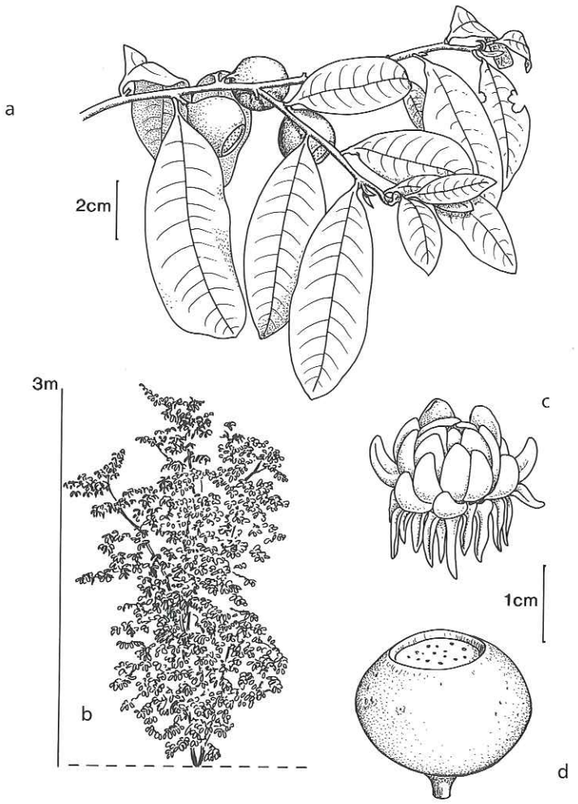
Eupomatia laurina

Eupomatiaceae

Bolwarra
or
Native Guava

Description

This small tree has black branches that grow more than 1 m long. Pale, heavily scented flowers have no petals or sepals and appear in summer. The urn-shaped berry is 15–20 mm in diameter and turns from green to brown through winter.



Eupomatia laurina
a) leaves and fruit; b) habit; c) flower; d) fruit

Where it is found

Bolwarra is widespread in or near warmer rainforest and moist eucalypt forest on the coast and lower ranges. In New South Wales it is found on the coast and tablelands. It also occurs in Queensland, Victoria and New Guinea.

Uses

- Bolwarra berries have an interesting taste with soft, sweet flesh and strong, spicy seeds. The whole fruit can be dried, crushed and used to flavour foods such as ice-cream.
- The fibrous bark was used as raw material for manufacturing fishing lines (Turbet 1989). The bark was prepared in the same way as that described on page 22.

Ficus coronata

Moraceae

Sandpaper Fig
or
Creek Sandpaper Fig

The leaf's very, very coarse like sandpaper. When the fruit's a darky red colour or off-brownish colour, it's ready to eat. *Ruth Simms*

Description

The branches and leaves of this small tree are densely hairy and rough. The round figs are also hairy, turning purple-black when mature, ripening in January through to June.

Where it is found

The Sandpaper Fig grows along creeks, in rainforest and open country and occasionally in sheltered rocky areas. In New South Wales the fig is found on the coast, tablelands and western slopes. It also occurs in Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

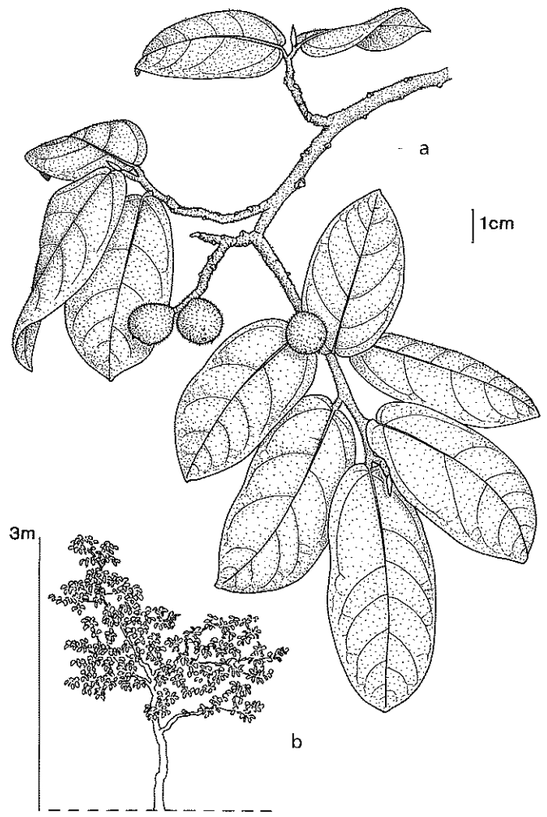
Uses

• The tasty fig is best when ripe and with the hairy outer skin removed. Native figs form part of the diet of many groups of Aboriginal people throughout mainland Australia. All figs are edible but some taste much better than others. Some figs are eaten raw, while others are pounded into a paste and mixed with water and honey.

• Sap from the plant can be applied to wounds to promote healing.

• Rough leaves can be used as sandpaper.

• The Aboriginal people of the Sydney region ate the yellow fruits of the Port Jackson Fig *(Ficus rubiginosa)* raw or in a cake. The wood of this species was also used for shield-making (Turbet 1989).



Ficus coronata
a) leaves and fruit; b) habit

Gahnia aspera

Cyperaceae

Saw-sedge

Description

Gahnia, which grows 15–65 cm tall, has long, grass-like leaves with sharp, saw-edged margins. The attractive flower spike is dark brown to black, and after flowering bears shiny, dark, red-brown seeds.

