

JULY MEETING – Nicole Leach – ‘Bush Foods’.

Our July meeting address was one of the most entertaining, informative and enjoyable talks that I have experienced in my time with APS Geelong. Nicole spoke to us about bush foods and cooking with ‘native’ ingredients. She began the evening by distributing some ‘pop-corn’ – the roasted seeds of *Brachychiton acerifolius*, the Illawarra Flame Tree. As we crunched noisily on this tasty little entrée, Nicole explained the many edible plants and their preparation and use as food.

Of course, aborigines have been eating bush tucker for 60,000 years and it was widespread and plentiful before European settlement. In most aboriginal societies the men were the hunters and the women the gatherers of plant and insect food.



Brachychiton acerifolius seeds – Photo courtesy
www.smartseedsemporium.com

Most of the food eaten was seasonal, so diets varied throughout the year, but the food was at its best when eaten. Many Australian restaurants are now embracing bush foods and they are becoming more widely available in nurseries and specialty food stores.

Some of the more readily available bush foods include ...

- Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*)
- Davidson’s Plum (*Davidsonia* sp.)
- Finger Lime (*Citrus australasica*)
- Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*)
- Cinnamon Myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*)
- Mountain pepper (*Tasmannia lanceolata*)
- Wattle Seed (*Acacia* sp.)
- Saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.)
- Macadamia (*Macadamia* sp.)
- Pigface (*Carpobrotus* sp.)

Aborigines of the Melbourne/Geelong region were the five tribes of the Kulin Nation with the twenty five clans of the Wathaurong (pronounced, roughly Wudda Warring) inhabiting Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsular, the Surf Coast to about Airey’s inlet and north to around Ballarat. Locally available bush foods included ...

- Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*)
- Native Spinach (*Tetragonia implexicoma*)
- Milkmaids (*Burchardia umbrellata*)
- Vanilla Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*)
- Berry Saltbush (*Atriplex semibaccata*)
- Native Leek (*Bulbine bulbosa*)
- Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)
- Black Anther Flax-Lily (*Dianella revoluta*)
- Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*)
- Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)
- Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*)
- Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*)
- Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*)
- Prickly Currant-bush (*Coprosma quadrifida*)
- Coast Flax Lily (*Dianella revoluta* var *brevicaulis*)
- Giant Hop-bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*)
- Coast Beard-heath (*Leucopogon parviflorus*)
- Tangled Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*)
- Prickly Geebung (*Persoonia juniperina*)
- Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum laciniatum*)
- Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*)
- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)
- Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*)
- Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*)

Add to these kangaroos, birds, fish and shellfish and you have an abundant and diverse diet.

So, what can we do with bush foods? The majority of edible bush seeds require soaking, pounding, grinding or baking before use. Bush nuts can usually be eaten raw, cooked or ground. Bush fruits and berries are often very high in vitamins and nutrients. The bush boasts an assortment of herbs and spices which can boost the flavour of a dish. It's always best to research whether something is ok to eat, or if there is any preparation required to make it safe to eat.

Nicole talked to us at length about many of the commercially available or locally eaten bush foods. I'll review just a sample here to give you a 'taste' of her presentation.

Wattle seed was widely used by the local indigenous people. Not all *Acacia* seeds are edible, but the most commonly used were *Acacia retinodes* (Wirilda), *Acacia victoriae* (Prickly Acacia), *Acacia sophorae* (Coastal wattle) and *Acacia aneura* (Mulga). The seed was ground, moistened or roasted and is extremely nutritious. It is a rich source of protein and carbohydrate and is high in potassium, calcium, iron and zinc. Roasting the seed releases coffee, spice, raisin or chocolate aromas.

Kangaroo Grass is a perennial tussock grass native to Australia, Africa and the Pacific Islands. It was once widespread across Australia but has been greatly reduced by clearing for agriculture and over-grazing by domestic livestock. It recovers prolifically and quickly after fires. The ripening seed was gathered in the summer, and ground between two stones to make a flour for damper.



**Kangaroo Grass seed - Photo courtesy
www.backyardbuddies.org.au**

Bush Tomatoes and Kangaroo Apples (*Solanum* sp.) belong to the same family as regular tomatoes and potatoes. Nicole dealt with them jointly for that reason. Bush Tomatoes are perennial herbs which grow quickly after rain from mostly dormant roots. Kangaroo Apple is fast growing and hardy, but short-lived. It is often dispersed by birds which eat the fruits. It is considered a weed in some places. Both are a rich source of minerals,

especially potassium and vitamin C, however, Bush Tomatoes only fruit for two months of the year in the wild. They have a strong sun-dried tomato, caramel and tamarillo flavour. They can be used in recipes with tomato, cheese, eggs, Salmon or game meats, as well as for sauces, in dukka or crusting for meats. They can act as a laxative if too many are eaten. Warning! The green fruits are poisonous.



