



MEDICINAL & BUSHFOOD PLANTS



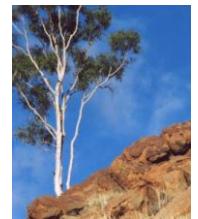
Aboriginal people retain an extensive amount of detailed knowledge about the edible properties and medicinal uses of many different plants. The sourcing, harvest and preparation of these plants is important knowledge that is shared between older and young Aboriginal people, and many local Arrernte people still harvest plants regularly for bushfood and medicinal resources. This walk takes you around some of the bushfood and medicinal plants growing at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. The walk starts at the ghost gums beside the entrance to the Visitor Centre, and then stops at plants in two of the adjacent display gardens, before moving on to a couple of plants near the carpark, and then to others close to the waterhole behind the Visitor Centre.

The information used to prepare this walk comes from two local authors and ethnobiologists - Arrernte elder, Veronica Perrurle Dobson, and botanist, Peter Latz. IAD Press publish both of their books: *Arrernte Traditional Healing* by Veronica Perrurle Dobson (2007) and *Bushfires and Bushtucker* by Peter Latz (1995).

Ilwempe

Ghost gum *Corymbia aparrerinja*

This elegant tree with its striking white bark is an iconic feature of rocky range country in Central Australia. Arrernte people use its small branches to make splints to immobilize broken bones. Other Aboriginal people used its resin to treat cuts and sores.



Aherre-aherre

Native lemongrass *Cymbopogon ambiguus*

Arrernte people collect the fragrant leaves of this grass and crush them to use in a pillow to treat flu symptoms. Leaves and roots are also used in rubbing medicines or boiled and drunk in small quantities to relieve bad colds and flus.



Awele-awele or Alperrantyeeye

Bush tomato *Solanum ellipticum*

The roots of this plant are used by Arrernte people to treat toothache. The roots are baked in ash and then peeled and placed on the aching tooth. The fruit of *Awele-awele* is also an important bushfood, but can act as a laxative if too many are eaten.



Anatye

Bush potato *Ipomoea costata*

Anatye grows as a viny shrub on sandplains north of Alice Springs. Its large, starchy tubers are both nutritious and sweet tasting. It is a staple bushfood throughout the region, and is drought- and fire-tolerant.



Atnyeme

Witchetty bush *Acacia kempeana*

The seeds of this widespread shrub are an important bushfood for Aboriginal people, as are the large witchetty grubs extracted from its roots. Arrernte people also used the inner bark from roots of *Atnyeme* to make strings to tie splints to broken limbs.



Atnetye

Bush banana *Marsdenia australis*

The young fruit of this vine are a delicious bushfood as are the creamy flowers, but the older fruit are full of silky seeds. Arrernte people used to use the roots of *Atnetye* to keep thin. This plant is relatively common in bush around Alice Springs, but can be hard to spot.



Pmerple

Quandong *Santalum acuminatum*

The tart, fleshy fruit of Pmerple is a highly prized bushfood. Quandongs are now cultivated to provide fruit for the bushfood industry. In the wild, however, quandongs are becoming rare as a result of intense browsing pressure from feral camels.



Alatyeye

Pencil yam *Vigna lanceolata*

Found near watercourses, this creeper is most obvious after rains. The swollen roots of Alatyeye are a favoured bushfood throughout the region. These starchy tubers are eaten raw, or after cooking in ashes.



Apere

River red gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

Common along watercourses throughout inland Australia, *Apere* is a very important tree for Aboriginal people. Arrernte people pound the bark to make an antiseptic paste that is used to treat wounds. Sugary lerp infestations on the leaves are a prized bushfood, and grubs from the roots are also harvested.



Arrutnenge

Bush passionfruit *Capparis spinosa* var. *nummularia*

Growing mostly on riverflats, this dense spiky shrub has large, sweetly scented, white flowers. The ripe yellow fruit of Arrutnenge are a prized bushfood, but are often eaten by birds or ants before people can harvest them!



Arrwatnurlke

Striped mint-bush *Prostanthera striatiflora*

The fragrant leaves of *Arrwatnurlke* are crushed by Arrernte people and the juice used to dry out sores. The leaves are also either burnt to make inhaling smoke or made into a rubbing medicine and used to treat flu symptoms. *Arrwatnurlke* grows in the rocky hills around Alice Springs.



Irmankga-irmankga

Narrow-leaf fuchsia bush *Eremophila alternifolia*

More common in northern parts of South Australia, Irmankga-irmankga is a potent medicinal plant. The leaves are either steeped in water or crushed and made into a rubbing medicine to treat a wide range of ailments.



Atnyerlenge

Crimson turkey bush *Eremophila latrobei*

Arrernte people use the juice from leaves of *Atnyerlenge* in rubbing medicines or in a solution to treat flu symptoms, headaches and infections. Fresh stems are also used to treat toothache, and the nectar from flowers eaten to cure sore throats.



Arrethe

Rock fuchsia bush *Eremophila freelingii*

A common shrub on the surrounding rocky hillslopes, Arrethe is an important medicinal plant. Its leaves are either burnt and the smoke inhaled, or crushed and made into a wash or rubbing medicine to treat flus and chest infections.