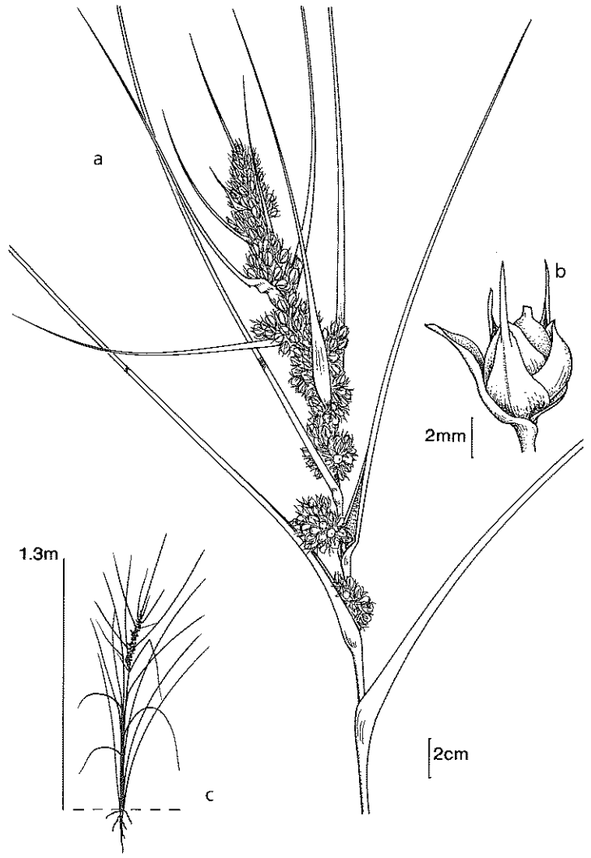
Where it is found

This sedge is a widespread plant in the drier parts of rainforest, open forest and woodland. It is found on the coast, tablelands, western slopes and plains of New South Wales and also in Queensland, Malaysia, Indonesia and Polynesia.

Uses

• The seeds are pounded to produce flour.

• The leaf bases are edible.



Gahnia aspera
a) leaves and flowers; b) seed; c) habit

Livistona australis

Arecaceae

Cabbage Tree Palm
or
Cabbage Palm
or
Fan Palm

***daranggara* (ta-rang-gera) to Eora people**

Description

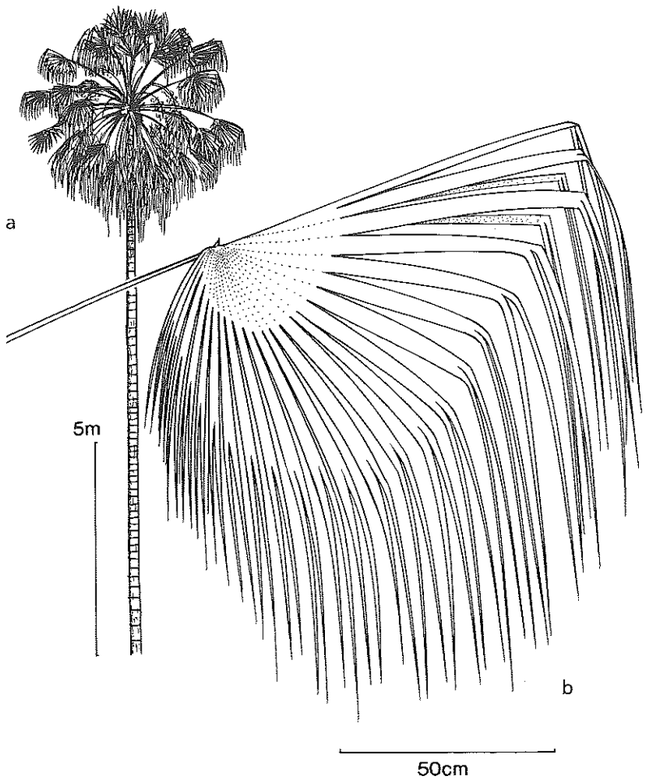
This beautiful palm grows up to 30 m high and is crowned with shiny leaves 3–4.5 m long. In summer it bears flower spikes with sprigs of cream-white flowers. The fruit is red, turning black when it is ready to be peeled and planted.

Where it is found

The Cabbage Tree Palm occurs in moist open forest, often in swampy sites and on margins of rainforests. It is widespread along the New South Wales coast and extends north into Queensland and south into Victoria.

Uses

- The growing tip of the palm is edible; however, harvesting of this tip kills the plant because it cannot regrow from another point.
- The Aboriginal people of the Sydney area used the leaves as roof thatch and for weaving baskets. They also used the fibrous bark to make fishing lines (Turbet 1989).
- In Cape York, shallow bag-like nets are made from the bark fibres.



When we were old enough, we used to hold dances down in the old shed and we used to row across to the Commerong Island to get Cabbage Tree Palms and tomato vines to decorate the hall. We'd come back home and rig up a light bulb and we'd pretty it up. We'd have an old man there who used to play the accordion, and we used to enjoy it very much.

Barbara Timbery

Livistonia australis
a) habit; b) leaf

Lomandra longifolia

Lomandraceae

Spiny-headed Mat-rush

Description

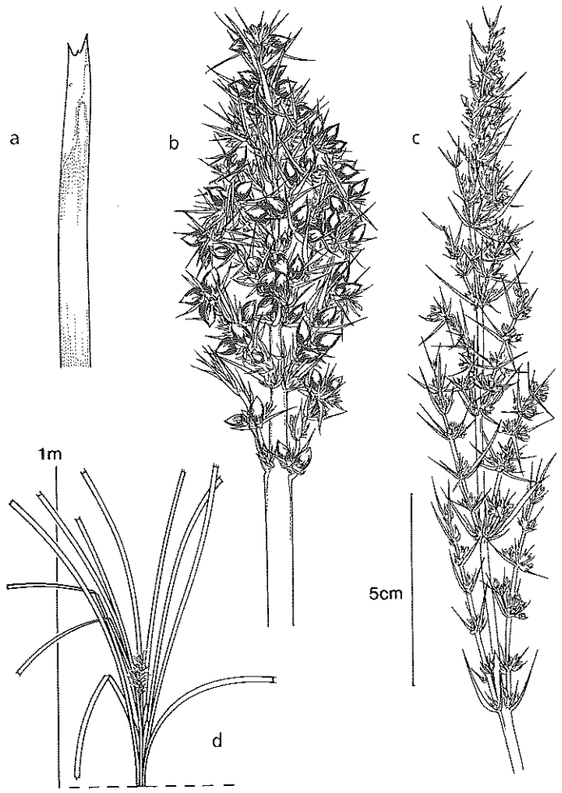
This widespread herb has separate male and female plants. The small, creamy, male and female spiny flower heads appear in spring. Male flowers produce pollen and are 3–3.5 mm long; perfumed female flowers are approximately 4.5 mm long. The plant has tough, narrow leaves 50–100 cm long, which grow from an underground stem.

Where it is found

The mat-rush is found in a variety of habitats along the New South Wales coast, tablelands, northern and central western slopes and north-western plains. It also occurs in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. The bush is common in street and park plantings and can provide a safe habitat for lizards and other small animals.

