

Many native plants and trees found in Gumbaynggirr country bear edible fruits and berries. The Gumbaynggirr people have been harvesting some of these popular fruits for generations, not only to eat, but also for their medicinal properties.



Wombat Berry

The wombat berry plant (*Eustrephus latifolius*) produces seed pods that turn from green to yellow-orange when ripe. These pods contain many small black seeds surrounded by an edible, sweet, white pulp that is said to taste a lot like coconut. The roots of the wombat berry are also edible.



◀ Photo

The pods of the wombat berry are ripe when they turn bright orange.

Lilly Pilly

There are half a dozen types of lilly pilly in Gumbaynggirr country. The most widespread, particularly along creek banks, is the common lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii*), or **jijimam**. When ripe, the ball-shaped fruit of this variable species turn from green to white or purple. Lilly pilly berries may be eaten straight from the tree or used to make jams, tarts, cordials and juices. They are best cooked with sugar to make them palatable as they can be acidic.

Pigface

Pigface (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*), or **barridamam**, grows on beach dunes and is very popular with the Garby Elders. The flower is bright pink, and when it dies, the fleshy base of the flower becomes the fruit, changing from green to purple. The tough outer skin is discarded and the sweet, juicy fruit inside is eaten raw. Pigface fruit was used in the past as a treatment for worms, and the gelatinous flesh of the leaves is used to relieve burns, stings, bites and rashes.

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Geebung

The large seed of the geebung fruit (*Persoonia virgata*) is used as a thirst quencher. The bark is also collected and soaked in water, and the resulting tannin can be used to preserve animal skins and to prevent fishing line and string from fraying. This process is called 'tanning'.

Did you know?

The name 'geebung' comes from the Aboriginal language in Brisbane, where there is now a suburb called Geebung. In Western Australia, *Persoonia* species are often called 'snotty-gobbles'.

FACT SHEET 13 Useful Plants: Fruit





◀ Photo

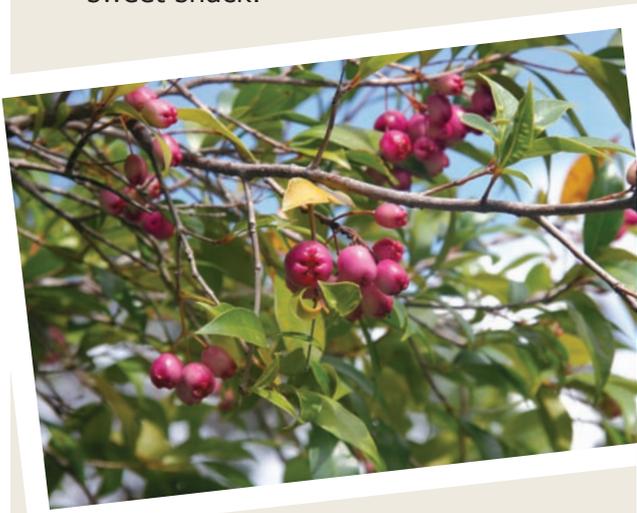
The furry green fruit of the roly poly is ready to eat when it turns grey. The skin is peeled off and the pulp is eaten.

Roly Poly

The fruit of the roly poly plant (*Billardiera scandens*) is very high in vitamin C, and highly sought after by the Gumbaynggirr people. It is green when unripe, turning grey and falling to the ground when ripe. The sweet, soft flesh of the ripe roly poly is eaten raw after the furry skin is removed; many people believe it tastes a little like kiwi fruit. The unripe fruit can also be eaten but is roasted first.

Coastal Bearded-Heath

The coastal bearded-heath (*Leucopogon parvifolium*), or **nyam nyam**, is found near beaches throughout New South Wales. *Nyam nyam* fruits change colour from green to white when they ripen. The Garby Elders harvest the small berries straight from the bush, enjoying the flesh as a delicious, sweet snack.



◀ Photo

The sweet and delicious berries on the brush cherry are mostly eaten straight off the tree.

Brush Cherry

The brush cherry (*Syzygium australe*), or **wunarrga**, used to grow densely behind the dunes from Corindi Beach to Mullaway; however, sand mining destroyed the habitat of many of these rainforest trees in the 1970s. The Garby Elders prize the delicious bell-shaped fruit of this tree, which turn to reddish pink or red when ripe. The flesh inside can be whitish, but those with the strongest flavour are red all the way in to the single, loose seed.

Please note that all native flora (dead or alive) is protected in National Parks estate.

Photos: Adam Davey; Michael Rule; Steve Smith.

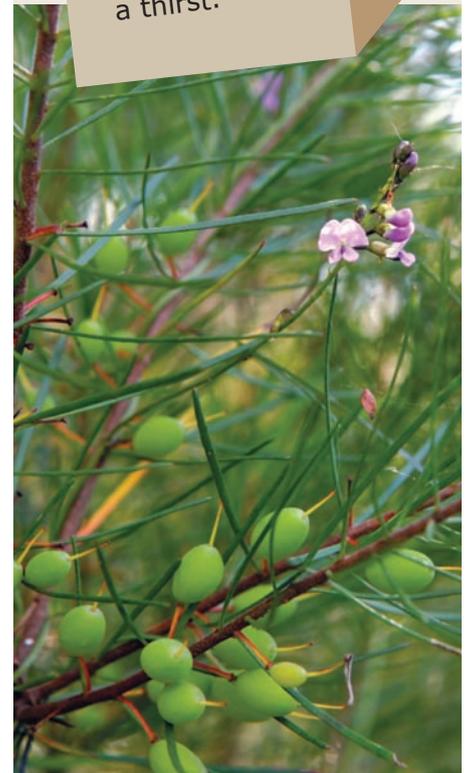
Lingo

barridamam: pigface
jijimam: lilly pilly
nyam nyam: coastal
bearded-heath
wunarrga: brush
cherry

"You put [the geebung fruit] in your mouth and roll it around and spit out the seed; it quenches your thirst. They're like a mini mango."
Uncle Milton Duroux

▼ Photo

The grape-like fruit of the geebung provides a sweet snack. Sucking the large seed also helps quench a thirst.




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