Aherre-intenhe

Red poverty bush *Eremophila duttonii*

Aherre-intenhe grows on gravelly flats across the region. Its leaves have strong medicinal properties, with the juice being used to treat scabies and sores. Leaves are also crushed and mixed with fat to make a rubbing medicine for aching muscles.



Ilpengke

Gidgee fuchsia bush *Eremophila dalyana*

A powerful medicinal shrub from Alyawarre country, Ilpengke leaves are used in rubbing medicines to treat flus and chest ailments. A decoction of the leaves is also used to treat scabies and other skin complaints.



Pintye-pintye

Sticky blue-rod *Stemodia viscosa*

Pintye-pintye grows in moist places along watercourses or in gorges. The fragrant leaves of this herb are used in a pillow to induce a restful sleep, or crushed and mixed with fat to make a rubbing medicine to treat cold and flu symptoms.



Ayepe

Tar vine *Boerhavia species*

After rains, Ayepe can carpet floodplain areas or riverbeds. The tap root of Ayepe is edible, and can be eaten raw or baked. Ayeparenye, an edible caterpillar that feeds on Ayepe leaves, is an important ancestral being in Arrernte Altyerre (Dreaming).



Arnterre

Colony wattle *Acacia murrayana*

Arnterre usually grows in dense colonies in floodplain or sandplain areas habitat. Aboriginal people collect its seeds for bushfood, either roasting them before grinding them into a paste, or steaming the green pods whole. The sap is also eaten by kids.



Ntyemenye

Ruby saltbush *Enchylaena tomentosa*

Ntyemenye is a common shrub in most habitats across the region. Masses of tasty orange, yellow, or red fruits are produced after rains and are a favoured bushfood of kids. The fruits were also used by Aboriginal people to produce a red dye.



Arlperre

Whitewood *Atalaya hemiglauca*

Alperre is a common tree across the region, growing on rocky hills, as well as in loamy woodland areas. The white sap is edible, and there is a witchetty grub that lives in the roots and is eaten by Aboriginal people.



Atwakeye

Wild orange *Capparis mitchellii*

(on the carpark edge west of the medicine garden)

Atwakeye grows in woodland communities across the region and produces sweetly scented white flowers and round fruit that ripen to yellow-green. The yellow pulp is strongly flavoured, and the seeds are bitter if chewed.



Utnerrenge

Weeping emu bush *Eremophila longifolia*

(on the carpark edge west of the medicine garden)

Utnerrenge is the host plant of one of the three ancestral caterpillars that are important to local Arrernte people. A significant medicinal plant, its leaves are used to smoke mothers and babies. Juice from the leaves is also used to treat burns and sores.



Arratherrke

Snake vine *Tinospora smilacina*

(in the display bed opposite the medicine garden)

Arrernte people used to crush sections of the vine from this plant and tie it around the head of someone with a bad headache. Other Aboriginal groups used the sap or leaves from this plant to treat sores or wounds. Snake vine occurs on sandplain country north of Aileron.



Artetye

Mulga *Acacia aneura*

The inner bark from roots of *Artetye* was used by Arrernte people as a string to tie splints to broken limbs. The seeds of this widespread tree are also a very important bushfood. Honeyants are also dug out of their deep nests under Artetye groves.



Athenge or Atyarnpe

Ironwood *Acacia estrophiolata* (on path toward the Waterhole turnoff)
Arrernte people use the bark from roots of *Athenge* to make a solution to treat sore eyes and other infections. Gum exuded from the trunk of this tree is eaten and the hard, red wood is used to make implements.



Arrankweye

Bush plum *Santalum lanceolatum* (at start of Waterhole path)
A common plant across the region, often growing in small copses along watercourses, Arrankweye fruit turns black when ripe and is a significant bushfood. The fruit were also used by Arrerte people to dye reeds to make into baskets.



Irlweke

Native pine *Callitris glaucophylla* (at start of Waterhole path)
This tree is found in rocky hill country protected from fire. Arrernte people used to collect the bark from *Irlweke* to make a bed to treat people with bad flu infections. The fragrant leaves and resin are also steeped in water or used in a rubbing medicine for chest colds and the flu.



Arlketyerre

Dead finish *Acacia tetragonophylla* (at end of waterhole path)
Arlketyerre is a widespread shrub around the Alice Springs region. Arrernte people use the sharp spiky leaves to treat warts. The bark from roots is also steeped in water to make an antiseptic solution for treating sores. The seeds are an important bushfood.



Aperlape

Conkleberry *Carissa lanceolata* (at end of waterhole path)
Growing along watercourses or in woodland communities to the north of town, Aperlape produces many sweet, black berries after good rains. The orange inner bark is also used by Aboriginal people as a medicinal wash for skin and eye infections.



Many other plants that grow around waterholes or in other wetland areas were also harvested extensively for food by Aboriginal people in earlier times. It is not unusual to come across fragments of grinding stones used to process the seeds and tubers of different food plants in these habitats. Many of the other wattle species growing in the Garden are also harvested as bushfoods by Aboriginal people in the desert regions. The Wattle Walk will introduce you to some of these plants.

We hope you enjoyed this walk!