Uses

- The tough leaves can be used to make baskets.
- Leaf bases are edible, with a pea-like flavour.
- The flowers are also edible — watch out for the spines!



Lomandra longifolia
a) leaf; b) female flowers; c) male flowers; d) habit

Macadamia tetraphylla

Proteaceae

Rough-leaved Queensland Nut
or
Rough-shelled Queensland Nut

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Description

This tree grows to 15 m high. The large leaves (18–25 cm long) occur in groups of four, and are glossy and leathery with stiff, prickly margins. Flowers appear in August to October and grow in pairs along a thread-like flower spike. The greyish-green fruit contains a hard-shelled, delicious nut.

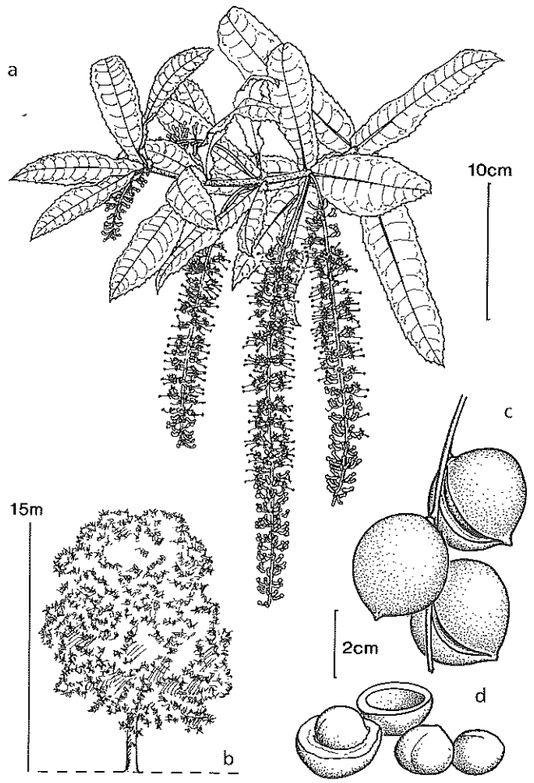
Where it is found

The macadamia occurs in subtropical rainforest in coastal areas north of the Clarence River into Queensland. It is endangered in its natural habitat and is at risk of disappearing from the wild within 10–20 years if present land use continues.

Uses

• The nut is supremely tasty. The oil content of the kernel is higher than 72 per cent, which is the highest for any oil-yielding nut. Out of a possible 4000 different types of food plants, the macadamia is the only native Australian plant grown as a commercial food crop.

• The NSW Department of Agriculture and Fisheries reported (1990) that the macadamia was introduced to Hawaii in the 1880s. It was commercialised from the 1930s onwards. There are large macadamia farms in South Africa, Costa Rica, Kenya, Malawi and Guatemala.



Macadamia tetraphylla
a) leaves and flowers; b) habit; c) fruit; d) nut

Macrozamia communis

Zamiaceae

Burrawang

***barwang* to Bundjalung people**

DANGER

Poisonous seeds
Do not touch

Description

Burrawangs belong to a group of plants called cycads. These slow-growing, cone-bearing plants flourished during the time of the dinosaurs (the Mesozoic era) and then all but disappeared 80 million years ago. This cycad has long leaves (70–200 cm) with very sharp pointed leaf segments. Fifty to one hundred leaves can grow from the crown of a trunk. Burrawangs have separate male and female plants.

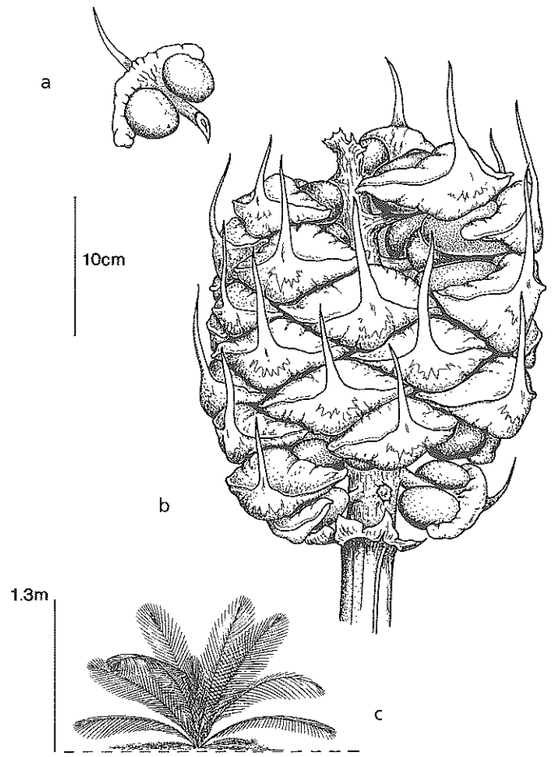
Female cones are 20–45 cm long, 10–20 cm in diameter and contain seeds that are scarlet when ripe. The cylindrical male cones are 20–45 cm long and bear pollen.

Where it is found

Burrawangs occur in open forest on sandy to loamy soils along the New South Wales coast from the Macleay River to Bega and inland to the Goulburn River. They also occur in Queensland.

Uses

The plant's highly poisonous red seeds contain starch. Aboriginal people use various methods to treat seeds before eating them. Pounded seeds are washed in running water for some days. The pulp is then made into cakes and roasted. However, there is no evidence that this treatment destroys or even reduces the poisons.



