

## In conclusion, something to chew on: native plant foods of the Gold Coast

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### Introduction

Ask most people what Gold Coast food is and you may hear answers like the ubiquitous prawn cocktail with avocado, a burger with 'fresh' pineapple available at the local surf club, or fish and chips (eaten on the beach to give it the seaside connection), with the fish often imported from New Zealand or Vietnam. None of this is the true food of the Gold Coast.

The true food of the Gold Coast is being rediscovered as concepts such as food providence, a focus on Australian native food and food products, and a general consumer focus on more healthy and sustainable food choices has formed and fairly rapidly increased in popularity. For all the 'Yin' (action on the Gold Coast coastal strip), the 'Yang' (the hinterland side of the Gold Coast) may be a place of recuperation with an abundance of edible plants and plants with medicinal qualities (Setzer *et al.* 2001; Miller and Brewer 1992).

In the pre-industrialised age, human settlements occurred where food grew. Now, due to technology, engineering and advances in preservation techniques and transport, food more often than not follows the people. Other changes are much more recent. Or so we think, until we read a little history on the matter.

The Australian native edible plant industry has expanded rapidly (Ahmed and Johnson 2000). Not only does this provide culinary benefits but environmental ones. The recognition that a considerable number of native Australian plants are edible and are suitable (or proven candidates) for various forms of horticulture can assist in the conservation of native bushland which may otherwise be seen as valueless or of low value. It also represents a potential source of sustainable income for remote indigenous communities, particularly in arid regions of Australia (Walsh and Douglas 2011).

On the Gold Coast, there are native foods in the area reaching from the hinterland to the ocean foredunes. Some, like the macadamia (*Macadamia tetraphylla*) are well known and have a strong commercial presence; some like the smooth-leaf Davidson plum (*Davidsonia johnsonii*) are relatively unknown but may be the next superfood. In this chapter, key native plant food species from rainforests, open woodlands and coastal areas of the Gold Coast are described with the aim of identifying the local native varieties that can be incorporated into an interesting and enjoyable diet. Elements of the natural history of the plants are described, as is knowledge of indigenous uses of the plant and the scope for planting in backyard gardens and commercial production. While this chapter focuses on plant food, it also recognises that bushfoods include various animals, aquatic and terrestrial.