

Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps Aboriginal Values Medicinal plants



Plants feature prominently in Aboriginal remedies. Fleurieu Swamps include many medicinal plants. © Nicole Motteux, 2021
Plants feature prominently in Aboriginal remedies chiefly used to relieve symptoms such as fever, congestion, headache, skin sores, tired or swollen aching limbs and digestive problems. The Aboriginal pharmacopeia is vast and the diversity of herbal remedies served Aboriginal people well. They moved seasonally through different habitat zones in the landscape, which meant that it was necessary for them to possess knowledge of a broad range of remedies. It was also important for Aboriginal people to know the seasonality of each plant species, some of which may not be as effective or even available at certain times of the year.



Acacia gum and Woolly Tea Tree leaves were important Aboriginal medicines © Nicole Motteux, 2021

Analysis of the historical records indicates that plants were major sources of medicines, although the exact species involved is generally poorly recorded. In Aboriginal Australia, there are several main categories of medicine use: externally as inhalants in vapour baths and wreaths, as well as 'rubs', poultices and bandages; and internally as chewed material and drunk as 'teas'. In and around the Fleurieu Swamps important medicinal plants included the leaves of tea trees (*Leptospermum lanigerum*, *L. continentale*) for inhalants and rubs; and wattle gum as a chewed digestive from *Acacia pycnantha* and *A. retinodes*. Swamp herbs used for medicinal purposes included native pennyroyal (*Mentha satureioides*), slender mint (*M. diemenica*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*).



Tanya Karpany is learning and sharing information about swamp medicinal plants used in Aboriginal remedies

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This post especially informed by many papers and advice from [Philip Clarke](#), Ethnobotanist and Anthropologist.
A full list of references for this Post are available at [\[link to references\]](#)