



IPHA Newsletter #30

Summer 2026 edition

www.indigenousplantsforhealth.com

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Indigenous Plants for Health (IPHA) is a not-for-profit incorporated association, formed with the objectives of raising awareness, researching Australian health-promoting plants, supporting their cultivation and protection of habitat.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples are the Traditional Owners of this country, and they retain their relationship and connection to the land, sea, and community.

President's chat



Welcome all to our latest edition.

Here we are, in tumultuous weather conditions from severe heat warnings along the east coast of Australia to floods and fires in the Otway Ranges, Victoria and cyclones in the northern parts of this huge continent.

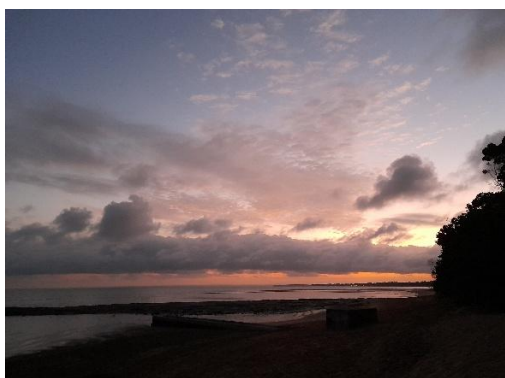
Today, the 26th January, I attended a special Survival Day dawn smoking ceremony, held by the local Badtjala people here on the Fraser Coast. Individuals spoke of hope and possibility in enabling Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to connect and communicate and care for Country. Bruce Phillips, proud Badtjala man and Murri Tukka business founder displayed his array of native edibles/medicinals like finger limes, bunyas,

lemon myrtle, ginger berries and

pigface fruits. Bruce tells me that the Badtjala would plant the bunya seed and eat the newly grown shoots. His work is based mainly around Brisbane bringing awareness and education to groups all over.

Please help IPHA to continue our work to embrace, educate and illuminate ourselves about the power of these unique plant species we live with. Engage with our Committee, come along to a field day, contribute an article to this newsletter, help us with the website or just pass this information to a friend. We are on FB as well.

Jen Stroh, IPHA President



Survival Day dawn smoking ceremony, Fraser Coast. Photos by Jen Stroh

Please dig deep to support IPHA in any way you can. We need helpers for:
Maintenance of our website. Free web management training on offer.

Plants for the new Year

Jen Stroh

Focussing on the far north, some of you may have heard of the fascinating find of a native plant that was thought to be extinct. *Ptilotus senarius* had not been seen for around 50 years until last year when a horticulturalist and bird bander Aaron Bean spotted it near the Gulf of Carpentaria and uploaded it to the iNaturalist app. <https://australian.museum/aap/citizen-scientist-discovers-extinct-native-plant/>

The other plant that's caught my interest recently is the famed bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*). Endemic to SE Queensland, it has been widely planted in the region and beyond. This year has seen an abundance of cones (which can weigh up to 10kg) produced with the accompanying tasty edible seed. This phenomenon occurs once every 3rd or 4th year. I've had my first nibble today. It's sweet and floury in texture eaten raw. Next on the agenda is to roast or boil the seeds. The shape and size is similar to a large brazil nut. These huge trees create stunning architectural features in the landscape. The distinct leafy ends of the varying lengths of the branches yield a kind of ellipsoid shape to the tree.

This plant is significant culturally to all the Indigenous peoples of SE Queensland and Northern NSW. Festivals and events took place over millennia, drawing many different groups together to discuss important issues pertaining to everyone.



Fruit of the bunya. Photos by Jen Stroh

IPHA Committee Members

President: Jen Stroh

Vice President: Andrew Pengelly

Treasurer: Patricia Collins

Secretary: Reesa Ryan

General members:

Felicity Kerlake, Fred Fetherston, Renata Buziak, Denise Harslett

Webmaster/mistress: VACANT

Newsletter editor: VACANT

Introducing New Committee Member, Denise Harslett



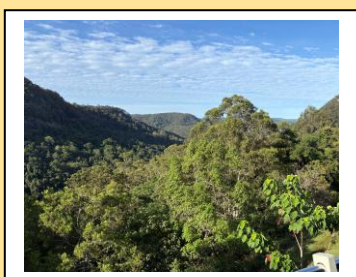
I am a retired green leafy vegetable farmer having spent all my married life working on my husband's family farm at Amiens in the Granite Belt of Qld. I studied Agricultural Science at UQ St Lucia as it was the course allowing me the widest range of biological sciences. I grew up in Brisbane but fully involved myself in the Harslett Family Enterprise where I ended up in charge of the nursery production of over 5 million plant seedlings/year for our home plantings, while raising two children. I was also the major bookkeeper and payroll master and learnt to be the insect scout for the IPM programme we developed.

