Acknowledgement

Barapa Barapa people have walked this land we now know as Gunbower Forest for thousands of years as far back as the dreaming.

To the Barapa people the Forest is our oxygen. We feel the presence of our old people being there. We have a spiritual connection to everything; the animals, the plants, the land and the water. We are the custodians of the land for future generations. When you visit our Country, you share this responsibility with us.

We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present.

This plant pamphlet, compiled by the Barapa Culture team and North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) endeavours to share the work of the Barapa Culture Team for the benefit of Barapa Barapa people and the broader community. In doing so, we hope to promote understanding, knowledge and respect for Barapa Barapa cultural heritage. It is important that knowledge is only used in accordance with the wishes of the custodian of that information.

Our cultural heritage is important to Australia as a reminder of the efforts of men and women to make a living over the generations. It is important to us Barapa, for the insight of how our ancestors lived. It is our duty to record that past; to protect and conserve its history and culture for our future generations and to educate the public, from school kids to tourists.

Photo credits

Damien Cook, Kate Bennetts, Bambi Lees, Robyn McKay, Ian Higgins.

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the North Central Catchment Management Authority and its employees and agents do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.
Gunbower Barapa Culture and Heritage knowledge exchange

In July 2013, the North Central CMA received funding from the Australian Government through an Indigenous Heritage grant to assist Barapa Barapa people to work with CMA interests to identify and map both the culturally important plants of the Gunbower Forest, and the archaeological record of our ancestors. The project received significant in-kind support from the Living Murray Indigenous Partnerships Program co-ordinated through the Murray Darling Basin Authority. This pamphlet covers the plants identified as culturally important for their ability to provide food, fibre and medicine – a healthy forest offers the resources of a supermarket, chemist and hardware shop.

Barapa Culture Team

The Barapa Culture Team undertook field survey work between 3 and 21 February 2014, assisted by archaeologist Colin Pardoe and three ecologists from Rakali Consulting – Damien Cook, Douglas Frood and Kate Bennetts with support from North Central CMA staff Robyn McKay, Bambi Lees, Anna Chatfield and Trent Gibson.

Many thanks to Sharnie Hamilton (Team Leader), Aunty Esther Kirby, Laura Kirby, Chris Webster, Harold Webster, Joshua Brown, Jason Brown, Shae McCulloch, Harry Hamilton, Jack Hamilton, Zoe Hamilton, Glen Galway, Uncle Neville Whyman, Shanice Whyman, Clinton Jones, Tom Kirby, Tracy Hamilton, Aunty Barbara Hamilton and Uncle Ron Galway for their participation.

We are grateful for their commitment to the project and its outcomes, especially the young people who earned much respect as the upcoming custodians of their culture.

The Barapa Culture Team and North Central CMA also thank Eddie Monro for generously sharing his knowledge of Gunbower Forest.
Very few language names used by Barapa were recorded so some Wamba Wamba names from Deniliquin (Wamba and Barapa Country) have been used.

**Austral Bugle**
*Ajuga australis*

**Description**
Small herb with soft leaves and purple flowers like mint – short lived

**Use**
Leaves used for medicine to bathe sores, boils, stings and scratches (Gott)

**Habitat**
Grassy woodland

---

**Berrigan**
*Eremophila longifolia*

**Description**
Medium sized with tubular red flowers and yellow berries with large seeds

**Use**
Medicine

**Habitat**
Dry woodland

**Season**
All year Fruit in summer

---

**Berry saltbush**
*Atriplex semibaccata*

**Description**
Widespread, sprawling groundcover with small silvery leaves and red berries

**Use**
Fruit ground, cooked, also leaves. Leaves for medicinal wash (Gott)

**Habitat**
Woodland

---

**Black Box**
*Eucalyptus largiflorens*

**Description**
Tree with rough 'box' bark to ends of branches

**Use**
Seed eaten, gum as cement (Gott) Bark removed from the tree may be used for stretching boards for possums skins, shields, coolamons or canoes

