



# Bush Food Plants

of the South East



Natural Resources  
South East



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



Government  
of South Australia

**Caution: Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.**

Natural Resources South East acknowledges and respects the traditional owners of the ancestral lands of the South East. We acknowledge elders past and present and we respect the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal peoples to country. Acknowledgements to Neville Bonney for his contribution and assistance in compiling this publication, Des Hartman for his assistance regarding Aboriginal language. Images courtesy of Neville Bonney, Kathy Bell, Bryan Haywood, Elizabeth Mapletoft, Tina Fowler, Oisin Sweeney, Steve Clarke, Rebecka McCann, Peter Tucker.

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KEENG-A (BUNGANDITJ) PLANT  
PUUYUUP (BUNGANDITJ) FRUIT



*Native Pigface*

*Carpobrotus rossii*

**FAMILY**

Aizoaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Carpobrotus rossii*

**COMMON NAME**

Native Pigface

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Keeng-a (Bunganditj) Plant

Puuyuup (Bunganditj) Fruit

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Fleshy fruits were eaten raw when ripe (pinkish red colour). Green leaves also eaten raw or cooked and eaten with meat. Leaves often have a salty flavour. Skin peeled off before eating.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Predominantly coastal.

**FLOWERING TIME**

August - October.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Low spreading plant, spreading out to many meters. Thick fleshy triangular leaves. Daisy like flower heads, mostly pink to mauve in colour up to 5.5cm in diameter. Fruits, purplish to red.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



# MUNTER, NGURP (BUNGANDITJ)



Muntries

*Kunzea pomifera*

**FAMILY**

Myrtaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Kunzea pomifera*

**COMMON NAME**

Muntries

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Munter, Ngurp (Bunganditj)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Berries eaten fresh or pounded together to make a paste, which was dried and eaten later. Ripe fruits have a dry apple, peach taste.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Usually on sandy soil, often with limestone.

**FLOWERING TIME**

October - December.

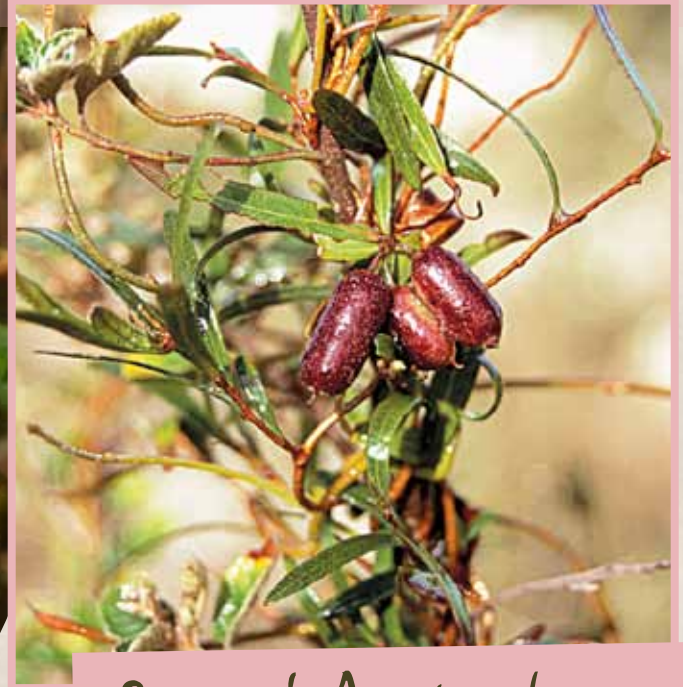
**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Prostrate shrub with spreading branches up to many meters. Leaves oval to round up to 5mm in length. Small white flowers. Fruits globular green, ripening to a reddish purple in colour.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



KUNDUWI (BUNGANDITJ)  
(NGARRINDJERI)



Sweet Apple-berry

*Billardiera cymosa* ssp. *cymosa*

**FAMILY**

Pittosporaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Billardiera cymosa*  
*ssp. cymosa*

**COMMON NAME**

Sweet Apple-berry

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Kunduwi (Bunganditj)  
(Ngarrindjeri)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Ripe fruit regarded as one of the tastiest bush fruits with an aniseed flavour.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Widespread in most parts of the region.