Kangaroo Apples – *Solanum aviculare*

Macadamia Nuts – *Macadamia integrifolia*, *M. ternifolia* and *M. tetraphylla* – are well known to most of us. Macadamia Oil is a gourmet oil and is regarded as one of the healthiest edible oils in the world. It tolerates high temperatures with a smoke point above 200° C and a flash point at 252° C. and the nutty, sweet aroma enhances natural food flavours. It can be used for salad dressings, stir-fries, baking, pan-frying and as a delicious dipping oil. The nuts are great in both savoury and sweet dishes. Macadamia can also be used to make a great dairy-free alternative to milk.

There are many herbs and leaves to add flavour to your dishes. River Mint, *Mentha australis*, was embraced by early settlers and used with roast lamb. The leaves can be used fresh or dried. It can be used in desserts where exotic mint is used such as in ice cream or sorbet, and is great in sauces, salads, dressing, dips, tea, cocktails and water infusions.

Warragul Greens, *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, is native to Australia, South America and Japan. It is very high in Vitamin C, and was used by Captain Cook's men to combat scurvy. However, the leaves contain oxalates, which can be harmful in large amounts. To remove them, simply blanch the leaves for 3 minutes. It can be used in the same way as you would use spinach, chard, silverbeet and bok choy. Great in a stir fry or enjoy in soups, stews, and as a steamed vegetable.

Lemon Myrtle, *Backhousia citriodora*, is well known to most of us as an ingredient in cooking. The leaves have a fresh fragrance of lemon and lime. It works well with

fish, chicken or roast veggies and sweet food. The leaves may be used in teas, syrups, glazes, cakes, biscuits, dressings, sauces, ice creams, dips and meat dishes. However, if it is cooked for too long, it loses its lemon flavour and a eucalyptus taste can take over. The essential oil distilled from the leaves has a refreshing lemony scent, and has been found to have antifungal and antibacterial properties.

Samphire, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, also called Beaded Glasswort grows in extensive mats on tidal mudflats. It is very high in Vitamin A and a good source of calcium and iron. Blanching before cooking gives a lovely, salty taste of the sea. It has a crunchy texture, and tastes a little like asparagus. It pairs well with seafood and is wonderful in salads, pesto and salsa verde or as a garnish. It is also quite tasty when pickled.



Samphire – Photo: Jef Braund, Jungledragon

Roots and tubers were an important part of the aboriginal diet and many were gathered and eaten. Many were quite small like various orchids, Chocolate lilies, Vanilla lilies and Bulbine lilies. The Yam Daisy, *microseris lancolata*, is perhaps the best known and the most used of them. Also called murrnong, was once very widespread and common but is restricted now due to the grazing of domestic livestock. When sheep arrived they duck up the tubers and trampled the ground making it unsuitable for the Yam daisy

The Bulbine Lily, *Bulbine bulbosa*, is found from Queensland to Tasmania. The corms were harvested and roasted and have a mild onion flavour. After flowering the young seeds can also be eaten. But, the above ground parts of the plant are toxic. These are just a small sample of the

These are just a small sample of the more than twenty five plants, seeds, fruits, nuts and tubers that Nicole told us about. The talk ended with a delightful surprise – a little banquet of bite-sized goodies prepared by Nicole with the ingredients she had just told us about.

First was a Mini Bruchetta made with Bush Tomato, Warrigal Greens, Native Oregano, Native Basil, mozzarella and Macadamia oil. There followed vol au vents with pickled greens (Dorrigo & Mountain pepper) with Macadamia, Aniseed Myrtle & Honey. This was followed by dried Quandong Fruit Leather. Macadamia scones with Kangaroo Apple & Native Currant jam were accompanied by a Wattle-seed coffee with Macadamia milk. All washed down with a delicious River Mint & Lemon Myrtle tea.

A thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all.



Bulbine Lily – *Bulbine bulbosa*

PLANT TABLE

with Roger Wileman

The plant table was presented by Roger Wileman and it was a very colourful and varied table.

