

The leaves of a wide variety of native Australian plants have been used by Aboriginal people for generations. Leaves can be eaten raw, soaked or steamed, boiled into tea, ground into an edible paste, woven into ropes or baskets, or rubbed directly onto the skin to cure ailments.



Goat's Foot Vine or Beach Morning Glory

The goat's foot vine (*Ipomoea brasiliensis*) is primarily used as a source of bush medicine. The leaves and stems are heated and made into a bandage to wrap around bites, skin inflammations and infections. The vine can also be bruised, twisted, and then wrapped around the head to relieve headaches (see Fact Sheet 15).



◀ Photo

The leaves and stems of the goat's foot vine can be used to make a poultice to help infected wounds heal.

Native Asparagus

The native asparagus (*Geitonoplesium cymosum*) is a creeping vine that grows in coastal bushlands, providing a popular source of food for the Garby Elders. The fresh, young shoots and leaves are eaten straight from the plant and are often mixed into salads. The vines of this plant are also used to make rough rope.

Blue Flax Lily

Both the berries and leaves of the blue flax lily (*Dianella caerulea*) are used by the Gumbaynggirr people. The bright blue berries are eaten, though rarely and in moderation as they are acidic. The long, thin leaves provide a perfect fibre to weave into string for both net- and basket-making, and can be knotted together to make strong ropes.

Did you know?

"If you twine and wrap the vine [of the native asparagus] enough times it is strong enough to tow a car."

Uncle Milton Duroux

Spiny-headed Mat-rush

The white leaf-bases of the tussocks of the spiny-headed mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) are edible raw and taste like green peas. While watching out for the prickles, the flowers and the seeds can also be eaten. The long flat leaves of the mat-rush are great for plaiting and weaving, making rope or a durable dilly bag or basket.

Bracken Fern

The fronds of the bracken fern (*Pteridium esculentum*), or **gamiiny**, are a good insect

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repellent, and young stems can be crushed and the juice rubbed on to the skin to relieve insect bites (especially tick bites). A bullroar sting can be relieved by the application of warmed bracken leaves, and a pile of bracken will repel ants from your picnic or camp bed.



◀ Photo

Native spinach, or warrigal greens, can be steamed, roasted on the barbecue, added to fish soup or baked into pies.

Native Spinach

Native spinach (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*) is called 'warrigal greens' by the Garby Elders. Warrigal greens are a popular food source and taste delicious when roasted on the barbecue or added to fish soup. They can also be steamed or baked into pies.

Sarsaparilla Vines

The leaves of the sweet sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*) are a common and popular snack. According to the Garby Elders, only the soft, young, red leaves should be eaten. These leaves have a very strong, sweet flavour and are also used to make sarsaparilla tea. The leaves of a related species, Austral sarsaparilla (*Smilax australis*), also known as 'dinner leaf', can be sucked to soothe a dry mouth (see Fact Sheet 15). The sturdy prickles on the stems of Austral sarsaparilla give it several common names: 'wait-a-while' and 'barbwire vine'. The two species of sarsaparilla vine are very important story and medicine plants.



◀ Photo

The Garby Elders say that sucking on the leaves of the Austral sarsaparilla (*Smilax australis*) will soothe a dry mouth.

Lingo

gamiiny:
bracken fern

"We would get lots of [bracken] stems and [then we'd] break them up and lay them down to sleep on when we'd be out hunting for days and that'd keep all the insects away."
Uncle Milton Duroux

▼ Photo

The leaves of the blue flax lily can be woven into nets and baskets.



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

Photos: Adam Davey; Margie Mohring; Dee Murphy.


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