**FLOWERING TIME**

Mainly November - January.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Shrub or climber to 1m high. Leaves narrow to oblong 2-6cm long. Flowers 5 petaled, creamy-white to purple in colour. Fruits oblong, often reddish in colour up to 3cm long.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



KARRA (BUNGANDITJ)



Black Wattle

*Acacia mearnsii*

**FAMILY**

Leguminosae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Acacia mearnsii*

**COMMON NAME**

Black Wattle

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

karra (Bunganditj)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Important source of gum, which was chewed. Balls of gum were kept and carried about, eaten or dissolved in water with flower nectar to make sweet drinks.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Occurs in the lower South East region from Naracoorte southwards in woodland, open forest and tussock grassland.

**FLOWERING TIME**

September - November.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Small spreading tree, 5-12 m high. Dark, rough bark on the trunk, dark green, soft phyllodes. Pale yellow to cream flowers. Brown seed pods 5-10cm long with small black seeds.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



# NAL-A-WORT (BUNGANDITJ)



Golden Wattle

*Acacia pycnantha*

**FAMILY**

Leguminosae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Acacia pycnantha*

**COMMON NAME**

Golden Wattle

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Nal-a-wort (Bunganditj)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

The gum was eaten or mixed with water and nectar from flowers to make sweet drinks. When mature, seeds were ground to a flour and mixed with water to make a paste. Seeds offer a high source of carbohydrate, protein and fibre.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Occurs throughout the region on a variety of soils.

**FLOWERING TIME**

August - October.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Medium shrub or small tree 3-8m high. Phyllodes broad, wide at the centre and tapering towards the base, 6-20cm long by 1-5cm wide. Flowers golden yellow balls branched in clusters.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



PEEINTUCK (BUNGANDITJ)  
(NGARRINDJERI)



Black-anther Flax-lily

*Dianella revoluta* var. *revoluta*.

**FAMILY**

Liliaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Dianella revoluta*  
*var. revoluta*

**COMMON NAME**

Black-anther Flax-lily

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Peeintuck (Bunganditj)  
(Ngarrindjeri)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Plant has medicinal uses. The juice of the berries were known to fight colds. The underground stems were cleaned and chewed, good for colds also. Some species of Dianella have poisonous berries.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Very common and widespread, especially in wetter areas.

**FLOWERING TIME**

September - January.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Small, clumping lily, to 1m high. Leaves with rolled back leaf edges. Flowers have blue petals, black anthers with yellow base. Small oval, purple-blue fleshy fruits.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



BO-AN (BUNGANDITJ) EDIBLE ROOT



Common Vanilla-lily

*Arthropodium strictum*

**FAMILY**

Liliaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Arthropodium strictum*

**COMMON NAME**

Common Vanilla-lily

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Bo-An (Bunganditj)

Edible root

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Tubers can be dug up once they have developed near the base of the plant. Tubers were eaten raw but usually roasted first. High in carbohydrates and sweet tasting.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Common throughout the region.

**FLOWERING TIME**

Mainly September - December.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Small, erect annual to 1m high. Grass-like leaves. Flowers purple to 2cm in diameter. Fruit, globular capsule.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



TAARUK, TAROOK (GUNDITJMARA)



Old Man's Beard

*Clematis microphylla*

**FAMILY**

Ranunculaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Clematis microphylla*

**COMMON NAME**

Old Man's Beard

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Taaruk, Tarook  
(Gunditjmara)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Long fibrous roots were dug up and cooked in, and over, hot coals, then kneaded into a dough. When not cooked, the young roots often taste peppery. Very high in starch.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Widespread in the region but particularly common along the coast.

**FLOWERING TIME**

July - September.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

A scrambling vine or climber with long slender stems. Leaves consist of three leaflets 1-3 cm long. Many flowers, cream-white in colour. Seed, feathery-fluffy in appearance.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



MIR-NAT (BUNGANDITJ)  
YUWATCH (GUNDITJMARA)



Narrow-leaf Bulrush

*Typha domingensis*

**FAMILY**

Typhaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Typha domingensis*

**COMMON NAME**

Narrow-leaf Bulrush

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Mir-nat (Bunganditj)

Yuwatch (Gunditjmara)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

The new shoots and the underground stems were both eaten and have a potato like taste. The roots were usually cooked and roasted, then chewed. The fibre remaining after the root was chewed and the starch removed, was twisted and made into string. The new shoots were eaten raw as a salad. A very important plant.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Grows on the edges of wetlands and permanent lakes and swamps.

**FLOWERING TIME**

Throughout the year.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Tall, aquatic plant to 2m high. Leaves, long, narrow, 0.5-1 cm wide. Flowers, cylindrical spikes, light brown, 10-25cm long by 0.5-1.5cm diameter.