The property, "Mountain View" is approximately 700 ha, but only 100 ha is under cultivation for vegetable production. There is major infrastructure for water storage and the rest that is not under water or cultivation is mostly natural granite rocks and vegetation. In recent times the next generation has established a campground "Foxbar Falls" to allow others to enjoy our natural beauty. Being on the western edge of the Granite Belt our property adjoins trap rock grazing country and as a result we get a lot of cross-over of different botanical species from the two regions, making it a great place to live if one has an interest in Botany.

I am afraid I know very little about the health properties of all the local plants as I am still getting my head around just identifying some of them. I have always preferred the notion of medication via natural rather than artificial means, and support the endeavour of putting science behind herbal remedies.



Scene from the property at Mountain View



Indigenous Plants for Health Bush Fruit Field Day

Sunday, 3rd May, 2026 – 9.30am
*Eco Lodge, 27 Suses Pocket Rd. (off Obi Obi Rd.)
Mapleton, Qld*

**Cost incl. lunch, morning & afternoon teas \$85 pp
IPHA Members \$70—children under 5 free—school age ½ price**

Registrations—www.indigenousplantsforhealth.com—Events

Programme

9.30. Registration, morning tea	
10.00. Welcome and housekeeping	Jen, Warwick
10.10 Introducing and tasting native bush fruits	Pat Collins
11.00. Davidson plum (Ooray) Cultivation and production	Warwick Grace
11.50. Medicinal benefits of bush fruits – focus on native plums for metabolic syndrome	Andrew Pengelly
12.40. Making cordials from native plums demo	Mary and Warwick Grace
1.00. Lunch (provided)	
1.50. Weed awareness walk	Jen, Pat, Andrew
2.55. Botanic Art with Biochrome	Renata Buziak
3.45. Afternoon tea (provided)	
4.00. Medicine making with lemon myrtle and other natives	Jen Stroh
4.50. Wrap up	
5.00. Close	
<hr/> Monday extra. 9.30am. Cyanotype Botanicals Workshop with Renata Buziak (details on next page)	

Optional costs: Sunday Dinner \$20. Biochrome workshop \$55.00 (includes materials)

Accommodation options – no charge (please select on registration form). Few tents set up and available, otherwise BYO tent, van or camper-trailer. NO caravans. Bathroom access

Inquiries: Andrew trueunicorn11@gmail.com Jen contact@integrityhealth.com.au



Workshops participants' and Renata's prints in progress.

Cyanotype Botanicals

IPHA Field Day workshop
with Renata Buziak

In this introductory workshop create your own unique photographic print without a camera - using plants, found objects, and sunlight.

Date: Monday 4 May 2026

Time: 9:30am – 11am

Group size: 5 - 10 participants

For beginners, adults and teens (15+)

Price: \$55

You will:

- Create a unique cyanotype print.
- Learn some history, and printing techniques

Supplies: cyanotype materials & found objects provided.
Bring your own plant cutting or a small object for a personal touch.

Your facilitator: Dr Renata Buziak is a biochrome photo-media artist, researcher, and educator with over 15 years of teaching experience. She helps people to reconnect with nature, and her art has been exhibited nationally and internationally.

<https://renatabuziak.com>



Bookings:

<https://indigenousplantsforhealth.com/events-2/>



IPHA FIELD DAY AT YARRAWA HALL 22.11.2025

Report by Pat Collins

Our recent field day in NSW was held in the Upper Hunter Valley at the Yarra Hall. This Hall was bequeathed to myself in 2024 by Bev Button (Hicks) and she asked if I'd use it as a place for learning. This was the first workshop I have run at the hall, and I know Bev would have been very pleased.

Some of the attendees arrived the night before and set up their tents and vans in the backyard with some sleeping in the Hall.

The day started with a smoking ceremony by Natasha and her elders from the local Wanaruah community. Then in my introduction I spoke about the history of the Hall, what we were doing today and the plants we would put into our garden, as well as information on IPHA. This was followed by morning tea where we enjoyed some tasty lemon myrtle and ginger tea and some of my Anzac biscuits that contained macadamia nuts and crushed bunya meal.

