



MEDIA Release

Tuesday 30 June

Teaching and tasting our local bush foods

A new guide to teach primary school children not only about bush foods in their local areas, but also how to grow and eat them, was launched today at Goonellabah Primary School.

The comprehensive guide for teachers has been produced by the Dorrroughby Education Centre in conjunction with the Richmond Landcare Network through a Forging Partnerships Grant. It is understood to be the first of its kind in Australia.

“The teaching resource called ‘Bush Foods for Kids’ includes information about what and how bush foods were used by indigenous Australians as well as photographs and descriptions of various edible plants and recipes to try out,” says Stuart Willows, Project Coordinator, from the Dorrroughby Environmental Education Centre.

The guide was written by Natalie Pangallo, a local environmental educator and produced with assistance from the Bundjalung Elders Council.

Four schools are involved in the pilot program, which also includes the supply of a variety of native plants for the children to grow and cultivate in a school garden.

The launch was held today at one of the participating schools, Goonellabah Primary School. The others are Lismore Heights, Lismore South, and Manifold Primary Schools.

“This project has been welcomed by the schools as it provides learning experiences in various ways. For over 50,000 years indigenous Australians used plants in their local environments for food, fibre and medicines. The guide not only provides information about this aspect of native plants, but suggests ways that teachers can help students develop an appreciation of the uniqueness of Australian flora,” says Stuart.

“It also suggests a variety of lessons from drawing leaves and fruits, to studying the science of the plants and their high nutritional values,” adds Stuart.

Richmond Landcare Network in association with its Northern Rivers Landcare Group initiated the project and is delighted that word has spread of the project across the region.

“It is great that teachers will now have a resource that helps them teach children about the importance of local vegetation, not only to the environment but to the very existence of the indigenous people in the past,” says Tony Walker from Richmond Landcare.

“The hands-on aspect of the project to involve children in the growing of some of the native bush foods will really heighten their appreciation of the environment around them.”

As well as providing coloured photos and descriptions of many of the local plants in the Northern Rivers region, the guide also has information about how the indigenous people used them.

For example pandanus fruit were eaten raw or cooked, while the dry leaves were used for weaving or shelters. The common lomandra longifolia leaves were used for making bags and baskets, the white leaf bases were eaten and seeds and flowers were ground into flour.

The teachers guide has been the major part of a Project which has been funded by a grant of \$17,000 from the Forging Partnerships Program, a joint initiative of the Natural Resources Advisory Council and the NSW Government.

Reaction from teachers has been so positive a version for secondary schools is now being produced.

If teachers are interested in the program and the guide, for more information they can contact Dorrroughby Environmental Education Centre on (02) 66895286 or email dorrroughby-e.school@det.nsw.gov.au

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Captions:

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1. Stuart Willows Bush Foods Project Coordinator (I) with Tony Walker from Richmond Landcare
2. School children sample some bush food jams at the launch of the Bush Foods Resource Book for Teachers in the Northern Rivers region

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