

TOPIC : **NATIVE PLANTS**

GUEST SPEAKER : GEOFF ROBINSON

CLUB MEETING 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

- In the early days of Australian settlement the Aborigines showed the new arrivals how to use many of the native trees and plants which Geoff discussed, for useful purposes. Geoff conducts classes to teach contemporary Australians about the wonders of these ancient, tried and true uses of the natural bounty of the land
- **Red Kamala Berries** make red dye used for uniform jackets. The powder was exported to India in the 1800's
- **Peanut Tree** produces black silky sheen nut – peel and eat. Leaves used to wrap food to cook and to poison fish in streams for a quick catch
- **Grease Nut** crushed to extract oil to grease the hubs of Cobb and Co coaches. Nuts also roasted to eat. Tree now on endangered list
- Three varieties of **Davidson's Plum** – Cairns region, Border region and south of Border. Smooth DP grows to 12 metres but does not germinate from seed. Researchers believe Aborigines must have dug up suckers to plant elsewhere
- **Soap Tree** important food source for native butterflies and fruit for native birds. Aborigines taught settlers to make soap from leaves which also have medicinal uses for sore eyes, headache and toothache. Tough pioneer tree when starting a garden
- **Bluetongue Tree** – fruit in quadrants and tastes like raspberries, no toxins, will turn tongue blue
- **Blueberry Ash** – miniature Quandong. Aborigines chewed the bright blue fruits “warheads” when travelling to seal saliva ducts and dry the mouth to conserve moisture. BA white flowers signalled that bunya nuts were ready to harvest
- **Brushed Pepper Bush** – understory shrub grows to 3 metres. Seeds used for pepper – toss in salads or meat dishes
- **Pigeon Berry Ash** grows to 15 metres similar to camphor laurel
- **Butterfly Bush** – butterflies attack old leaves and leave new growth so tree always looks good
- **Atherton Oak** grows to 10 metres bearing blue fruits with edible kernels tasting like macadamia nuts
- **Python Tree** has a curving trunk like a mottled python – good for wood turning
- **Weeping Pittosporum** produces edible fruit. Gum used for skin cancer, leaves for tea, and seed kernels ground into flour
- **Bracken Fern** is toxic but if dry fronds are burned, the ash mixed with a little water makes a healing ointment. New shoot is edible and tastes like walnuts

- Geoff also discussed two recipes using Bunya Nuts as follows –
Recipes are from the 'GO NATIVE WILD FOOD COOK BOOK' compiled and illustrated by Jan Sked published by Pine Rivers Branch, Society for Growing Australian Plants (Qld Region) Inc. The book is available at Fernlands for \$16.50.

Bunya Nut Casserole

4 cups minced, boiled bunya nuts
250g bacon rashers, chopped
1 can diced tomatoes
salt
pepper
macadamia oil
2 onions, sliced
250g sharp cheese, grated

Grease 2 litre deep casserole dish. Cover bottom with a layer of prepared bunya nuts then layer sliced onions already fried in macadamia oil till soft and clear. Next a layer of lightly fried chopped bacon, then a layer of tomatoes. Sprinkle with some grated cheese, salt and pepper to taste. Repeat layers finishing off with bunya nuts sprinkled with grated cheese, salt and pepper. Cover, place in moderate oven for 1 - 1¼ hours removing lid for last 15 minutes. Serves 4 to 6.

Bunya Nut Ice

2 cups sugar
1 cup minced bunya nuts
½ cup milk
pink food colouring

Bring sugar and milk to boil, stirring all the time. Boil for 5 minutes. Add bunya nuts and boil for another 6 minutes. Take saucepan off stove and place in cold water. Add food colouring and stir until mixture becomes thick. Pour into wet plate to set. Cut into squares.