Dear Members,

It may still be officially Spring by the calendar, but as the temperature is already nudging 40, and no relief from the drought is in sight, it's probably fair to say that Summer is here, (and we could add "with a vengeance!"). This means a great deal of extra work is required just to keep gardens alive, especially as water restrictions are in force. There is also the added heartbreak of watching the bush remnants and recreation areas wither and die in the harsh conditions, and the fires which light the mountains each night. Thus gardening is suspended, except for watering, and club activities are winding down as it becomes too hot for any but the shortest and gentlest excursions, and we wait and pray for rain.

Three members from Rockhampton were fortunate enough to attend the A.S.G.A.P. conference in Perth, so we are looking forward to hearing about their experiences.

We have continued to read and comment on articles sent to us by the editor of "Australian Plants", for an issue in preparation, and have sent some photos of the Kershaw Gardens as requested. No more project articles have been received, so those to hand have been forwarded also.

Thanks to those members who have sent newspaper and magazine cuttings of interest. Items from Rodney Barker and Dick Dietsch are among others reproduced later in this issue. As well, Dick has forwarded an advertising leaflet for Kurri Kurri Foods, of 2A Weeley St., Paddington, 2021, listing their jams, relishes and icecreams made from native foods. Robyn Parker has sent an information guide booklet from the Weeroona Garden, a useful plant garden which surrounds The Low Energy House in East Brunswick, Victoria. This contains a map, some background information, and notes on 38 species growing there.

With our very best wishes to you and yours for the Christmas Season and the coming year,

Regards,

Lenore Lindsay and Rockhampton S.G.A.P.
ADDITIONS TO MEMBERSHIP LIST.

John and Julie Barrie. 1 George Tce., Coonalpyn. S.A. 5265.

Vic. Cherikoff. P.O. Box B103, Boronia Park. N.S.W. 2111.

Neil and Diane Hoy. 12 Anderson St., Rockhampton. Q'ld. 4700.

Librarian, Australian National Botanic Gardens, P.O. Box 1777, Canberra.

Nowra S.G.A.P., P.O. Box 618, Nowra. N.S.W. 2541.

Nicola Taws. RMB C710, Ballarat. Vic., 3351.

Dan and A. Wotherspoon. 7 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge. N.S.W. 2776.

EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:

28/6/91: Grevilleas agrifolia, whiteana and "Sandra Gordon", Callistemon polandii (nectar producers), Orthosyphon aristartus (medicinal).


EXCURSIONS.


22/9/91: Working bee at Kershaw Gardens: Between the current heat and drought and the everpresent vandalism of various types, the Useful Plants Section has sustained some losses, particularly of smaller plants. However, many Callistemons, Grevilleas and Hakeas are in full bloom, as are the following: Acacia aneura, A. farnesiana, A. victoriae, Ajuga australis, Brachychiton bidwillii, Cassia brewsteri, Dianella sp., Dodonaea viscosa, Hibiscus heterophyllus, H. splendens, Lomandra longifolia, Lysiphyl-lum hookeri, Macaranga tenarius, Pipturus argenteus. Ripe fruit is present on: Ficus opposita, F. racemosa, 2 unidentified varieties of Sandpaper Fig, Sterculia quadrifida, and seeds on Brachychiton bidwillii (some of which I took home and lightly roasted as nibbiles for the family).

6/10/91: An afternoon stroll through the Kershaw Gardens, to view other parts besides the Thozet Useful Plants Section. In the rainforest down beside the creek many trees are in flower and fruit, including deliciously acid and refreshing Diploglottis australis, Eugenia reinarndtiana and Elaeocarpus grandis.
Dear Mr. Barker,

For some time I have attempted to obtain Solanum centrale, the Desert Raisin, a little tomato relative native to Australia. I am very anxious to trade or buy seed. I maintain quite a few Solana seed on behalf of Solanaceae Enthusiasts, a group interested in edible members of that family of plants.

Members of the California Rare Fruit Growers are also attempting to develop a sub-section dedicated to the Myrtaceae. Australia, of course, is a center for this family of plants. I grow a number of Eugenias and a few Syzygiums in an area normally with winter lows around 28 degrees. Last year I fruited your Kensington mango with 20 oz. fruit using a 15 gallon container and winter protection.

I will be happy to refund postage also.

Yours sincerely,

John M. Riley.

I have already replied generally to John, but would really appreciate it if anyone could help him with solanum seed.

MEMBERS' GARDENS

New member Judith Brass has sent a list of plants she is growing in her garden at Karalee in South East Queensland. Most have not reached the fruiting stage yet, but Judith has commented on those that have, or on fruit she has tasted from another source.