Natasha Kellet from the Wanaruah community spoke on reviving Indigenous survival practices and showed products she had made. She had string from stringy bark and kurrajong, woven baskets from matt rush, wooden objects made from various trees such as bowls of various sizes. She talked about bush medicine and the plants she used, tanning skins with wattle bark and so much more. Everyone enjoyed her talk.

After a tasty lunch based on kangaroo meat balls or lentil balls with flat bread and salad we had our next guest speaker Paul Melehan. Paul is the local Landcare co-ordinator and has his own nursery at Muswellbrook. He had collected many local plants and was a wealth of information. He also talked about the plants that were going into our native garden and brought along extras so everyone could take home a native plant.



Smoking ceremony



Veranda plant class with Paul Melehan

Photos by Pat Collins

IPHA Field Day (cont).

At the end of the day we made a rockery, native garden and two water features. We had a ute full of soil, lots of hay and a range of large and slightly smaller rocks. We covered the area in weed mat then made our rockery. Some of the rocks weighed a ton but some of our keen gardeners lugged them into position. Then on goes the soil followed by the plants. In the centre we had some native pennyroyal and in the next layers we had a creeping boobialla, flax lily, kangaroo apple, saltbush, kangaroo paw, red wings Grevillea, midyim berry and so many more. In our water features we planted several rushes, a variegated water celery, water chestnuts, swamp mazus, bulrush and more. We also planted other trees in the garden such as Kunzea, riberry, lemon myrtle, various wattles, Illawarra plum and a tuckeroo.

We finished off tasting some jams I'd made from local berries and fruits on pikelets with cream. Yummo. Everyone took their native plant and a head full of information and a belly full of good food.

Thank you to all the participants especially those that helped with the food and a special thankyou to Natasha and her elders and Paul who filled our heads with a hundred botanical names. A big thankyou to my fellow IPHA committee member Reesa for her invaluable help before, during and after the event.

Just an update on the garden after the terrible hot weather we've been having. We have lost a few plants, which is inevitable, but the rockery and water features are looking very good.



Activities inside Yarrowa Hall. Photos by Pat Collins

Persoonia conservation and the power of community

Chantelle Doyle Exert from *The Gardens Magazine* Sep. 2025

In the lower Hunter Valley, a new nature reserve has become a sanctuary for one of Australia's rarest plants, with scientists, First Nations leaders and the local community collaborating.

The newly created NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 609-hectare Tiraki Nature Reserve recently became home to two new genetically optimised populations of the critically endangered and locally endemic plant, the North Rothbury Persoonia (*Persoonia pauciflora*). These new populations represent the culmination of many years of research and also typify the importance of collaboration and community support to conserve locally unique biodiversity.



Persoonia pauciflora – images by Nathan Emery

In autumn this year a contingent of people, drawn from all these groups, descended on Tiraki Nature Reserve bearing shovels and chatter, to create two new populations of the North Rothbury Persoonia. The planting event was led by Katie Elsley from the NSW Saving our Species program and Riley McGee from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Although this was the fifth planting to occur, something new was underway. Each plant had a unique identification number and was clustered in a specifically selected group. Dr Samantha Yap, one of the planters, is also the geneticist from the Research Centre for Ecosystem Resilience (ReCER) at the Botanic Gardens of Sydney, who used genetic data to design these new plantings. "*Persoonia pauciflora* occurs in such a highly fragmented and small geographic area that, when we create a new conservation population, we want to make sure we are representing as much of the wild genetic diversity as possible," Dr Yap says. "Using genetics, we designed the planting clusters so that each individual is a unique genotype, or unrelated to another. That way we capture all the wild diversity and simultaneously encourage visiting bees to cross-pollinate plants, which we hope will produce genetically diverse seedlings."

Transplanting Persoonias

Dr Nathan Emery from the Seedbank at the Botanic Gardens of Sydney has researched Persoonia ecology and biology for over a decade.

Nathan's work has confirmed the North Rothbury *Persoonia* are pollinated by *Leioproctus* bees and that plants produce more fruit if cross-pollinated between isolated populations, which is essential information to support the genetic advice. His field studies identified that the hard woody endocarp naturally weakens when buried and it can take up to two years of aging in the soil before seed dormancy is overcome and summer germination pulses begin.

Community involvement

Pilot plantings to understand aftercare and microhabitat or niche, are also required and have been critical to long term success. For a species whose wild populations occur almost exclusively on private land, finding translocation sites can be very difficult. This is why the project has relied so strongly on local residents and the North Rothbury Bushcare Group.

