

Healthy Habitat for Schools

Fact Sheet 14

Cultural knowledge used in the garden

Aboriginal people have used Australia's native plants for food, medicine, material and tools for around 60,000 years. Many schools enjoy creating a bush tucker garden to increase biodiversity, native wildlife and learn more about Aboriginal culture.

The following table will help you in choosing your native plants that have cultural uses:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Characteristics
Alexandra palm	<i>Archontophoenix alexandrae</i>	The inner heart of the palm is edible after being peeled and cooked. The large sheath at the base of the leaf make plates/bowls. The leaves are woven into baskets and the timber is used for making spears.
Beach almond	<i>Terminalia catappa</i>	The seeds are edible after processing.
Beach apricot	<i>Ximenia americana</i>	The plum like fruit turns yellow/orange when it is ready to eat.
Beach sheoak	<i>Casurina equisetifolia</i>	The timber is used to make hand spears and firewood. The leaves and bark have medicinal properties.
Blackbean tree	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	The fruits and seeds are toxic and need to be processed before consumption.
Bloodwood	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i>	The bark is used for medicine, firewood and timber.



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Common Name	Scientific Name	Characteristics
Blue fig/Poison fig	<i>Ficus albipila</i>	The blue edible fruits are covered in white hairs. Fighting shields were made from the wood of this tree.
Blue quandong	<i>Elaeocarpus angustifolius</i>	The wood is used to make canoes and the blue/purple fruit are edible.
Broad leafed native cherry	<i>Exocarpos latifolius</i>	This summer fruiting plant gives cherries that are red, yellow or orange.
Bulrushes	<i>Typha sp</i>	The young shoots are eaten raw. Pollen from the flowers is eaten raw or baked. The sap provides protection against leeches.
Burdekin plum	<i>Pleiogynium timorense</i>	The fruits are eaten or made into a jam.
Cloudy tea tree	<i>Melaleuca dealbata</i>	The flowers of the Cloudy Tea Tree provide nectar. The leaves are used as a medicine and the bark is useful as insulation and for carrying food and water.
Cocky apple	<i>Planchonia careya</i>	The fibrous twigs once pounded, can be teased out to make a brush for painting or to make twine. The large fruits are edible. The bark is used to stun fish and it has medicinal properties.
Hakea	<i>Hakea lorea</i>	The wood is used to make tools and weapons. This plant has medicinal properties.
Cottonwood/Native hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	The inner bark is used for string and fishing line. The wood is used for building rafts and firesticks.
Crabs eyes	<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	The hard seeds are used by Aboriginals to decorate Ceremonial objects. They are extremely poisonous.
Cypress pine	<i>Callitris intratropica</i>	The bark, wood, sap and leaves are used for medicine, weapons and tools.
Goats foot morning glory	<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	The root and leaves have medicinal properties and the root is also food.



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A bush garden
using traditional
know-how!



Common Name	Scientific Name	Characteristics
Quinine tree	<i>Petalostigma pubescens</i>	The wood is used for spear throwers and the fruit are used in medicine such as to prevent malaria.
Dogs balls	<i>Grewia retusifolia</i>	The fruit is boiled down to make a medicinal drink.
Geebung/Milky plum	<i>Persoonia falcata</i>	This plant is used for medicine and weapons.
Herbert River cherry	<i>Antidesma bunius</i>	The edible fruit are ripe when they turn red to black.
Jungle currant	<i>Antidesma ghaesembilla</i>	The Jungle Currant produces currant-like fruit that provides an acid pulp around a central stone.
Leichhardt tree	<i>Nauclea orientalis</i>	An infusion of crushed leaves was used to treat 'sore belly' by inducing vomiting. The bark was prepared to relieve rheumatic pain and bruising. The trunk was used to make canoes and the leaves were used to protect damper from ashes. Its flowers develop into edible fruit. Fish poisons are made from the bark and roots.
Moreton Bay ash	<i>Corymbia tessellaris</i>	Gum trees are famous for their eucalyptus oil. Crushed leaves in hot water provide relief from colds and their timber was valuable for making hardwood tools. The wood is favoured for firewood and spears.
Native passionfruit	<i>Passiflora foetida</i>	This vine produces small, tasty yellow fruits.
Native rosella	<i>Abelmoschus moschatus</i>	This plant has edible leaves, shoots and roots.
Native grape	<i>Cayratia trifolia</i>	The purple/black fruit are edible.
Nicker nut	<i>Caesalpinia bonduc</i>	The seeds can be eaten after processing and are used for necklaces. The bark is ground into a powder to treat aches and pains.



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Common Name	Scientific Name	Characteristics
Northern beefwood	<i>Grevillea striata</i>	The seeds are edible after processing and boomerangs were made from the root or basal areas. This tree has medicinal properties.
Peanut tree or Monkey nut	<i>Sterculia quadrifida</i>	This plant has medicinal manufacturing and nutritional use. The leaves and bark was made into twine and nets.
Rock fig	<i>Ficus platypoda</i>	Provides edible fruits that are rather dry and tasteless unless soaked in water to make a pulp.
Sandpaper fig	<i>Ficus opposita</i>	Its rough leaves are used for final smoothing of wooden tools and weapons. The fruit is eaten when ripe. The leaves were used for medicine.
Screw palm	<i>Pandanus sp</i>	The fruit is edible after roasting. The leaves were stripped into thin fibres to weave mats and baskets.
The cupania tree or Beach tamarind	<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	This has edible orange fruit.
Wattle	<i>Acacia sp.</i>	Some wattles have edible gum which was soaked in water with honey to form a toffee. Roots were cooked and eaten and the wood was used for manufacturing weapons and tools. The red and yellow wattle is used for fibres to weave fishing string.
Weeping tea tree (paperbark)	<i>Melaleuca leucadendron</i>	The flowers of the Cloudy Tea Tree provided nectar, the leaves were used as a medicine and the bark was used for shelters, bedding, slow burning torches and for carrying food and water.
White apple	<i>Syzygium forte subsp. forte</i>	The fruit can be eaten raw or cooked. Fish poison is made from the bark, seed and leaves.
Wild orange	<i>Capparis canescens</i>	The fruit is eaten the plant is used to make medicine.



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