Syzygium australe: I like these - rather like a crisp, tart apple.
Eugenia reinwardtiana: pleasantly sweet and chewy.
Acmena smithii: unpleasant stale fish aftertaste, rather cottony texture.
Canavalia maritima: plenty of pods, haven't tried to cook them yet.
Ficus opposita: slimy and tasteless - I'm leaving these for the birds.
Pleogynium timorense: fruit sour and hard - beautiful rose perfume, flavour may improve with keeping or cooking. (Must be kept till soft before eating raw. - Ed.)
Eustrephus latifolius: aril sweet, crisp and pleasant.
Pothis logipes: germinates readily from fresh seed, but very difficult to transplant.
Alectryon tomentosus, Aleurites moluccana, Alpinia caerulea, Austromyrtus dulcis, Cissus antarctica, Davidsonia pruriens, Diploglottis cunninghamii, Eupomatia laurina, Freycinetia scandens, Linospadix monostachya, Microcitrus australasica, Nauclea orientalis, Planchonella australis, Podocarpus elatus, Randia fitzalanii, Rawenhoffia leichardtii, Sterculia quadrifida, Syzygium francisii, S. oleosum, Terminalia oblongata.
Judith would like to obtain seeds or plants of the following species:—


Dick Dietsch has had great success in his garden at Sans Souci, near Botany Bay, with a creeper he bought as Dioscorea transversa, the Pencil Yam. This year it appeared to fruit, but instead of the bunches of papery winged capsules expected, it grew hard round bulbils. Dick sent us some, asking for information. The plant he has is Dioscorea bulbifera, the Cheeky Yam, one of the staples of the Aborigines of northern and western Cape York. It is in a garden bed in full sun, growing in sandy loam over gravel, and is a rampant grower. Most of the bulbils fell from the plant before they attained any size. They may be planted in the usual way, and there are now a number scattered in gardens round Rockhampton. If anyone is interested in growing this interesting vine, please contact Dick around June/July next year, to arrange to receive a couple of bulbils.

FROM OUR FILES

The Winter issue of "Health and Lifestyle", published by the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia Limited, features Australian bush foods. It contains a two page article (including photographs) titled "Bush food business", based on an interview with Vic Cherikoff. The "On the Market" pages include a review of his "Bush Food Handbook" published by Ti Tree Press, and there is a full page "advertorial" from Country Comfort Inns and Motels extolling the virtues of their restaurants, which use indigenous ingredients when formulating menus and recipes, two of which are included for home experimentation. So, from the Country Comfort kitchens:—

NYNGAN MUD CAKE

Named after the muds spread by the flooding Bogong River at Nyngan, N.S.W., and the wattles growing on the river's banks, this recipe produces a rich, moist cake with the coffee/chocolate/hazelnut/spice flavour characteristic of wattle seed.

250g butter, chopped. 150g chocolate, chopped.
1 cup hot water. 1/2 cup rum.
2 tablespoons wattle seeds. 2 eggs, lightly beaten.
1 1/2 cups plain flour. 1 1/4 cups self-raising flour.
Icing sugar for dusting.

1. Grease a 23cm square slab tin and line base with greased paper.
2. Combine butter, chocolate, water, rum and wattle in a double saucepan and heat until mixture is smooth. (Alternatively, heat in a microwave to mix.)
3. Leave to cool for 15 minutes, then add the eggs and transfer to a large bowl.
4. Fold in sifted flours, then pour into prepared tin.
5. Bake at 180 degrees for about 1 1/4 hours.
6. Remove and let stand for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool. Dust with sifted icing sugar before cutting into squares.
THROW ANOTHER LILLY PILLY ON THE BARBIE

Our wide, brown land is a garden of delights, says this intrepid gum-tip gourmet!

PETER'S BUSH TUCKER BONANZA

When "bush foodie" Peter Hardwick, from Byron Bay, in NSW, rustles up a mess of breakfast victuals, he grabs ingredients direct from the mulga. For example: bunya nut pancakes made with finely chopped macadamia nuts, topped with lilly pilly fruit preserve and nut sauce with brush box honey. Tastes great, says Peter. And hardly costs a cent.

Be careful when trying it yourself, though.

Peter, 30, has spent a lifetime sampling and identifying wild fruits of the bush. He knows what to eat – and what to avoid. In fact, he's made a career of it. His Wilderness Foods is a business bent on making native plants the national "nosh".