**Caution: Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.**



BO-AN (BUNGANDITJ) EDIBLE ROOT  
POPOTO (GUNDITJMARA)



Milkmaids

*Burchardia umbellata*

**FAMILY**

Liliaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Burchardia umbellata*

**COMMON NAME**

Milkmaids

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Bo-An (Bunganditj)

Edible root

Popoto (Gunditjmara)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

After flowers died off, tubers were dug up and cooked before eating. Crisp, highly nutritious tubers that look like small carrots.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Grows in grassland, open woodland and scrub heathlands.

**FLOWERING TIME**

July - October.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Small, erect, single-stemmed annual, 15-50cm high. 2-3 long, linear leaves to 25cm which occur from the base. Flowers white with 6 petals.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



ME-A-KEE (BUNGANDITJ)  
MOOKITCH (GUNDITJMARA)



Kangaroo Apple

*Solanum laciniatum*

**FAMILY**

Solanaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Solanum laciniatum*

**COMMON NAME**

Kangaroo Apple

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Me-a-kee (Bunganditj)

Mookitch (Gunditjmara)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Collected and fruits eaten only when soft and ripe.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

A scattered plant in the South East, usually confined to coastal areas.

**FLOWERING TIME**

September - March.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

A medium to tall, open, sometimes straggly plant. Leaves to 20cm long. Flowers purple with 5 petals, yellow stamens. Fruit globular shape, start out green then change colour, yellow through to orange when ripening.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



NGOOR-LE (BUNGANDITJ)



Coast Beard-heath

*Leucopogon parviflorus*

**FAMILY**

Epacridaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Leucopogon parviflorus*

**COMMON NAME**

Coast Beard-heath

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Ngoor-le (Bunganditj)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

No cooking required, eaten as a ripe fruit.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Common in coastal and near coastal eucalypt woodlands, open scrub and heathlands on sand dunes over limestone or granite.

**FLOWERING TIME**

Most of the year; fruit: September - February.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Erect, pale to bright green shrub, 1-2m high. Leaves with pointed tip, dark green above, pale green below, 1-3cm long by 4-8mm wide. Flowers white, small, 5 petalled in clusters. Fruit globular, small, white and fleshy.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



WROIT (BUNGANDITJ)



Silver Banksia

*Banksia marginata*

**FAMILY**

Proteaceae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Banksia marginata*

**COMMON NAME**

Silver Banksia

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Wroit (Bunganditj)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Flower spikes soaked in water to release plant nectar. A sweet drink sometimes mixed with the gum from Golden Wattle and Black Wattle.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Sandy to clay soils in heath, woodlands and forest.

**FLOWERING TIME**

All year.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Low shrub or small tree. Leaves stiff, green above, white below, 2-8cm long by 3-8mm wide. Flowers yellow, cylindrical spikes, 5-10cm long by 4cm wide. Fruit woody cylindrical cone, black triangular seed enclosed.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



MURNONG (GENERAL)  
MUURANG, KEERANG  
(GUNDITJMARA)



Yam-daisy

*Microseris lanceolata*

**FAMILY**

Compositae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Microseris lanceolata*

**COMMON NAME**

Yam-daisy

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Murnong (general)  
Muurang, Keerang  
(Gunditjmara)

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Tubers dug up and usually cooked in baskets in earth ovens, allowed to cook slowly. Very common plant before European settlement.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

In mallee, swamps, woodland and other open vegetation.

**FLOWERING TIME**

July - October.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Perennial herb, 10-40cm high. Leaves narrow, arising from the base of the plant, 30cm long. Flowers singular, yellow, daisy-like.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.



TAARK (GUNDITJMARA)  
CHARR-AK (GUNDITJMARA)  
EDIBLE ROOT



Common Reed

*Phragmites australis*

**FAMILY**

Gramineae

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Phragmites australis*

**COMMON NAME**

Common Reed

**ABORIGINAL NAME**

Taark (Gunditjamarra)

Charr-ak (Gunditjamarra)

edible root

**PREPARATION AND USE**

Underground shoots were eaten tasting like bamboo shoots. The long, straight flowering stems were used for spear shafts.

**PLANT DISTRIBUTION**

Grows in wet places, especially along the banks of rivers and ponds.

**FLOWERING TIME**

December - August.

**PLANT DESCRIPTION**

Tall, erect reed, 1-3m high. Narrow, tapering leaves 20-50cm long by 1-5cm wide. Flowers fluffy white to pale brown, 10-40cm long.

**Caution:** Some plants are poisonous and extreme care must be taken. Do not eat bush food plants without being shown by an experienced person.