Macrozamia communis
a) seeds attached to a cone scale; b) cone; c) habit

Marsilea drummondii

Marsileaceae

Common Nardoo

***ngartu* to Paakantyi people**

Description

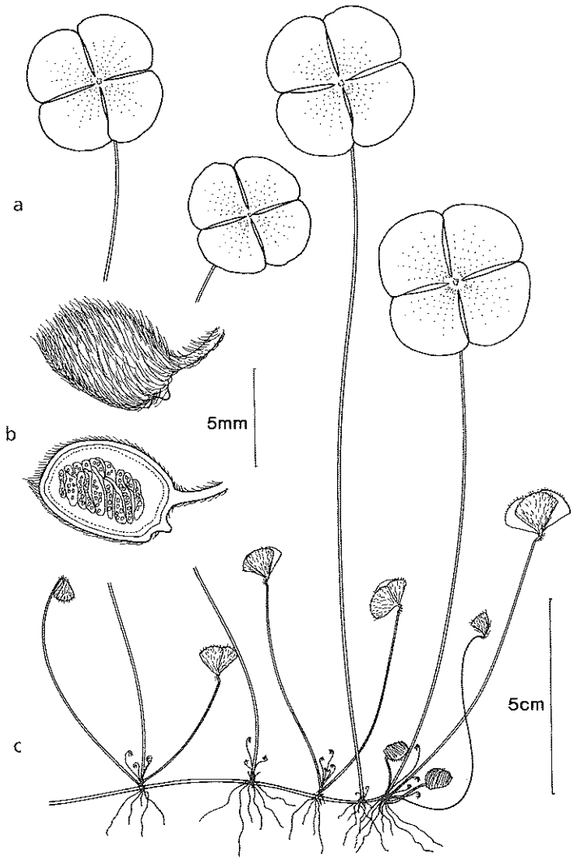
This water fern looks like a floating four-leaf clover. Leaves arise from a long creeping rhizome (underground stem) that is rooted in the mud. Nardoo produces spores which are housed in small packets that grow on stalks from the rhizome.

Where it is found

This water plant is widespread in inland areas and is found in moist depressions, and around waterholes, swamps and creeks. In New South Wales the plant occurs on the western slopes and plains into Queensland and Victoria. It also occurs in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia.

Uses

On most of the flood plains around the Darling region, around the Darling River, we come across the nardoo plant. Now, the nardoo plant was used extensively by the Aboriginal people to grind up and make their flour. As well as that, they would eat the nardoo seeds when they were fresh, as well as the plant itself — the leaves. Everything was edible. In a good time all these plants would come back along the flood plains. We've lived for years and years in the dry time and you don't see a plant at all, but after big rains in '88 all the plants came back. But of course, all the emus, kangaroos, sheep, and rabbits, they love them too, so you've got to be really quick now to gather enough seeds to make some flour. *Beryl Carmichael*



Marsilea drummondii
a) leaves; b) spore case; c) habit

Melaleuca quinquenervia

Myrtaceae

Paperbark

Description

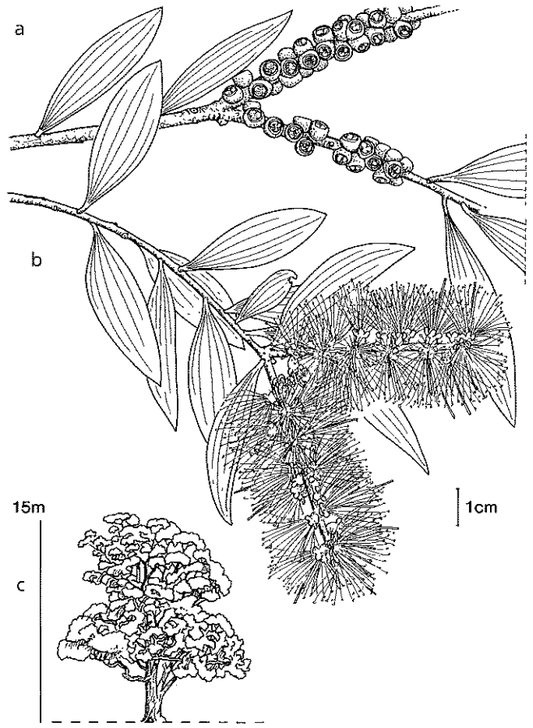
This paperbark grows 10–15 m high with scented leaves and papery bark. Hold a leaf up to the light to see its shiny oil glands, then crush it to smell the aromatic oils. The flower spikes are made up of creamy, sometimes greenish flowers which appear in autumn and winter. The woody fruits are 4–5 mm in diameter and contain many tiny seeds that are easy to collect and grow. There are approximately 215 species of *Melaleuca*, 210 of which are native to Australia.

Where it is found

This species is common in coastal swamps and around lake margins. It is widespread north from Botany Bay NSW into Queensland and also in New Guinea.

Uses

- The bark peels off in strips and has many uses ranging from wrapping food for cooking to making bandages and disposable raincoats. The bark can be used to make containers for food and water storage and for mending holes in canoes.
- A liquid made from the leaves can be used as a wash. The leaves can also be boiled to make a pleasant tea.
- The nectar-rich blossoms can be soaked in water to make a sweet drink.
- All species of *Melaleuca* can be used to treat symptoms of colds, flu and sinusitis by inhaling the steam from boiling or burning the leaves. The young leaves can also be crushed in the hands and the released oils inhaled deeply to relieve headaches, blocked sinuses, coughs and runny noses.



Melaleuca quinquenervia
a) leaves and fruit; b) leaves and flowers; c) habit

Nymphaea gigantea

Nymphaeaceae

Giant Waterlily

Description

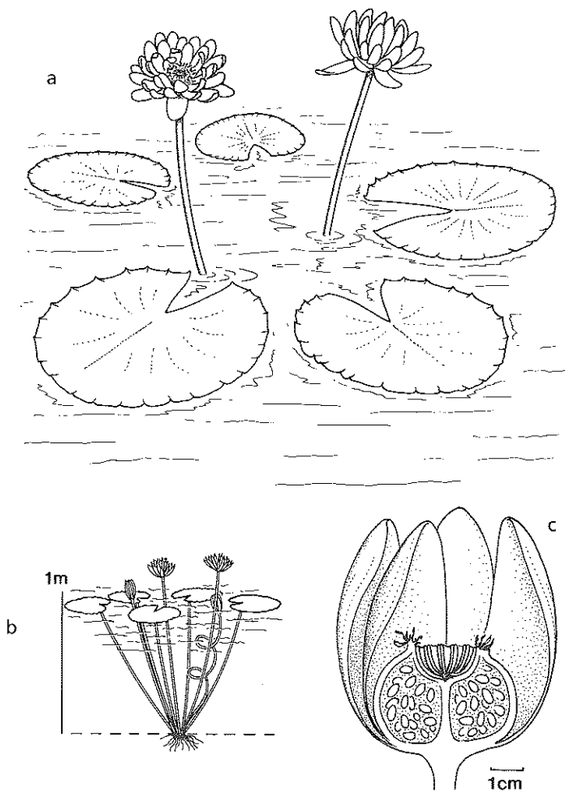
This beautiful waterlily has large (to 25 cm) blue-white flowers that emerge from the water. The plant is a perennial and grows from small tubers. The large circular leaves grow up to 75 cm in diameter and have toothed margins.

