



Lake Macquarie  
Landcare

# Case study

## Local native plants with traditional uses - Lakeside Drive Landcare



## About this booklet

This booklet has been put together by Lakeside Drive Landcare with assistance from the Landcare Resource Centre as part of a project funded in 2017 through Lake Macquarie City Council's Environmental Sustainability Grants.

Lakeside Drive Landcare Team Leader, Garry Stewart, has contributed many photos from his Landcare site as well as his knowledge on traditional plant uses. Garry has been assisted by Don Roach from Lakeside Drive Landcare, Noel Date (an Aboriginal community member) and Mick Green from Bahtabah Aboriginal Landcare Council in this project.

This booklet explores a range of plants traditionally used as bushfoods and for their medicinal properties, but it is not to be used as a definitive guide to what can be eaten and used due to risks involved in consuming wild foods.

**You should be completely sure of your plant identification skills and knowledge before trying anything**

Some native plants, although edible, can cause serious long-term damage, for example the fruit of the Native Guava (*Rhodomyrta psidioides*) has been associated with a fungus that can cause blindness. No responsibility is taken for any harmful effects from the use of plants included in this guide.

Some of the bushfood plants listed here may be growing naturally in Landcare sites and some you may like to plant in your garden.

**It is illegal to pick, harm or collect native plants, particularly in National Parks and reserves, without appropriate permissions or permits**

As well as providing interest and diversity in plantings, bushfood species are often popular with wildlife who can enjoy the fruits, seeds and leaves too.



**Garry Stewart (above) and  
Don Roach (right)  
presenting at Bush  
Tucker workshops at  
Lakeside Drive Landcare  
Site**





**Common name** Bulrush or Cumbungi

**Scientific name** *Typha sp.*



### **Traditional uses**

- Many uses, such as medical purposes, leech repellent, food, string, bags, baskets, rafts, bedding, body decorations for dancers

**Common name** Bleeding Heart

**Scientific name** *Homalanthus populifolius*



### **Traditional uses**

- Crushed leaves were used by the Chinese to stop the bleeding of wounds
- A dye can be made from leaves and bark

**Common name** Blue Flax Lily or Paroo Lily

**Scientific name** *Dianella caerulea*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: some species of *Dianella*, which look similar can be poisonous**

- Fruits and roots are said to be edible in small quantities
- Leaves were used for weaving or twisted into cord
- Attracts birds and lizards

**Common name** Bracken

**Scientific name** *Pteridium esculentum*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: for external medical use only - could be carcinogenic if eaten**

- The juice from bracken stems can be applied to ant bites and stings of bees and wasps



**Common name** Broad-leaved Paperbark/  
Tea Tree

**Scientific name** *Melaleuca quinquenervia*



### **Traditional uses**

- A bitter tea can be made from leaves for colds and flus and can be sweetened with the flower nectar
- Bark was used for toilet paper, wrapping foods, cooking fish, shelter, hats, blankets for warmth, and to start fire
- A coolamon was made from the bowl that grows on the base of the tree



**Common name** Cabbage Tree Palm

**Scientific name** *Livistona australis*



### **Traditional uses**

- Fronds used for weaving
- Young shoots and leaves said to be edible, but harvesting can kill the tree
- Used for building, fencing and animal troughs by early settlers

**Common name** Coastal Banksia

**Scientific name** *Banksia integrifolia*



### **Traditional uses**

- Timber was used for boat building
- Aboriginal People made boomerangs from the wood and toys from seed cones
- Bark of the Banksia and Wattle were used together for tanning, leather, fibres, and fishing nets
- Cones were used to carry fire and keep the fires burning overnight
- Nectar can be sucked from the flowers or soaked in water to make a sweet drink
- Seeds were cooked and eaten

**Common name** Coastal Wattle

**Scientific name** *Acacia sophorae* (syn. *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*)



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: seed pods may cause irritation. Be careful with identification as some *Acacia* seeds are toxic.**

- Seeds are edible when cooked
- Edible grubs may be found in the bark



**Common name** Common Maidenhair

**Scientific name** *Adiantum aethiopicum*



### **Traditional uses**

- Can be used as a tea

**Common name** Magenta Lily Pilly

**Scientific name** *Syzygium paniculatum*



### **Traditional uses**

This species is threatened in the wild and is protected by law – No picking, harming or harvesting is allowed without a permit for plants in the wild or in public reserves

- Fruit is edible and can be made into jam but it can have a tart taste
- Flowers and fruit attracts birds and reptiles
- A similar local species *Acmena Smithii* also has edible fruit

**Common name** Cut-leaved Mint-bush

**Scientific name** *Prostanthera incisa*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: the fragrance can be overpowering and cause dizziness**

