



16th Australasian **Botanic Guides Conference**

*Beauty rich and rare*  
Kings Park and Botanic Garden Western Australia

**16 - 20 September 2019**

### **WALK SUMMARY: RICH BUSHLAND RESOURCES**

**This walk through remnant bushland of Kings Park introduces the participant to particular plants which were used in various ways by the indigenous Noongar people and how the European settlers on arrival, too, found the bush offered resources to exploit, with reference as well to current and possible future uses.**

The bush, a Banksia woodland complex, has great diversity and an abundance of floral wealth that flourishes on soil considered one of the poorest in the world. A traverse of approximately 500 metres through a small section of this remnant bushland, which makes up more than 70% of Kings Park, highlights some of the 40 or so plants occurring in this area which were used by the Noongar people and the European settlers.

The South West of W.A. was home to the Noongar people for tens of thousands of years, during which time they observed and managed carefully this land so that it provided all the resources needed for survival. The bush supplied the necessary essentials to life: food, shelter, clothing, materials to fashion hunting weapons and other artefacts and medicine as well as spiritual wellbeing.

The leaves, wood, bark, gums and resins of a wide variety of plants were used to craft weapons, build shelters, provide bedding material and make fire. Other plants were sought after for their berries, nectar bearing flowers, roots and seeds for food. Health and wellbeing was maintained through an extensive knowledge of the medicinal value of the oils contained in the leaves of particular plants. Examples include the Orange Wattle or Coojong (*Acacia saligna*), Grass Tree or Balga (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*), Red Stemmed Green Kangaroo Paw or Kurulbrang (*Anigozanthos manglesii*), Marri or Mari (*Corymbia calophylla*), Dianella or Mangard (*Dianella revoluta*).

Arriving on West Australian shores in 1829, the Europeans soon found the bush, harsh and strange as it was, provided resources that were vital to their survival; initially in the construction of their first dwellings, saplings for wattle and daub, rushes for thatching and timber for more substantial dwellings. One tree in particular, the Jarrah, or Swan River Mahogany, as it was called then, provided the infant colony with its first export. This was to be the beginning of what became a flourishing timber industry, which as the colony developed, provided timber for bridge and jetty construction, furniture, railway sleepers, road paving, mine bearers and general building and construction. Gradually other uses were found for what the bushland had to offer. Timber from one tree was found to make excellent roofing shingles and ideal for wine casks and barrel production. Other woods made excellent charcoal, musical instruments, butcher's chopping blocks while various plants were used for making gas, providing ingredients for medicinal and pharmaceutical use and gum to make explosives and adhesive. A number of these significant plants occur along the walk trail. They include Jarrah or Djarra (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Tuart or Duart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*), Sheoak or Kondil (*Allocasuarina fraseri*), the cycad Zamia or Djiridji (*Macrozamia fraseri*) and a trailing peaflower, the Running Postman or Wollong (*Kennedia prostrata*).

Today the monitoring and careful management of bushland areas is essential. The Kings Park Biodiversity and Conservation Centre and other institutions continue to work tirelessly regenerating depleted bushland and propagating endangered species. Developing the horticultural potential of W.A.'s flora as cut flowers and garden subjects makes up a major part of the research being conducted by Kings Park scientists and biologists. Significant institutions elsewhere are working with elders of the Noongar community to record and investigate the medicinal properties of different native plants with the view of cultivating them for use in modern medicine.

The South Western Australian bushland will continue to provide for us. It is our duty to respect it and continually care for and conserve this unique and dynamic biodiversity hot spot.

**Please note:** Plant names are referenced in the following order, common, Noongar and botanical name.

*Notes by Kim Fletcher, Helen McNee, Paola Vallesi and Robyn Bowler. March 2019*