



# NAIDOC Week 2023

## Native Edible Planting Guide

Here are some tips and tricks from La Perouse Elder, South Coast NSW and Western NSW Freshwater man Uncle Dean Kelly in conversation with horticulturist Narelle Happ for how to care for edible native plants at home!

### What did First Nations people use edible plants for?

- Food
- Medicine
- Firewood
- To stun fish and kangaroos
- Soap and body decoration
- Musical instruments and for ceremonial purposes
- Weapons
- To create rope, string and glue.

### Which native edible plants can be grown in the shade?

There is a wide variety of shade loving native edible plants such as:

Tasmania lanceolata – **Pepper berry**  
Prostanthera incisa – **Native Thyme**  
Prostanthera rotundifolia – **Native Oregano**  
Mentha australis – **Native River Mint**  
Austromyrtus dulcis – **Midyim Berry**  
Alpinia caerulea – **Native Ginger**  
Melastoma affine – **Blue Tongue**  
Antidesma erostre – **Native Cranberry**  
Eupomatia laurina – **Native Guava**  
Backhousia citriodora – **Lemon Myrtle**  
Citrus australasica – **Finger Lime**

### Can native edible plants be grown in pots?

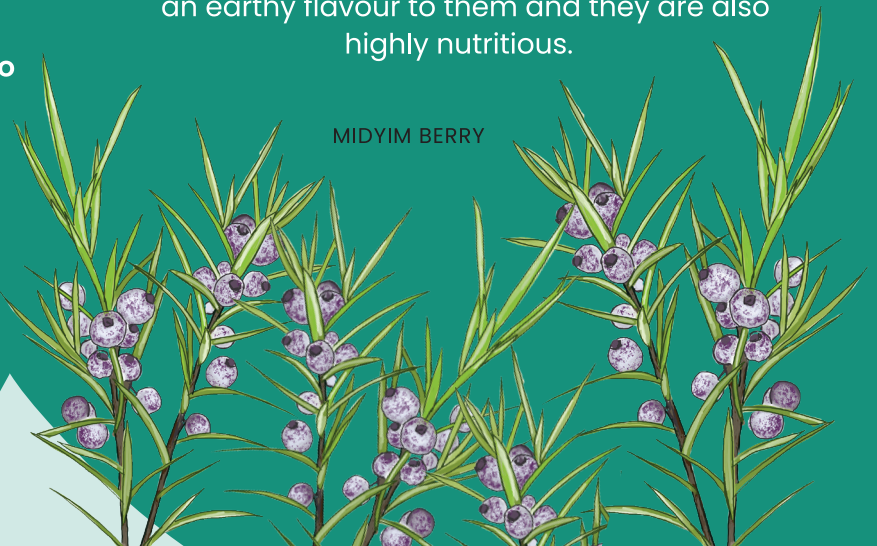
Absolutely! All native edible plants can be grown in pots. Native Potting Mix is used for growing native plants due to their sensitivity to phosphorous. For best results use potting mix which is formulated with low phosphorous fertiliser.

Always mulch the top of the pots with a mulch such as Euky or Cypress in a fine chip to a depth of 5cm, ensuring to keep away from the main stem of the plant to prevent collar rot.

### What do native edible plants taste like?

The flavours vary so much from plant to plant and can't be compared with exotic produce. Berries range from sweet to sour. Leaves used are quite intense in flavour so should be used to taste. The tubers have an earthy flavour to them and they are also highly nutritious.

MIDYIM BERRY





### Can native edible plants be grown with other edible foods?

Yes, absolutely! Just remember that native edible plants don't like fertilisers such as chicken manure or fertilisers with high phosphorous. However, you can use native fertilisers on native edible plants.



LEMON MYRTLE

Illustrations by **Noni Cragg**

### About the authors

**Uncle Dean Kelly** is a La Perouse Elder and South Coast NSW Saltwater and Western NSW Freshwater man. Uncle Dean runs cultural camps, is involved with the community in the Juvenile Justice System and Youth off the Streets, and is a Community Liaison Officer with National Parks and Wildlife.

**Narelle Happ** from A Garden for Life is a garden designer, horticulturist and educator who specialises in native gardens, permaculture design and has a particular passion for native edible plants. She has over twenty years of experience and is passionate about creating 'living' spaces that are nurturing, productive and sustainable.



OLD MAN SALTBUSH

### How do I harvest from my native edible plants?

#### Berries

Berries should always be harvested when they are completely ripe. Some berries are toxic or poisonous when not fully ripe so this will vary from plant to plant.

#### Tubers

Tubers need to be harvested without removing the whole plant. Soil is dug away from around the tuber and the mother tuber is taken, leaving the grandmother tuber to keep growing and the child tuber to grow up.

#### Seeds

Wattleseed for example is shaken from the tree or the tree hit with a stick, so the loose, ripe seeds fall from the dry pods. Ensure you have identified edible varieties.

#### Leaves

Leave can be harvested as required and only as much as you need or for drying purposes.

#### Other Edible Plants

The base of *Lomandra longifolia* has a chew starch which is eaten when the leaf is mature.