Peter says many commercially viable foods flourish beneath, or just above, your noses. For instance, the berries of the magenta lilly pilly, commonplace in Brisbane’s streets, make a great nibble while waiting for a cab. Flavour and texture are comparable to watermelon, according to Peter.

Another is the humble pigface, seen in many Australian backyards, and now sold under its Aboriginal name, noolii.

"Eating noolii is a novelty in itself," said Peter. "You break off the stem and squeeze the juicy pulp into your mouth, discarding the skin. The taste is like strawberries or kiwi fruit, and it’s a good source of magnesium, calcium and potassium."

The son of a clergyman from NSW’s Northern Rivers district, Peter spreads the bush food gospel with evangelical zeal. A convert since he sampled his first bush berry at the age of four, he’s a walking encyclopedia of bush harvests.

Most of his expertise comes from personal experiment. He began studying horticulture at Sydney’s Ryde College – but quit when he realised no-one knew the first thing about bush food. Instead, he went to live the hippy life at Cedar Bay, on the North Queensland coast, using his time to dig up food from the rainforests.

Returning to the Northern Rivers, Peter took a job with the Department of Agriculture. In his spare time, he converted the pigsty on his Lismore farm to a nursery for native food plants. His mission? To make Australians aware of the bush food bonanza going begging in the wilderness.

"There’s more employment potential utilising Australia’s plants than in destroying the bush," he said. "On the NSW north coast, we’ve recorded more than 200 species with an edible component. Not all have a commercial potential, but I’ve identified 60 which do. Of those, some are readily commercially developed," Peter explained.

"If I had five tonnes of a certain type of lilly pilly, I could sell it like that," he said, snapping his fingers.

Last year, Peter shipped 200kg of native foods to Sydney – bush harvests with names like Dorrigo pepper, black condoo warragal greens and oomay plum. Some went to delicatessens, some to restaurants featuring bush tucker. Restaurants, Peter believes, have a big part to play in developing bush menus acceptable to the European palate.

Sadly, he says, around 25,000 green leaf plants and another 5000 non-vascular plants (mosses, liverworts, algae, etc) have been lost forever due to clearing for agriculture. He laments that, after 200 years, white Australians have been able to commercially develop only two native foods - the macadamia nut and the tea-tree.

Peter says many bush species have medical applications.

"My approach is that people who have ‘green’ ideas should find investors," he said. "The environmental crisis will make green technology and reforestation very attractive investments. The rule is: no economy, no planet. We have to think of creative ways of using the existing system.”

– DAVID BENTLEY
Wattle it be? Bunya nuts or lilly pillly?

By CHERRY RIPE

ITCHETTY grubs might appear on the odd restaurant menu, but so far bush tucker hasn't made great inroads into the national diet. How many people have you tasted wattle seed icecream? Lilly pill jelly? Even quandong jam?

Despite Les Hiddens's excellent and hugely popular television series Bush Tucker Man, now being repeated on the ABC, not too many bush foods seem to have made the transition from scrub to shop.

Nevertheless, the series served to increase our awareness of how rich Australia is in native foods. It certainly captured public imagination – videos of the series have become one of ABC Marketing's most successful releases, and a second series, to be screened next February, is in the making at the moment.

Through there has been an increased interest in native foodstuffs in the two years since the series first went to air, none is yet being farmed on a commercial scale. The native with the most obvious potential is the billygoat plum, *Terminalia ferdinandiana*.

"Ounce for ounce, they have 50 times the Vitamin C of an orange," Hiddens points out.

"All the fruit juice you people in the cities drink actually has ascorbic acid added to it. Here you have a natural source of it that is viable from a medicinal point of view as a commercial crop."

At the moment in the Northern Territory, there is a plan to grow the billygoat plum commercially on Melville Island. The project, designed by Brian Woods with assistance from the Northern Territory Government, is awaiting substantial finance – from Germany.

In Western Australia, Hiddens showed us dogs' nuts, an Aboriginal remedy for colds, which tasted, he said, like apple strudel.

"There were some early pioneers who used them in lieu of aspirin," he says. "The pharmaceutical industry could do well to have a closer look at them. It wouldn't do any harm."

While both of these natives have potential medicinal applications, foodstuffs are lagging behind. Among Hiddens's delights was another of the *Terminalia* genus, from the Kimberleys.

Hiddens calls these Kalumbur almonds: "If you could make the fibre on the outside smaller and the nut on the inside bigger with genetic engineering, it would probably be worthwhile. Then they might be commercially viable."

We have been guilty in the past of overlooking the commercial potential of certain Australian natives. We let the Hawaiians take the initiative to farm and popularise the macadamia, the only Australian native farmed so far on a commercial scale.