Hakeas were well represented and caused not a little discussion. *Hakea orthorrhyncha*, commonly known as bird beak hakea, is a shrub which is endemic to the Murchison River area of Western Australia. It flowers mostly on the old wood with stem-hugging red and white flowers appearing below the foliage. *H.francissiana* is an old favourite, perhaps becoming less common in cultivation with large, upright red or pink flowers. *H.multilineata* appears to be a very variable plant in the wild with very noticeable differences in leaf shape and size and flower size and colour. The specific refers to the obvious veins on the leaves and seems to be the diagnostic determinant of species. Leaves vary from almost needle-like to 1cm across and flowers can be red, white pink or combinations of all. One variant from Gardner's Reserve in WA has deep red flowers with prominent yellow stamens.

For ease of discussion Roger grouped the Thryptomenes, Baeckeas and Scholtzias due to their

obvious similarities. *Thryptomene calycina*, the Grampians Thryptomene is a plant to 2m, Flowers vary from white with a crimson centre, through white with pink centre to pure white and pure pink. Roger had a couple of samples grown from roadside cuttings taken in Halls Gap. *T. strongylophylla* is a low, layered shrub from the Geraldton/Kalbarri sandplains with pink/purple flowers.



Thryptomene calycina

Other Thryptomenes included a mysterious plant with long, arching branches and masses of deep mauve flowers which appeared spontaneously in Roger's garden; a stunning small shrub with tiny pure white flowers and F.C. Payne's hybrid. There was a lovely little *Baeckea crassifolia*, commonly known as the Desert Heath-myrtle or the Desert Baeckea, a common heathland shrub found in coastal areas of southern Australia. Our specimen came from the Grampians and featured tiny, deep purple flowers. There were two Scholtzias – and unknown beauty with pale mauve/pink flowers and *Scholtzia involucrata*, a small shrub with delicate pale pink flowers which is endemic to the sandplains and coastal plains from south of Perth to about Eneabba.

Banksia spinulosa is a variable shrub with a number of colour forms, two of which were represented on our table. It is found along the east coast from Gippsland to Cairns and inland to the Great Dividing Range. Depending on situation it can be a dwarf plant less than a metre high, to a large shrub of 3m plus. The two specimens on our table showed yellow inflorescences, one with red stamens and one with black. *Banksia candolleana*, called the propeller banksia for its leaves, has almost spherical gold inflorescences.

Acacia boormanii, the Snowy River Wattle is a very showy rounded shrub to about 2.5 m. It has narrow phyllodes and is a mass of bright yellow flowers at this time of the year. A baileyana, the ubiquitous Cootamundra wattle is a favourite of many and a

noxious weed to others. The golden yellow flowers are a common sight around Geelong just now. Less common is *Acacia willdenowiana*, the Grass Wattle, a small plant with a rush like habit from south west WA. It has flattened phyllodes with small numbers of flower each on a short pedicle.



***Acacia willdenowiana* – Photo: M. Fagg**

PLANT OF THE MONTH – by Frank Scheelings
***Chamelaucium uncinatum* - 'Seton's Form'**

Chris Walker-Cook won the raffle and chose a Chamelaucium brought along by Frank Scheelings as Plant Of The Month. Frank writes ...

Chamelaucium is a genus in the family *Myrtaceae*, and consists of 21 species at this time, although the genus is undergoing some revision. They are endemic to Western Australia. As a group they are easy to grow, tolerate frost and can deal with dry conditions. A specimen at Kings Park was the size of a house, but I try to keep mine to around 2 meters high. There are a number of named cultivars readily available and a considerable number of hybrids all worthy of a place in the garden.

They respond well to pruning after flowering as this keeps them compact and stops them becoming too

woody and leggy. However, they have a very prolonged flowering period, so timing the pruning can be difficult. In my garden I have had flowering as early as April and through to December; however this year flowering started quite late in July. As a cut flower they have no equal, with the flowers presented in terminal racemes and having a very long vase life of 2 to 3 weeks.



Frank's Chamelaucium – Seton's Form

Colours vary from pure white to pink to deep purple. The cultivar Seton's form is a large flowered selection with the flowers up to 2 1/2 cm, starting a pink colour, becoming white as the season progresses; this year the early flowers are a deeper pink than in previous years. Chamelauciums are not easy to grow from cuttings, in my experience, but I have had some success, even with the more difficult Seton's form. Cuttings may take 6 months to develop roots.

I have been unable to find a definite reference to the Seton's cultivar, and it is not mentioned in the Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, and the name has been passed on to me by "word of mouth" rather than definitive knowledge. I would be happy if any members are able to provide a reference for this magnificent garden plant.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEXT MEETING: **August 20th**

AGM & PHOTO COMPETITION

Our next meeting is the Annual General Meeting and Photo Competition. The AGM will be conducted as usual with a welcome, the President's and Treasurer's reports and election of office bearers.