- Potential use for flavouring food in small quantities, as a substitute for mint



**Common name** Dusky Coral Pea

**Scientific name** *Kennedia rubicunda*



### **Traditional uses**

- Stems used for string
- Nectar was sucked from the flowers
- Leaves can be used as a tea substitute

**Common name** False Sarsaparilla

**Scientific name** *Hardenbergia violacea*



### **Traditional uses**

- A mild tea can be made from the leaves
- Dye can be made from the flowers
- String can be made from the stems

**Common name** Gymea Lily

**Scientific name** *Doryanthes excelsa*



**Traditional uses**

- Stems and roots were roasted and eaten
- Leaves were made into mats



**Common name** Mat Rush

**Scientific name** *Lomandra longifolia*



### **Traditional uses**

- Leaf base is edible
- Leaves were dried and soaked to allow weaving into baskets
- Leaf fibre was also used for string for nets and bags
- Seeds are said to be edible with treatment
- Flowers can be used for nectar

**Common name** Native Quince

**Scientific name** *Alectryon subcinereus*



**Traditional uses**

- Fruit can be eaten or made into jam

**Common name** Native Raspberry

**Scientific name** *Rubus hillii* syn. *R. moluccanus*



### **Traditional uses**

- Fruit can be eaten or made into a syrup for ice cream, lemonade or into a jam
- Leaves can be used for a tea which can relieve diarrhoea



**Common name** Native Violet

**Scientific name** *Viola hederacea*



### **Traditional uses**

- Flowers are said to be edible as a garnish or used for decoration

**Common name** Orange Thorn

**Scientific name** *Pittosporum multiflorum* (syn. *Citriobatus multiflorus*)



### **Traditional uses**

- Fruit is edible when ripe

**Common name** Pigface

**Scientific name** *Carpobrotus glaucescens*



### **Traditional uses**

- Edible fruit forms at base of flower (ripe when full and light brown) and the flowers are also edible
- Leaves can be used in cooking as a substitute for salt
- Juice from the leaves was used to treat minor marine stings and sunburn



**Common name** Plum Pine

**Scientific name** *Podocarpus elatus*



### **Traditional uses**

- Fruit can be eaten or made into jam or syrup for ice cream
- Fruit is found on the female plant - the male plant looks different (see right)



**Common name** Samphire

**Scientific name** *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*



**Traditional uses**

- Salty stems are eaten raw

**Common name** Sandpaper Fig

**Scientific name** *Ficus coronata*



### **Traditional uses**

- Leaves were used as a sandpaper for tools and weapons
- Fruit is edible when ripe
- Leaves and sap were used to treat infections
- A similar species *F. fraseri*, is also found locally

**Common name** Scurvy Weed or Native  
Commelina

**Scientific name** *Commelina cyanea*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: consumption should be limited to small amounts and cooking is required due to oxalic acid content**

- Cooked and eaten by early settlers to treat scurvy as they thought it was high in Vitamin C



**Common name** Sea Celery

**Scientific name** *Apium prostratum* var. *prostratum*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning:** can look similar to, and grow among, poisonous Fumitory (*Fumaria* spp.)

- Can be eaten and used as a flavouring - leaves taste like parsley, stems like celery and seeds like aniseed

**Common name** Sea Purslane

**Scientific name** *Sesuvium portulacastrum*



**Traditional uses**

- Eaten as a green vegetable by Captain Cook and his fleet
- Grows in saltwater

**Common name** Swamp Lily

**Scientific name** *Crinum pedunculatum*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: toxic if eaten. All parts of plant are for external medical use only**

- Crushed leaves used to treat sunburn, marine stings and insect bites
- Leaf fibres can provide antiseptic properties for wounds
- The Australian Aloe Vera



**Common name** Tall Saw-sedge

**Scientific name** *Gahnia clarkei*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: leaves are very sharp**

- Leaf bases are edible (those growing in water contain more moisture)

**Common name** Tuckeroo

**Scientific name** *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*



### **Traditional uses**

- Fruits were eaten, although they are often dry and tasteless
- Seeds were crushed to make damper
- Attracts birds and insects including several different types of butterflies

**Common name** Warrigal Greens

**Scientific name** *Tetragonia tetragonoides*



### **Traditional uses**

**Warning: leaves can be eaten but contain high levels of oxalic acid so they must be cooked and cooking water discarded**

- Cooking leaves in a stainless steel pot with lid off is recommended
- Captain Cook and his crew ate it during the Endeavour Voyage in 1770 and it is now cultivated overseas
- May not have been eaten by Aboriginal People prior to European contact but the crushed leaves were applied to ulcers

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## Further information

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If you wish to know more about this and other Landcare projects in Lake Macquarie please contact the Landcare Resource Centre.



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