With the rapid decline of the North American maple, there have been calls recently for the commercial potential of the sap of the Tasmanian cider gum to be investigated as an alternative to maple syrup.

But one of the drawbacks Hiddens's series demonstrated was how difficult these products are to gather. They are often found in inaccessible places, and then not in large quantity. Consistency of supply has to be ensured for them to become more than a cottage industry.

Until now, native foodstuffs haven't appeared as lines of packaged food; at the moment they are available only at specialist outlets. This is changing: and bush foods have begun to creep into the mainstream.

The widely distributed South Australian company Beerenberg is making a quandong jam from the native wild peach, and two Melbourne hotels are testing the commercial potential of native foods. The Eden On The Yarra has just started doing a buffet-style Sunday brunch featuring such bush foods as buffalo with lilly pill jelly, baked fish with lemon aspen chutney, and desserts including a bunya nut and wattle seed roulade.

Next month the Hyatt will be featuring a bush food menu. Among other bush foods, it will be offering witchetty grubs and emu, the latter farmed by an Aboriginal community in Western Australia.

Also in Melbourne, restaurateur Jacques Rey-mon has introduced wild limes preserved in wild honey and brandy with pheasant to his menu. When a restaurateur of his calibre begins incorporating bush flavours, they're well on their way to wider acceptance.

In Sydney, Jean-Paul Bruneteau at his restaurant, Rowntrees, at Hornsy, has had witchetty grubs on a menu featuring many other bush foods for some years. He now makes and markets cans of witchetty and bunya nut soup.

John Cooper's Foodshow, an upmarket deli in Paddington, pioneered a commercial range of bush food three years ago. Now marketed under the name Kurri Kurri, its products include jams, jellies and relishes such as billygoat plum, lilly pill jelly and wild rosella relish. It believes the Sydney market is still warming up to bush food.

Rosella relish is always popular, and the wattle seed icecream has been a consistent seller: it's been described as a bit like coffee icecream with a coffee ground glaze. It actually has ascorbic acid added to it. Here you have a source of vitamin C that is from a bush food.

"It's a real hands-on exercise, to become more familiar with the Australian bush, so that you can go walking through your streets and find out what edible plants the council is growing, or what's in your local bushland," he says.

"We've also included a chapter on gardening with wild food plants."

Cherikoff is also partner in The Wattle Seed Deli on the edge of Sydney's Chinatown, which specialises in such foods. Among its products are bush tomatoes. About the same size as large raisins, they taste rather bitter but might work well in a curry.

Continued on Page 8.
FROM left: visiting ranger from Sherwood Forest in England, Hemendra Singh, Noni Jervis, Rachel Werry and seasonal ranger, Peter Coady, all enjoy some Lornandra, which tastes like peas.

Park's bush tucker given a thumbs up

By NICOLE CLEMENTS

THEY tasted berries, seeds and a consortium of food that certainly didn't come out of a can.

It was bush tucker in the purest sense of the word and the kids loved it, according to Royal National Park seasonal ranger Peter Coady.

For two hours last Saturday, school students participated in the first spring school holiday activity where they had Geebungs for lunch.

If you don't know what Geebungs are then relax, you are not the only one. (They are actually the small fruit of a shrub of the same name).

There was a wide variety of edible bush foods in the park, Mr Coady said.

"All the flavours are really subtle, not like the things we are used to buying out of the supermarket," Mr Coady said.

Eating fruits and bush food without the supervision of rangers was not advised, Mr Coady said.

"The activity that we undertake is with two rangers who know exactly what they are looking for," Mr Coady said.

Mr Coady said it was illegal to eat the bush foods without expert supervision.

A range of activities will be held in the RNP every day throughout the school holidays, from spot light safaris, kite making and walks featuring Aboriginal carvings.

During all school holidays rangers take to their beats, offering a range of programs for the adventure minded.

Bookings are required for all activities and can be made by phoning the RNP visitor centre on 542 0548.

ATTLE seeds are available in packets for use as a beverage, or as a flavouring for baking breads or biscuits. The Wattle Seed Deli also has native pepper leaves, used in the same way as bay leaves, and stocks the products of Glen Robins, a Melbourne company that works in close association with Cherikoff.

"We use a lot of the food he gathers," says Julie Robins who, together with Glenda Warn, makes the Glen Robins range of native products sold through Robins' Food Store in Toorak. These include rosella jam, clove lilly pilly, bush tomato, rosella and lilly pilly chutneys, and a range of jellies including Kakadu plum.

