

Creating a Bush Tucker Garden

Bush tucker gardens are a great way to teach students and members of the community about the traditional uses of some of Australia's native plant species. Once established, these gardens can become a long term feature of your yard.

Resources needed:

- Garden edging • Garden tools • Materials for signage • Organic matter and mulch • Native plants • Water source

Site selection

Site selection will depend on the type of plants chosen and their requirements. It is important to remember that some bush tucker plants may become quite large, or may have invasive roots that could impact on nearby buildings and infrastructure. Remember that you will need to have a reliable water source near the garden.

Selecting plants

Once a site has been identified, select appropriate plants that will grow well in the selected location. It may prove beneficial to engage with a local elder of one of your region's Traditional Owner groups, who can assist with specialist knowledge and recommendations regarding appropriate species.

Signage

It is essential to ensure that a bush tucker garden is appropriately signed. Some bush tucker plants require special preparation before they can be

eaten and may be quite harmful to humans if these instructions are not followed. Ensuring that the garden is signed will limit the risk of harm to anyone who may utilise the garden.

Site Preparation

Prepare the site as per the instructions set out in *Best Practice Sheet #6 Prepare to Plant*.

Developing a plan for your bush tucker garden will help the project run smoothly while promoting student involvement and learning opportunities.

Make sure that your garden beds are installed with proper borders and edging to assist the grounds staff in their upkeep of the surrounding area. Trees and other plants may be damaged by routine maintenance if not planted in appropriate areas. Speak with your school's grounds staff to get advice. Ensure that planning involves consideration for paths and access to the garden.

You will need to decide whether you plan to dig the garden bed into the existing soil, or whether you plan to build the beds up with purchased soils. If you are purchasing soils, ensure that they are suitable for the plants you have chosen.

It may prove useful to have a working bee to prepare the area, or to locate a parent or community member with the appropriate skills and equipment to assist.

Maintenance

After the garden is planted, it will need time to establish. Students who are involved in the preparation and planting of the garden may not get to see the final outcome while they are still at the school. This is a longer term project that will take some time to fully develop. All the more reason to use long term options when it comes to signage.

Refer to *Best Practice Sheet #10 Maintenance* for more information on how to maintain your bush tucker garden.

Plant the Garden

Once the garden bed has been prepared and appropriate plants have been selected and purchased, it is time to plant. Refer to *Best Practice Fact Sheet #9 How to Plant* for more information. Make sure that you keep an accurate record of which species is planted where. This may be made easier by using a coded system (e.g. tying a tag with a code to the plant to represent its species, putting a labelled star picket next to the plant, or place a cement-filled PVC pipe

USEFUL WEBSITES

Teaching Treasures <http://www.teachingtreasures.com.au/educational-links/bush-tucker.htm>

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next to the tree with a number embedded into the wet cement). Refer to *Best Practice Guide Sheet #14 Cultural Uses* for more information on what to plant in your bush tucker garden.

Here is a list of some popular bush tucker plants. Many of the bush foods are extremely high in vitamins, yet they are more snack food than a sustainable meal. **Warning** Many bush tucker plants are poisonous. Take care to only consume plants which you are sure are safe. Many of the poisonous plants can be rendered safe by processing, something indigenous people have developed over thousands of years. Some plants in different areas may or may not have the same amount of toxin within.

COMMON NAMES	BOTANICAL NAMES	PARTS USED	TREATMENT REQUIRED BEFORE EATING
Little plum	<i>Antidesma parvifolia</i>	fresh fruit	none
Native ginger	<i>Alpinia sp.</i>	roots, fruit	none
Creeping hibiscus	<i>Abelmoschus sp.</i>	roots, bush carrots	none
Lillypilly	<i>Syzygium sp., Acmena sp.</i>	many varieties of fresh fruit (the smell of the crushed leaves will indicate the flavour of the fruit)	none
White berry	<i>Flueggea virosa</i>	fruit	none
Figs	<i>Ficus sp., F. coronata, F. leptoclada, F. platypoda, F. racemosa</i>	fruit	none
Burdekin plum	<i>Pleiogynium timorense</i>	fruit (better if buried in sand to ripen for a week)	none
Cheese fruit	<i>Morinda citrifolia</i>	fruit (can smell terrible)	none
Native orange / pomegranate	<i>Capparis sp.</i>	fruit	none
Peanut tree	<i>Sterculia quadrifida</i>	nut	remove 2 seed coats from seed before eating

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Giro	<i>Terminalia sericocarpa</i>	fruit	none
Tropical almond	<i>Terminalia catappa</i>	kernel in the seed	none
Leichhardt tree	<i>Nauclea orientalis</i>	fruit	none
Black bean	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	fruit, nut	yes steam, slice and rinse in running water for up to 10 days
Native mulberry	<i>Pipturus argentea</i>	fruit	none

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