Where it is found

The Giant Waterlily is found in permanent water with deep mud in tropical and subtropical Australia. It occurs on the northern coast of NSW and up through Queensland.

Uses

Almost every part of the plant is edible. The tubers are a food staple and are eaten after roasting. The leaf and flower stalks are peeled and eaten raw. The seeds can be ground and a damper made from the flour.



Nymphaea gigantea
a) leaves and flowers; b) habit; c) cross section through flower

Pandanus tectorius

Pandanaceae

Screw Pine

Description

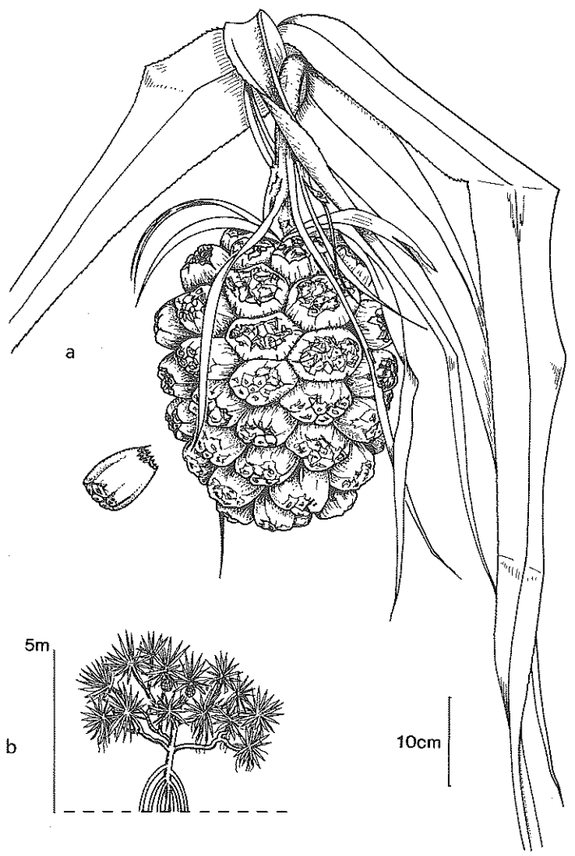
This distinctive small tree grows to 5 m high. The separate male and female plants flower throughout the year. The female plant has huge fruits made up of segments containing individual seeds. The leaves, up to 1 m long, are arranged in spirals and crowd on the ends of the branches. The stem and branches are ringed with distinct leaf scars. The tree also grows robust prop roots from the base of its trunk.

Where it is found

Pandanus occurs on exposed coastal headlands and along beaches north from the Port Macquarie district into Queensland.

Uses

- The ripe red segments of the fruit are roasted and the lower fibrous parts are eaten.
- The seeds found in woody cavities in each segment can also be roasted and eaten.
- The leaves are used to make bags and mats.
- A gargle for sores in the mouth can be made by using the juice from the pounded inner core of the growing tip (Isaacs 1987).



Pandanus tectorius
a) fruit; b) habit

Persoonia species

Proteaceae

Geebungs

***naam-burra* to Dharug people**

We used to collect Geebungs after school and put them in brown paper bags that we'd keep when you went to the shops to buy things. You've got to watch out for funnel webs and trapdoor spiders, because that's the kind of undergrowth they like to get in. *Ruth Simms*

Description

All 90 species of *Persoonia* are native to Australia. They have yellow flowers and oval fruit still with the style attached. All New South Wales species flower in summer. The hard seeds are dispersed by emus, kangaroos and other animals.

Where it is found

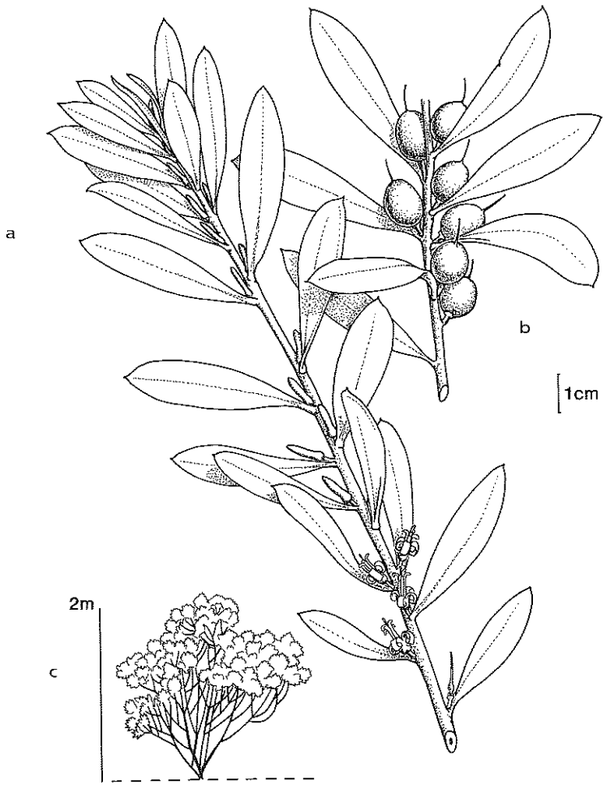
Geebungs occur in a range of environments — from heath to open forest on coastal sand and sandstone. They are found in all States of Australia. In New South Wales they occur along the north and south coast, into the central tablelands, with some species extending out into the western slopes and plains.

Uses

• Geebung fruits ripen on the ground and are best when soft. Discard the skin and enjoy the soft pulp around the seed.

• Aboriginal people treat sore eyes by mixing fine scrapings of wood from the stem of young *Persoonia falcata* with breast milk (Isaacs 1987).

• Aboriginal people of the Sydney area strengthened bark used for fishing lines by soaking it in a solution made from the bark of *Persoonia laurina* (Turbet 1989).



Persoonia lanceolata
a) leaves, buds and flowers; b) fruit; c) habit

Portulaca oleracea

Portulacaceae

Pigweed
or
Purslane

***parnamula, pirla* to Paakantyi people**

Description

Pigweed is an annual — it completes its life cycle in a year. It has a thickened taproot and fleshy stems growing up to 25 cm along the ground. The yellow flowers appear in August through to March.