Young stems chewed for moisture

**Habitat**
Floodplain

---

**Bush Tomato**
*Solanum esuarale*

**Description**
Small bush with grey leaves and little yellow berries

**Use**
Fruit eaten only when ripe

**Habitat**
Woodland

**Season**
Summer
**Common Reed**
*Phragmites australis*  
**Djarg** (Wamba)

**Description**
Tall reed with broad leaves along stem and feathery seed heads

**Use**
Use stem for spear shafts (traded), skinning knives and friction sticks to make fire. As food can eat young underground shoots, stems and leaves for weaving baskets and rope, cut stems threaded to make a necklace (Gott)

**Habitat**
Deeper swamps and creek lines

**Season**
Spring to summer

---

**Dwarf Cherry Ballart**
*Exocarpus strictus*  
**Bullyang** (Wamba)

**Description**
Medium shrub virtually leafless with succulent fruit stalks

**Use**
Woodland

**Habitat**
Fruit medicine

**Season**
Summer for fruit

---

**Cumbungi**
*Typha spp.*  
**Wurt-wurt** (Wamba)

**Description**
Tall rush with long strap like leaves and rod-like flower spikes.

**Use**
A staple food. Rhizomes (underground stems) usually cooked and chewed for food value as well as to make fibre for string to make nets, bags, bow bands and bindings, leaves for weaving. New shoots and developing flower stems eaten raw. Burned off in winter for new growth.