Monica Oppen (IPHA member), is one of the local landholders whose private property was the site of the first pilot translocations after putting the property under a legally binding conservation agreement with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. Because the *Persoonia* occurs predominantly on private land, the NSW Saving our Species team are reliant on the community group in North Rothbury. "There aren't a lot of us, but all you need is a few dedicated people," Monica says. "We monitor the plants, check them and let Saving our Species know if we find new plants."

Ensuring that healthy populations of plants continue to occur on dedicated conservation land is critical because, for foreseeable future at least, this species will rely on translocation and maintaining surrounding areas of its woodland habitat. The ecological value of its nectar-rich flowers and drupes is only beginning to be understood, however camera monitoring has identified bower birds foraging on seeds and, presumably, spreading them across the landscape.

Full article available here: <https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/discover-and-learn/watch-listen-read/persoonia-conservation-and-power-community>

[The Gardens magazine](#), the member magazine for Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens. If you found it this article to be informative, you can [join](#) the community that supports and raises funds for Botanic Gardens of Sydney.



Yarning Garden Project Update

2025 has seen significant challenges for our Youth Yarning Garden Project, as our program's venue has changed throughout the year. While we haven't had a consistent space to begin planting our native plants as planned, we have been able to execute the building and

painting of multiple picnic tables, which will form a core part of our future Youth Yarning Garden Space. Young people have also learnt about bush trucker, native plants (what thrives in our local spaces), as well as connected to country through multiple cultural camps. As we move into 2026, we are very optimistic about our pending MOU with local resident and retired UQ professor, who has offered three and a half acres of his land (located two minutes from our Oxley premises). If this moves forward as planned, we are excited to create a beautiful healing space, with gardens (native plants and bush medicine), room for picnic tables and yarning circles.



Discover the Remarkable Process of Turning Pineapple Leaves into Beautiful Fabric

By Kathleen Bennett

This exert is taken from an article published in *Piecework* on 13th October 2025

Piña Cloth Tradition

Considered a native of South America, the pineapple was brought to the Philippines by Spanish colonists around 1565. Using techniques perfected centuries before the arrival of the Spanish, Filipino people made the plant their own when they created beautiful fabrics from the fine fibers extracted from within the leaves of the red or “wild” pineapple (*Ananas bractaeus* or *Ananas comosus* var. *bracteatus*). When woven, these pineapple fibers produced a fabric that was translucent, with a natural golden sheen that became a part of traditional Filipino cultural heritage for centuries. Light and fine, piña fabric was later exported to Europe as a rare and expensive textile.

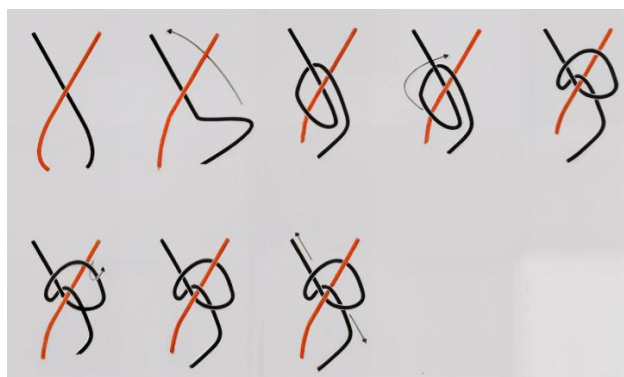
Pina cloth tradition (cont.)



Scraping a pineapple leaf, 2021.
Photo courtesy of Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan

Instructions for tying the pineapple fiber threads. First, cross the left (red) fiber over the right (black), then form a loop in the lower part of the right fiber. Bring that loop over the left (red) fiber and loop itself (black fiber). Pull the lower part of the loop up and over the top of the (red) fiber and gently pull on both sides of the black fiber to lock the knot.

Illustration by Kathleen Bennett, 2025



A sample of piña-silk cloth. Note the knot on the unraveled strand.

Photo by Kathleen Bennett, 2025

Pina cloth tradition (cont)

Example of piña fiber produced from pineapple waste. Photo by Kathleen Bennett, courtesy of The Fiber Garden



The whole process, from picking the leaves to weaving the fabric.

<https://youtu.be/yRvWiiGoOzI?t=7>

For Kathleens full article.

<https://pieceworkmagazine.com/discover-the-remarkable-process-of-turning-pineapple-leaves-into-beautiful-fabric/>

Kat Bennett is one of the founders of IPHA, and previously our webmistress and long-term Committee Member. Kat now lives in the USA.