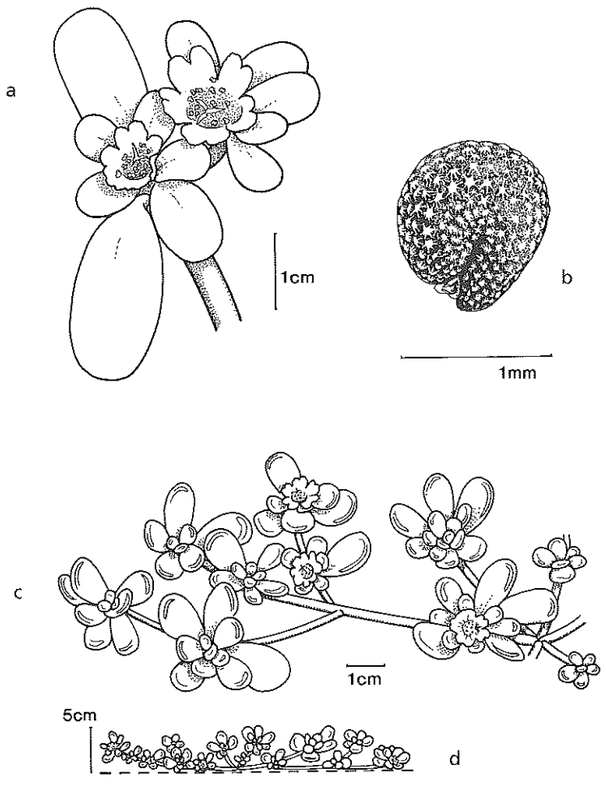
Where it is found

Pigweed is found Australia-wide. In New South Wales it occurs from the coast to the far western plains.

Uses

• The tiny black seeds are one of the most important bush foods of inland Australia, containing up to 20 per cent protein and 16 per cent fat. Joseph Maiden (1889) reported that Aboriginal people 'pulled up the plants, throwing them in heaps, which after a few days they turn over and an abundant supply of seed is found to have fallen out'. The seed is processed by grinding it on a flat rock with a hand-held stone. The resulting flour is made into a damper. Low (1989) comments that the oil from the seeds stains the grinding stones.

• The leaves and stems are also edible. They can be pounded into a mush and eaten raw, cooked as a vegetable or added to salads.



Portulaca oleracea
a) flowers and leaves; b) seed; c) stem; d) habit

Pteridium esculentum

Dennstaedtiaceae

Bracken

***gurgi* (gur-gy) to Eora people**

DANGER

Toxic rhizomes

Description

This hardy fern has glossy leathery fronds (leaves) mostly 0.6–1.5 m long. Spore cases are found around the edges of the underside of fronds. The fern grows from a long creeping rhizome (underground stem) 2–10 mm in diameter, which is densely covered with dark, red-brown hairs.

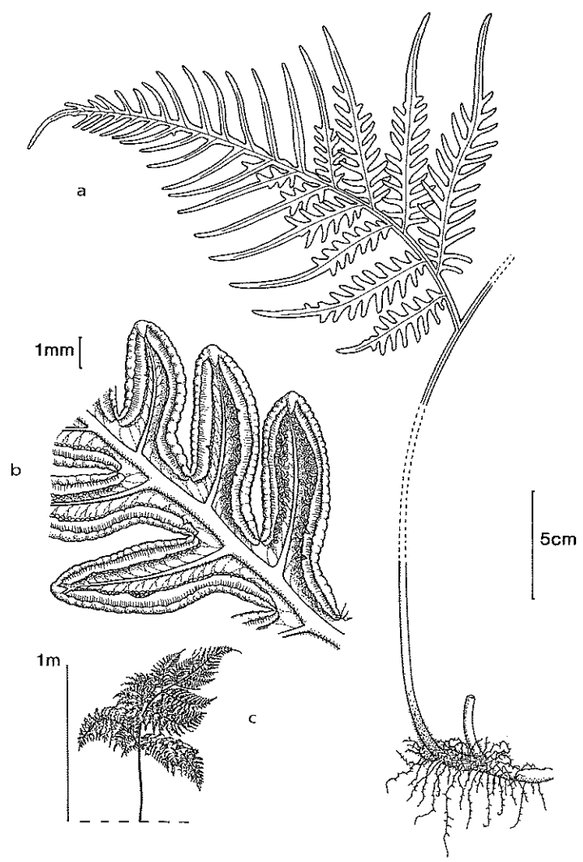
Where it is found

Bracken is found in all States except the Northern Territory. In New South Wales it occurs all along the coast, tablelands, slopes and to the south-western plains. The fern grows in open forest and regenerates quickly after burning or other disturbance. The roots and rhizomes of this plant hold the soil, while spreading fronds create a shady environment that promotes growth of seedlings.

Uses

- Rhizomes contain starch, but must be baked or roasted first to destroy toxins (Cherikoff & Isaacs 1990).
- Young fronds can be roasted in hot ashes and eaten.

The bracken can be used for stings of a bull ant or a stinging nettle. If you get some of the bracken and crush it up in your hand until you see some of the sap coming out, then you'd rub it on the sting. *Ruth Simms*



Pteridium esculentum
a) frond and rhizome;
b) underside of frond; c) habit

Santalum acuminatum

Santalaceae

Sweet Quandong

***karnpuka* to Paakantyi people**

***guanta* to Ngiyampaa people**

Description

This small tree grows to 6 m high. Its pale olive-green leaves are 3–9 cm long and 3–15 mm wide, growing opposite each other along the stem. The numerous flowers are found on the ends of branches and appear throughout the year. The bright shiny red fruit is 15–25 mm in diameter. The kernel is covered by a hard, pitted, woody shell.

