

# Fleshy Fruits

## Food trees for Wildlife

### What are fleshy fruits?

Fleshy fruits are produced by many plants, and in particular rainforest species, to enclose the seed for reproduction of the plant. They comprise a fleshy outer layer within a leathery skin and a central hard stone enclosing the seed.



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Assortment of Fleshy Fruits

### Why are they important?

Fleshy fruits vary considerably in size and texture making them an attractive and key food resource for many species of native birds, particularly pigeons (many of which feed almost exclusively on fleshy fruits), and a number of mammals such as possum and small rodents.

For some pigeons such as the Wompoo, Rose-crowned and Topknot, fleshy fruits comprise almost their entire diet, whilst other species such as fig parrots including the endangered Coxen's Fig-Parrot, feed mainly on the seeds within fleshy fruits but may also incorporate insects in their diets.

Flying foxes also rely heavily on fleshy fruits during periods of the year when they are more abundant. In return these animals play an important role in the dispersal of undigested seeds and the establishment of new rainforest species.

The distribution of rainforest in NSW has been severely reduced since European

settlement with for example less than 1% of lowland sub-tropical rainforest remaining. Outside of national parks, rainforest occurs now only as small areas, isolated remnants or as single trees in an agricultural landscape. As a consequence of this severe reduction in extent and distribution of rainforest there has been a marked decline in the abundance of a number of pigeons, doves and parrots and other animals reliant on rainforests. Consequently many of these species are now considered rare and threatened in NSW.

### What can you do?

The protection of vegetation including remnants and isolated paddock trees (e.g. figs) that annually produce fleshy fruit, is very significant in ensuring the continued survival of many threatened birds and mammals such as migratory bird and flying-fox species.

Forestry operations are not permitted within rainforests although existing roads can be maintained.

Table 1 lists some of the fleshy fruited rainforest species occurring on the north coast. These species can occur in rainforest and also as understorey trees and shrubs in



Coxen's Fig-Parrot Recovery Team

Coxen's Fig-Parrot





Table 1 Fleshy Fruited Rainforest Species

| Scientific Name                       | Common Name              | Scientific Name                | Common Name         |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Acmena hemilampra</i>              | Broad-leaved Lilly Pilly | <i>Ficus coronata</i>          | Creek Sandpaper Fig |
| <i>Acmena ingens</i>                  | Red Apple                | <i>Ficus fraseri</i>           | Sandpaper Fig       |
| <i>Acmena smithii</i>                 | Lilly Pilly              | <i>Ficus macrophylla</i>       | Moreton Bay Fig     |
| <i>Acronychia oblongifolia</i>        | Common Achronychia       | <i>Ficus obliqua</i>           | Small-leaved Fig    |
| <i>Alangium villosum</i>              | Muskwood                 | <i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>        | Rusty Fig           |
| <i>Anthocarapa nitidula</i>           | Incense Cedar            | <i>Ficus superba</i>           | Deciduous Fig       |
| <i>Aphananthe philippinensis</i>      | Rough-leaved Elm         | <i>Ficus virens</i>            | White Fig           |
| <i>Archontopheonix cunninghamiana</i> | Bangalow Palm            | <i>Ficus watkinsiana</i>       | Strangler Fig       |
| <i>Austromyrtus bidwillii</i>         | Python Tree              | <i>Ixora beckleri</i>          | Native Ixora        |
| <i>Beilschmiedia elliptica</i>        | Grey Walnut              | <i>Litsea australis</i>        | Brown Bolly Gum     |
| <i>Beilschmiedia obtusifolia</i>      | Blush Walnut             | <i>Litsea reticulata</i>       | Bolly Gum           |
| <i>Canarium australasicum</i>         | Mangobark                | <i>Livistona australis</i>     | Cabbage Palm        |
| <i>Celtis paniculata</i>              | Native Celtis            | <i>Mallotus discolor</i>       | White Kamala        |
| <i>Cinnamomum oliveri</i>             | Olivers Sassafras        | <i>Melia azedarach</i>         | White Cedar         |
| <i>Cinnamomum virens</i>              | Red-barked Sassafras     | <i>Neolitsea australiensis</i> | Green Bolly Gum     |
| <i>Citronella moorei</i>              | Churnwood                | <i>Neolitsea dealbata</i>      | White Bolly Gum     |
| <i>Cryptocarya bidwillii</i>          | Yellow Laurel            | <i>Olea paniculata</i>         | Native Olive        |
| <i>Cryptocarya erythroxylon</i>       | Pigeonberry Ash          | <i>Pennantia cunninghamii</i>  | Brown Beech         |
| <i>Cryptocarya obovata</i>            | Pepperberry              | <i>Planchonella laurifolia</i> | Blush Coondoo       |
| <i>Cryptocarya triplinervis</i>       | Three-veined Laurel      | <i>Podocarpus elatus</i>       | Brown Pine          |
| <i>Decaspermum humile</i>             | Silky Myrtle             | <i>Polyscias elegans</i>       | Celerywood          |
| <i>Dendrocnide excelsa</i>            | Giant Stinging Tree      | <i>Polyscias murrayi</i>       | Pencil Cedar        |
| <i>Diospyros pentamera</i>            | Myrtle Ebony             | <i>Premna lignum-vitae</i>     | Lignum-vitae        |
| <i>Diploglottis australis</i>         | Native Tamarind          | <i>Rhodamnia argentea</i>      | Malletwood          |
| <i>Dysoxylum fraserianum</i>          | Rosewood                 | <i>Rhodamnia rubescens</i>     | Scrub Turpentine    |
| <i>Dysoxylum mollissimum</i>          | Red Bean                 | <i>Rhodomyrtus psidioides</i>  | Native Gauva        |
| <i>Ehretia acuminata</i>              | Koda                     | <i>Sloanea australis</i>       | Maidens Blush       |
| <i>Elaeocarpus grandis</i>            | Blue Fig/Blue Quandong   | <i>Sloanea woolsii</i>         | Yellow Carabeen     |
| <i>Elaeocarpus kirtonii</i>           | White Quandong           | <i>Streblus brunonianus</i>    | Whalebone Tree      |
| <i>Elaeocarpus obovatus</i>           | Hard Quandong            | <i>Symplocos stawellii</i>     | White Hazelwood     |
| <i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>        | Blueberry Ash            | <i>Symplocos thwaitesii</i>    | Buff Hazelwood      |
| <i>Emmenosperma alphonoides</i>       | Yellow Ash               | <i>Syzygium australe</i>       | Brush Cherry        |
| <i>Endiandra discolor</i>             | Rose Walnut              | <i>Syzygium corynanthum</i>    | Sour Cherry         |
| <i>Endiandra muelleri</i>             | Green-leaved Rose Walnut | <i>Syzygium crebrinerve</i>    | Purple Cherry       |
| <i>Euroschinus falcata</i>            | Ribbonwood               | <i>Syzygium francisii</i>      | Giant Watergum      |

moist eucalypt forests. When undertaking forestry activities all efforts should be made to retain and protect these species.

Additionally, replacement of the weed species Campher Laurel with native rainforest species listed in Table 1 would be beneficial for biodiversity.

## References and Further Reading

### Reference Books for Rainforest Tree Identification

- Floyd A (1989), *Rainforest Trees of Mainland South-eastern Australia*, Forestry Commission of NSW, Inkata Press.
- Williams J B, et al (1984), *Rainforest Trees and Shrubs of NSW and Southern Queensland*, UNE.
- DECC: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)