Grassroots Botany for Herbalists

80 people, mainly naturopaths and herbalists, attended this event which was hosted by Elizabeth Greenwood at the Mt. Coo-tha Botanic Gardens, Brisbane.

IPHA was represented by Andrew and Renata. Andrew gave a presentation on creating a medicinal plant herbarium, while Renata had her Biochrome Art on display and for sale. The IPHA stand attracted a great deal of interest, many sets of Plant Knowledge Cards were sold as well as potted up yam daisy plants (*Microseris walteri*).



View from the back stalls



Andrew closes his presentation



IPHA stall was a highlight



Renata's Biochrome Art display

Food and Medicine Sovereignty- Groups Making a Difference

First Nations Foods, Medicines, and Botanicals Academy



The **First Nations Foods, Medicines, and Botanicals Academy** is dedicated to sharing and preserving the rich cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our mission is to deliver **culturally appropriate education and training** that celebrates and promotes the traditional knowledge of First Nations communities across Australia

<https://fnfmba.au/>

Southwestern Aboriginal Investigative Anthropology and other papers.

Anthropology *from the* Shed.

Ethnographic research from Western Australia, including for many bushfood and medicine plants. Detailed reports on plants including Macrozamia fermented fruit, Typha root, Acacia gum, Banksia, bloodroot and yam.

<https://www.anthropologyfromtheshed.com/>



**AGROECOLOGY & FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE**

The Agroecology & Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a farmer-led civil society organisation of people working together towards socially-just and ecologically-sound food and agriculture systems that foster the democratic participation of Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, and local communities in decision making processes.

<https://afsa.org.au/>

OTHER EVENTS

Cultural Medicine: The Art of Indigenous Healing

Medical History Museum, Melbourne. Exhibit continues until Friday 10 July 2026



Artist: Vanessa Inkamala . <https://manyhandsart.com.au/news/artist/vanessa-inkamala/>

Further information: <https://medicalhistorymuseum.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/exhibitions>

Gathaa First Nations Bushfood Lovers Market. 14TH Feb. 2026

Mooloolah River Landcare Nursery 10am- 2pm

<https://gathaamarkets.com.au/>



8.30-4.30pm Maleny Community Centre, 23 Maple St, Maleny.

<https://events.humanitix.com/beyond-bunya-dieback-symposium-connecting-people-for-country>

IPHA Queensland Committee visits Petah Tikhva at West Woombye

Jen Stroh

A few of the IPHA Committee were honoured to take a tour of Warwick and Mary Grace's extensive food forest farm last November. Cascading down the side of the Blackall Ranges in West Woombye on Kabi Kabi country, this family has nurtured many different types of native food plants, emphasising the stupendous 'ooray' or Davidson plum (*Davidsonia* spp.).

We immersed ourselves in their various stages of growth and enjoyed the 'fruits' of their labours, tasting the tart fruit fresh from the tree as well as processed into a more 'cordial' or easily palatable drink. Warwick will present at our May field day on this very topic.

Other plants we encountered included: aniseed myrtle (*Anetholea myrtifolia*), Riberry, a lilly pilly (*Syzygium australe*), lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) and bunya trees (*Araucaria bidwillii*).

What a joy to engage with such knowledgeable and enthusiastic carers of this country.



L-R. Mary, Renata, Andrew, Jen, Warwick



Planting trees in the food forest



Photos by Andrew Pengelly

Warwick holding fruit of *Davidsonia pruriens* and *D. jerseyana*

Indigenous Plants for Health Association Inc.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Set out below are my membership application details for Indigenous Plants for Health Association Inc.

There is a free membership option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as for pensioners or anyone with low income.

Enclosed/transferred is the sum of \$20 annual membership fee. The amount has been paid by:

- Cash
- Bank Transfer (Important - flag your name with payment)
- Paypal, via website www.indigenousplantsforhealth.com
- Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (fee optional)
- Identify as low income (fee optional)

Post Membership Form and cheque to:

IPHA Treasurer – 196 Bridge St. Muswellbrook NSW 2333, OR if paying by transfer you may scan and email the completed and signed form to IPHA.Secretary@hotmail.com

Bank Details for Payments: BSB 637000

Account 722660722

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Tel: Home _____ Mobile _____

Email: _____

I agree to abide by the Constitution and any policies, rules or regulations established within the association. These are listed on the website www.indigenousplantsforhealth.com

Signed _____ Date _____