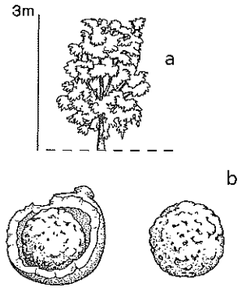
Where it is found

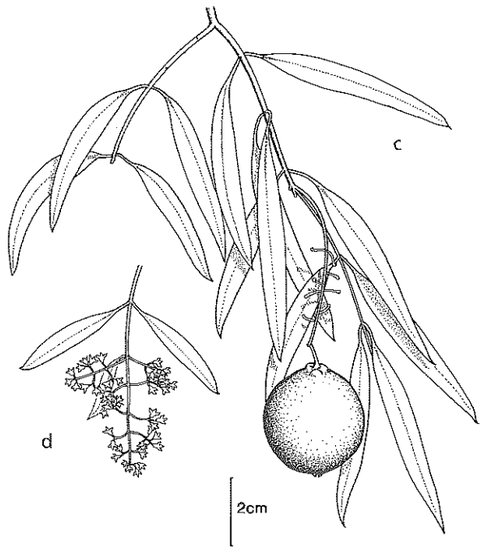
The Sweet Quandong occurs in a range of woodland communities on sandy sites to gravelly ridges. It is widespread west of Dubbo on the western and far western slopes and plains across New South Wales. It also occurs in Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia.

Uses

This is the, we call it *guanta*, which is the quandong, commonly known as the wild peach. When the fruit is red they're ripe and they can be eaten. The fruit is also used today in making ketchup, chutneys and sauces. The nut inside the quandong fruit is used for making necklaces. They burn two holes, one at both ends, with a hot wire. They used to make anklets as well for decoration — they used the feathers from the emu — anklets for doing special ceremonies, especially when the girls were getting married. Also they cracked the nut open, and they get the kernel out and the kernel was used for grinding to make flour for cakes. If the kernel was plentiful they'd also just eat them off the tree; crack them open and eat the kernel straight away. If they got the big old quandong trees, the trunks of the trees were made for coolamons, for making their dishes, because it is nice, soft wood to work with.

Beryl Carmichael





Santalum acuminatum
a) habit; b) seed;
c) leaves and fruit; d) flowers

Syzygium paniculatum

Myrtaceae

Magenta Lilly Pilly

***daguba* (takuba) to Eora people**

ENDANGERED SPECIES

On the current list of Rare Or Threatened Australian Plants (ROTAP) there are 730 taxa (plant groups — species or subspecies) from New South Wales. This represents 13 per cent of the plant species in New South Wales.

John Benson, Ecologist, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Description

There are several varieties of lilly pillies, all with fleshy edible fruits. Pink Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii)*, Brush Cherry (*Syzygium australe)*, Magenta Lilly Pilly, (*S. paniculatum)* and Blue Lilly Pilly (*S. oleosum)* are planted as street trees in Sydney. They occur naturally in rainforest areas along the coast.

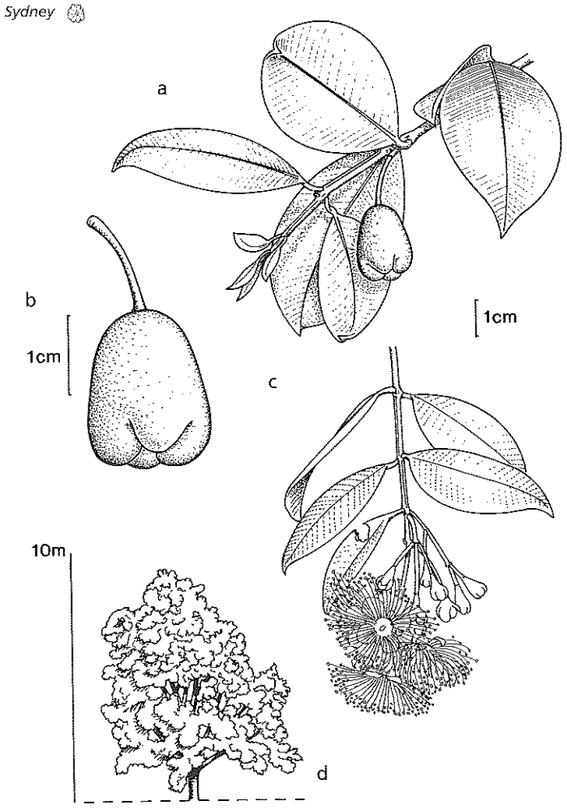
Oil glands in the leaves and the numerous stamens place the Magenta Lilly Pilly in the Myrtaceae family. The glossy green leaves are 4.5–10 cm long and 1.5–3 cm wide, with small, scattered oil glands. Flowers with showy stamens appear from December to March. The magenta fruits are 15–25 mm in diameter and contain a single seed.

Where it is found

The Magenta Lilly Pilly occurs in subtropical and littoral rainforest on sandy soils or stabilised dunes near the sea. It is found in small numbers in widely separated localities between Bulahdelah and Jervis Bay on the New South Wales coast. The Magenta Lilly Pilly is endangered, with a serious risk of disappearing from the wild within one or two decades if current land use continues.

Uses

Fruits can be eaten raw or made into jams or jellies.



Syzygium paniculatum
a) leaves and fruit; b) fruit; c) flowers; d) habit

Tetragonia tetragonioides

Aizoaceae

New Zealand Spinach
or
Warrigal Greens
or
Warrigal Cabbage

Description

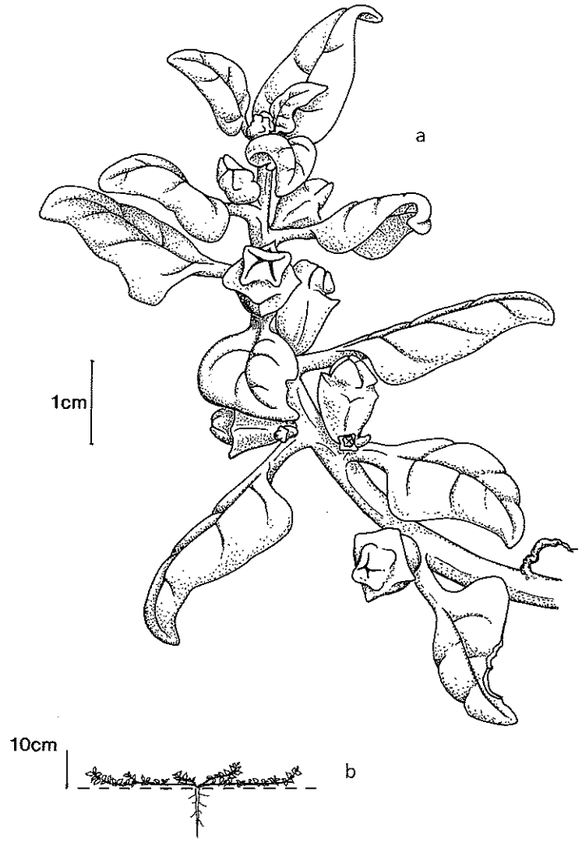
The stems and leaves of this spreading herb are covered with small, glistening, liquid-filled blisters. Its small, yellow flowers appear from August to December. Numerous small seeds are housed in woody, winged fruits which are dispersed by both wind and water.