The Glen Robins range also offers butter flavoured with lemon aspen, extracted from a tropical rainforest tree, and a lemon aspen vinaigrette. The products have been available for 18 months, albeit in smallish quantities, according to Robins.

"Everything has to be hand-gathered. Eventually we'd like to get our products into places such as David Jones' Food Hall.

"In the shop we do a lot of gourmet food to take away - last week we did wild duck with flaxwarraplum sauce. There's a growing awareness, and there's a huge amount of interest from tourists."

"Weekend Australian" 9-10 June 1990
With tourists on the lookout for anything novel and uniquely Australian, there ought to be great market potential in that area.

In Adelaide, Andrew Fielke supplies about half a dozen South Australian hotels or restaurants with bush foods. He organizes collectors to go out, and he wholesale to could order the stuff.

"I was in the United States and Canada in February, and they all wanted to know where they could order the stuff. They were just knocked out by the flavours. It's going to be huge. That's why we're trying to encourage people to farm them," says Fielke by the flavours. It's going to be huge. That's why

Les Hiddens is probably right when he says it won't happen on a large scale until there is some financial advantage. But somehow I don't think Hiddens will be popping in to any of the city restaurants to grab a bite of witchetty grub. What Hiddens thinks of putting them on a menu is akin to omnomism.

HERALD-SUN

The Park Royal's inaugural emu steak tasting on Saturday was an instant success with the special emu dish selling out.

For $25.50, diners sampled the grilled steaks covered in sauce and served with bacon on a bed of salted cos lettuce.

Mr Zihmann said the patrons were keen to try the dish and he expects to have it permanently on the menu by the end of the month.

He said the dark red meat's flavor was a cross between meat and game, very tender off the back of the bird but requiring longer cooking if from the legs.

The neck, which he likened to ox tail, is suitable for stock and soups.

The meat has one of the lowest cholesterol levels at .05 per cent.

A big bird is coming to dinner

Distributed in Victoria by Emu Industries, the meat comes from birds farmed and grown in Western Australia.

The current consignment of meat is part of the first product run. Emu Industries manager Mr Richard Dowling expects the price to drop once production is in full swing.

Emu Industries has placed submissions before both the Victorian and NSW governments for the licences of Emu farming.

The birds are farmed for their meat, oil and leather.

Other Melbourne restaurants — including the Windsor Hotel — have placed orders for emu meat.

It is also sold at the David Jones Food Hall and through wholesalers John Cester Poultry.

MELBOURNE diners are in a flap about the latest newcomer to the culinary world — emu meat.

Emu neck soup, emu steaks and emu leg casseroles may sound strange, but according to the executive chef of the Park Royal Hotel, Marcus Zihmann, diners can't get enough.

The Park Royal's inaugural emu steak tasting on Saturday was an instant success with the special emu dish selling out.
Nature's food hall:

By JOHN STAPLETON

Before soft drinks and white bread came along, mangrove lollybush, chocolate lily, hairy walnut, snotty gobbles and rainforest spinach were all part of the varied diet of Australia’s native people.

A group of enthusiasts on the North Coast wants to make these fruits readily available once again.

At the old mission town of Kempsey, which has a history of racial tension, locals are getting together to set up a traditional food park.

It is a much-needed chance to bridge the European and Aboriginal cultures.

The three-hectare site was once a rubbish tip.

At the moment it has a small network of pathways, built with waste from the nearby Boral timber mill, a few burrawang palms and young trees such as candlenut and black apple.

The dream is that the park will become a resource not only for the six educational institutions nearby but for the Aboriginal community of Kempsey.

At the moment only a few of the 350 plants the organisers want are growing there – the zigzag vine, a rainforest climber with a sour but pleasant fruit; the midyim, a bush with a small apple-like fruit; and the burrawang, whose nuts were washed in a stream for a week to remove poisons and then ground into a powder similar to flour.

The idea came about in 1988 after the Kempsey Shire Council offered the land to the Macleay Valley Afforestation Association.

One person involved in setting up the park is a local nurseryman, Mr. Greg Braun.

“The idea is for people to come here and eat,” he said. “We want them to take part in an act which is common to both cultures.”

However, those involved have found it difficult to get Aborigines interested in taking part in the project.

One of the first to become involved, Mr. Robert Campbell jnr., a Koori artist, has produced a painting which has been put in the local library to stir interest.

It is hoped that his involvement will help overcome scepticism.

“There is interest among Aborigines about the traditional foods,” Mr. Campbell said. “Aborigines lived with nature. They lived off this food for 40,000 years.”

The project has been helped by a $2,000 grant from the NSW Soil Conservation Service.

Tuesday, June 11, 1991