**Habitat**
Deeper swamps and creek lines

**Season**
All year

---

**Giant Rush**
*Juncus ingens*

**Description**
Very tall rush with drooping brown flowers

**Use**
After scraping the pith from the stems, they could be woven into fibre for string or rope, make matting for bed.

**Habitat**
Swamps and creeks

**Season**
All year
**Golden Wattle**
*Acacia pycnantha*

**DESCRIPTION**
Small tree or shrub with glossy green ‘leaves’ and yellow ball followed by long seed pods

**USE**
Young seed roasted, gum dissolved for drink and mixed with ash for glue, bark infusion as medicine (Gott)

**HABITAT**
Forest or woodland

**SEASON**
Flowers - winter-spring, seed - summer

---

**Grassland Woodsorrel**
*Oxalis spp.*

**DESCRIPTION**
Widespread herb

**USE**
Leaves eaten raw (sour), Root tubers eaten (Gott)

**HABITAT**
Woodland

**SEASON**
All year

---

**Hedge Saltbush**
*Rhagodia spinescens*

**DESCRIPTION**
Saltbush shrub with grey-green leaves and red succulent berries

**USE**
Small red fruit eaten, also red paint for face (Gott)

**HABITAT**
Forest or woodland

---

**Leafless Ballart**
*Exocarpus aphyllus*

**DESCRIPTION**
Medium shrub virtually leafless with succulent fruit stalks

**USE**
Fruit eaten

**HABITAT**
Woodlands
Mistletoe “Snottygobbles”  
*Amyema spp.*

**DESCRIPTION**
Small shrub which grows on other plants and takes its water from them

**USE**
Fruit is a bush lolly

**HABITAT**
Each type has particular hosts including: Gum, Box, Buloke, Wattle, Emu-bush and other Mistletoes

**SEASON**
Fruits ripen from summer (Buloke Mistletoe) to Autumn (Box and Fleshy Mistletoe)

Nardoo  
*Marsilea spp.*

**DESCRIPTION**
Small wetland plant that looks like a four-leaved clover that sometimes has a reddish tinge

**USE**
“Seed pods” used as flour. Must be treated properly or is POISONOUS

**HABITAT**
Areas that flood

Native Mint  
*Mentha spp.*

**DESCRIPTION**
Small herb with paired leaves it has mauve to white flowers and mint scented leaves

**USE**
Medicine, used in earth ovens

**HABITAT**
Woodland and Forest

**SEASON**
All year

Nodding Saltbush  
*Einadia nutans*

**DESCRIPTION**
Low growing sprawling saltbush with green ‘spade’ shaped leaves and red or orange berries

**USE**
Leaves eaten raw or cooked, red fruit used as face paint, hair dye (Gott)

**HABITAT**
Grassy Woodland

5 different kinds of Mistletoe occur on Gunbower Island: Fleshy Mistletoe, Box Mistletoe, Buloke Mistletoe, Drooping Mistletoe, Wire-leaf Mistletoe.
Old Man Weed
Centipeda spp.

DESCRIPTION
Upright herb to 30cm tall with ball-like flowers and toothed leaves. Leaves are strongly scented when crushed.

USE
Medicinal; used as a wash for skin conditions, and for colds and flu
Can eat the leaves fresh

HABITAT
Drying mud on the edge of wetlands

SEASON
When wetlands are drying; mostly summer but could be almost any time

Pig Weed
Portulaca oleracea

DESCRIPTION
Spreading herb with succulent leaves and yellow flower

USE
Root, leaf, seed eaten, seeds stored, root and leaf medicinal “blood cleanser” (Gott)

HABITAT
Often grows in disturbed areas

Pink bindweed
Convolvulus spp.

DESCRIPTION
Small twining herbs with narrow entire to divided leaves. Pink flowers with petals joined together

USE
Food, roast the roots, kneaded into dough

HABITAT
Red gum woodland
Dry land

SEASON
All year

Poong’ort
Carex tereticaulis
Pungurt (Wamba)

DESCRIPTION
Rush with round leaves, the stalks of the flower heads are triangular

USE
Young stems chewed for moisture.
Weaving

HABITAT
Swamps and creeks

SEASON
All year
| **River Red Gum** |
| Eucalyptus camaldulensis |
| **Bael (Barapa) Piyal (Wamba)** |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Tree with smooth pale bark and distinctive red timber. |
| **USE** |
| Nectar, seed eaten, gum and bark for medicine (Gott). Young stems chewed for moisture. Saplings used to make spears by straightening in the fire, then burn and roll the end to create a sharpen. Bark for canoes, or containers |
| **HABITAT** |
| Watercourses and swamps |
| **SEASON** |
| All year. Seed - autumn to spring |

| **Riverina Bittercress** |
| Cardamine moirensis |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Small annual with divided leaves and white flowers |
| **USE** |
| Food - leaves eaten raw |
| **HABITAT** |
| Red gum where flooding occurs |
| **SEASON** |
| Winter to early spring |

| **Riverine Flax Lily** |
| Dianella porracea |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Tussock-forming plant with broad, strap-like leaves. Flower stems to a meter tall stick out above leaves. Becoming rare in the local area |
| **USE** |
| Fruit used for dye. Not eaten as they are poisonous. Leaves used as rope and for weaving into baskets and mats. |
| **HABITAT** |
| Dry woodland in areas that don’t flood |
| **SEASON** |
| Summer for fruit, leaves available anytime |

| **Ruby Saltbush** |
| Enchylaena tomentosa |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Low-growing shrub with small fleshy leaves and small yellow, orange or red berries |
| **USE** |
| Fruit eaten raw or soaked for drink, leaves possibly also, and boiled and eaten |
| **HABITAT** |
| Woodland |
| **SEASON** |
| Spring, summer |

| **Silver Wattle** |
| Acacia dealbata |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Small tree or large shrub with silvery leaves made up of small 'leaflets' |
| **USE** |
| Bark cut to make fibre for axe handles and buckets, gum eaten and with ash on wounds |
| **HABITAT** |
| River edge |
| **SEASON** |
| All year |

| **Tah Vine** |
| Boerhavia dominii |
| **DESCRIPTION** |
| Twining herb leaves pained and paler underneath. Has small pink flowers |
| **USE** |
| Possible food. Roots roasted |
| **HABITAT** |
| Dry woodland |
| **SEASON** |
| All year |
Tangled Lignum
*Duma florenta*