Where it is found

This herb occurs along margins of salt marshes and in protected sites along the coast. It is found in all parts of New South Wales and across Australia.

Uses

- The young shoots can be eaten as a green vegetable, cooked or raw.
- Captain James Cook found the plant growing in New Zealand and fed it to his crew as a fresh vegetable to help prevent scurvy. Sir Joseph Banks took seeds back to England, where the plant became a popular summer vegetable.



Tetragonia tetragonioides
a) leaves anf fruit; b) habit

Typha orientalis

Typhaceae

Broad-leaved Cumbungi

***baraba* to Eora people**

Description

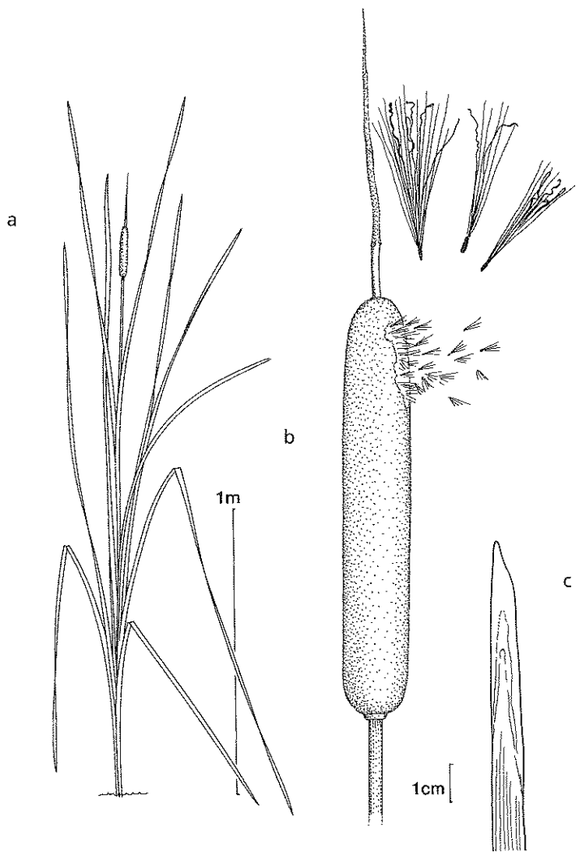
This robust water plant grows up to 4 m high, shooting up from extensive rhizomes (underground stems). The stiff leaf-bearing stems end in a velvety chestnut-brown flower spike. The Cumbungi has separate male and female flowers. The male flowers are found at the top of the spike and produce pollen. The female flowers are the velvety-brown areas 0–5 cm further down the spike. Flowers appear in the warmer months.

Where it is found

Cumbungi occurs in swamps, margins of lakes and streams, irrigation channels and drains. It is widespread across New South Wales from the coast, inland to the western plains.

Uses

- Rhizomes are roasted, providing starch and sugars; the leftover fibres can be used to make string.
- The new white-green shoots are eaten raw.
- The young flower spikes can be steamed and eaten like sweet corn.



Typha orientalis
a) habit; b) flower spike; c) leaf

Xanthorrhoea species

Xanthorrhoeaceae

Grass Tree

***wargalarra* (wer-gal-derra) to Eora people**

Description

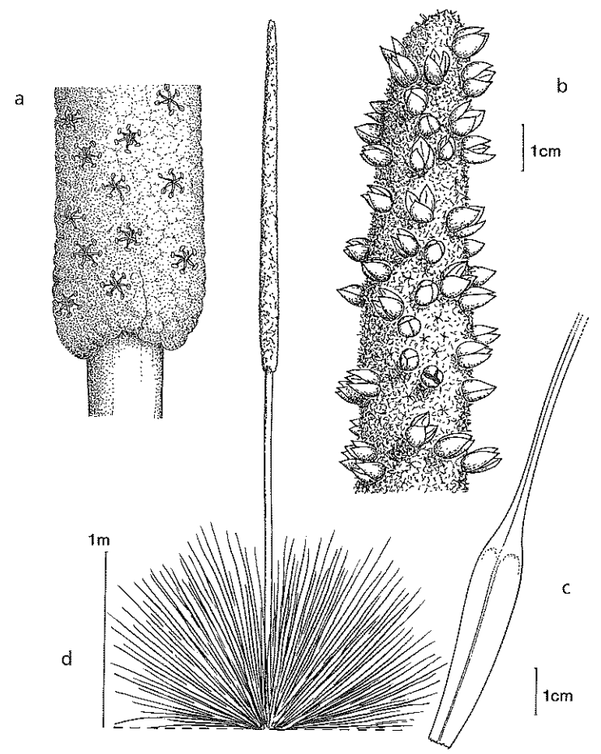
These elegant, slow-growing plants are a unique part of the Australian landscape. There are 28 species of *Xanthorrhoea* and they are all native to Australia, with 13 species occurring in NSW. Grass trees have either an above-ground or below-ground woody stem, which is covered with packed leaf bases. The long, narrow leaves form a crown at the top of the stem and look like a grass skirt. Creamy-white flowers are crowded on the end of a long, spear-like flower spike. The stem and leaf bases hold a lot of resin. Grass trees regenerate quickly after fire, with new leaves sprouting from the blackened trunk.

Where it is found

Grass trees are found in many habitats, from rocky dry ridges to swampy heathlands. In New South Wales they occur along the coast and tablelands and in rocky sites out to the western plains.

Uses

- Grass tree resin was an essential raw material in the manufacture of tools, weapons and other implements. The resin melts when heated but sets hard when cool. It was used to cement stone axe heads to wooden handles and spear tips to spear shafts. (Turbet 1989).
- Flowers can be sucked or soaked in water to make a sweet drink that can be used fresh or after fermenting.
- The soft, white leaf bases are edible, as is the sweet growing point; however, removing this part destroys the plant.



Xanthorrhoea johnsonii
a) flowers on flower spike; b) mature fruits on spike; c) leaf base; d) habit

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