The Photo Competition is for three categories ... Australian plants, Australian wildlife and Australian scenery. There is a limit of two photos per person per

category. Photos should be 5" x 7" format, colour or black and white. Prizes of plants will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Great fun, and no need to be a professional 😊



Breamlea Sunrise – a past winner from Roger Wileman

As an incentive to attend the AGM, financial members who come along will receive a gift ... a specimen of our Club Emblem, *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* 'Lara Form', one plant per family. Come along and get your Grevillea, now extinct in the wild, and help protect this lovely little plant from total extinction.

SEPTEMBER MEETING: **September 17th**

Ade and Penny will show some photos from their recent holiday in and around Geraldton, WA.

AROUND THE GROUNDS:

7th September – APS Wilson Park's Spring Plant Sale at Wilson Botanic Park, Berwick, in conjunction with the City of Casey who will be holding a Garden Expo. There will be a range of Australian plant growers stalls together with stalls that feature other aspects of gardens such as nursery supplies and garden equipment.

14th September – Committee of Management Meeting at 10.00 am and APS Victoria AGM at 2.00 pm. Auditorium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne.

14th & 15th September - APS Yarra Yarra Australian Plants Expo, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road, Eltham. 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. Check website <https://apsyarrayarra.org.au> for plant lists.

21st & 22nd September 50th Anniversary of Anglesea Wildflower Weekend and Art Show. Celebrating the area's remarkable biodiversity and wildflowers. Held at

the Anglesea Memorial Hall, 3 McMillan Street, Anglesea 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

21st & 22nd September - APS Bendigo Flower Show. Kangaroo Flat Primary School Gym, Freeman Drive, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo. 9.30 am to 4.00 pm.

24th September to 20th October 2019

Maranoa Gardens Florilegium – Town Hall Gallery
360 Burwood Road, Hawthorn. Free entry.

Twelve local artists from the Balwyn Community Botanical Art Group have painted an exquisite series of plant specimens picked by the curators of Maranoa Gardens in Balwyn.

These intricate botanical paintings have been created to document the fascinating flora of the Maranoa Gardens, one of the oldest surviving gardens to exclusively feature Australian native plants. Filled with watercolour paintings and drawings in pencil, pen and ink, this exhibition celebrates the collective artistic achievement of these dedicated botanical artists.

PROPOSED CLUB EXCURSIONS/WEEKENDS AWAY

The Committee is planning three excursions/weekends away for your consideration. More information will be available closer to the dates.

Little Desert Weekend – 14th and 15th September. The plan is to camp or find motel –type accommodation at Nhill or Dimboola and explore the Little Desert flora. Some members may choose to head up earlier, or stay later. We'll arrange meeting points and car-pooling each day for exploration of the sandy tracks, depending on the need.



Pomonal Wildflower Weekend – 5th and 6th October. The Pomonal Wildflower Show is a must attend for plant lovers and The Grampians flora is always interesting. We plan to camp or use cabin accommodation at Halls Gap Gardens Caravan Park. Hall's Gap is a three hour drive from Geelong, so the

weekend is doable or you might like to come up a day or two earlier. We can car-pool for bush exploration.

Maranoa Gardens Day Trip – 19th October. The Maranoa Gardens in Balwyn were designed as a botanical display to exhibit plants in a range of habitat styles and show the flora of Melbourne but also other regions. We will also visit the Maranoa Gardens Florilegium at the Town Hall Gallery in Hawthorn. See the write-up in 'Around The Grounds' (opposite) for a little more information.

MEMBERSHIP 2019/2020

Members are hereby advised that subscriptions for the 2019/2020 year were due on 1st July. Please fill in the form attached to this newsletter and bring it to the meeting on 20th August, or post it to APS Geelong, PO Box 2012, Geelong 3220. Alternatively, forms can be downloaded from our webpage.

Cheques should be made payable to APS Geelong. If you pay by electronic transfer please be sure your surname and 'membership' appears with the payment so we can identify who has paid.

Only members who have paid prior to the AGM are entitled to stand for election or to vote.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES.

It's time for my biannual plea for newsletter articles. Penny and I will be away for most of August, but will be back in time to prepare the September newsletter. With very few exceptions, I write all the articles for each newsletter. But, I certainly won't be spending my holiday doing that, and I won't have time after I return. So, I'm asking for contributions for the September newsletter (and beyond) or it will be a very thin publication indeed. Thanks in advance.



***Grevillea pimelioides*, a newsletter space filler photo**