**DESCRIPTION**
Tangled shrub

**USE**
Seed ground (Gott), stems for switches

**HABITAT**
Floodplains

**SEASON**
All year

---

Turkey Bush
*Eremophila deserti*

**DESCRIPTION**
Medium sized shrub with small white flowers in clusters

**USE**
Fruit possibly eaten but care required possibly poisonous in large amounts

**HABITAT**
Dry woodland

**SEASON**
Summer

---

Umbrella Wattle
*Acacia oswaldii*

**DESCRIPTION**
Rounded shrub 0.5 to 8 meters tall. Twisted woody pods with large black seed with an orange stalk

**USE**
Seeds as food
Gum as food and adhesive, clubs, boomerangs

**HABITAT**
Black Box Woodland on higher country

**SEASON**
Summer

---

Variable sida
*Sida corrugata*

**DESCRIPTION**
Low-growing herb
With yellow flowers. Leaves slighty toothed

**USE**
Food, eat roots
Baked roots

**HABITAT**
Dryland

**SEASON**
All year
**Water Pepper**
*Persicaria hydropiper*

**DESCRIPTION**
Large herb with green and white flowers

**USE**
Fish poison, stem roasted and peeled (Gott), numbing medicine

**HABITAT**
Waterways

---

**Water Ribbons**
*Triglochin spp.*

**Ngareli** (Wamba)

**DESCRIPTION**
Aquatic herb with ribbony leaves

**USE**
Important food plant – Eat the flowering stalks and tubers; string – flatten the leaves by pulling over a stick first

**HABITAT**
Water

**SEASON**
All year

---

**Weeping Pittosporum**
*Pittosporum angustifolium*

**DESCRIPTION**
Medium sized shrub with orange fruit that splits to show clusters of red seeds

**USE**
Seeds, stem and leaves as medicine

**HABITAT**
Dry woodland

**SEASON**
All year and fruit only in summer

---

**Willow Wattle**
*Acacia salicina*

**DESCRIPTION**
Tree with drooping foliage and pale yellow wattle flowers followed by long seed pods. Black seeds have a red ‘stalk’

**USE**
Leaf for wounds, bark for fish poison (Gott)

**HABITAT**
Floodplain

**SEASON**
Seed pods ripen over summer

---

**Yam Daisy, Murrnong**
*Microseris spp.*

**Mirrwan** (Wamba)

**DESCRIPTION**
Small herb with yellow flowers. Distinguishes from similar weed species by the ‘nodding’ flowers

**USE**
Tuber probably eaten

**HABITAT**
Open grassy areas
Barapa Water for Country Project

The Barapa Water for Country project aims to understand Barapa Barapa’s cultural values to improve the outcomes and management of environmental water on Gumbower Island.

The term ‘Aboriginal environmental outcomes’, is used to describe cultural benefits from environmental water. It is different from a ‘cultural flow’ which has been defined by the Murray Lower Darling Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) as:

“Water entitlements that are legally and beneficially owned by the Indigenous Nations and are of a sufficient and adequate quantity and quality to improve the spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions of those Indigenous Nations. This is our inherent right”.

The term ‘Aboriginal water’ may be used more broadly to encompass both ‘Aboriginal environmental outcomes’ and ‘cultural flows’.

It is fully acknowledged that the Barapa Water for Country project only focuses on the use of environmental water and does not encompass the full spectrum of the cultural flows concept as conceived by MLDRIN and other Traditional Owner groups.

The project is delivered through North Central CMA with funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. In the longer term, the project will help inform how CMAs across Victoria can develop environmental and cultural watering priorities that reflect Traditional Owner values and aspirations.

For more information visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au or www.mldrin.org.au