Tingha Fire and Seasons Calendar

TOO WET TO BURN



DECEMBER - JANUARY

NHIMIN (KURRAJONG), BAAN (MISTLETOE)

anytime...' - Jimmy Connors.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

GUDA (KOALA), BUUBUMURR (PLATYPUS),

burn the bark which makes it

difficult to get bark for the

coolamon' – Greg Livermore.

Guda (koalas) usually breed between September

and February- this important animal is a totem for

breed in spring, there are at least two pairs that usually live in the creek at Bassendean.

The **black orchid** is flowering, we use the

stems to keep our mouth moist when we are walking in the bush, and eat the stems to treat

diarrhoea. We eat the gum leaf to get rid of the doughy texture. The **Austral indigo** is

flowering. For some Aboriginal people, this plant was used as a medicine, or the leaves

were crushed and added to water to kill or

As the weather warms up, migratory bird

species arrive to breed over summer, including the mulindjal (rufous whistler),

sacred kingfisher, striated pardalote,

channel-billed cuckoo, white-throated gerygone, black-faced cuckoo-shrike,

'If you were in charge of

the fire, you had a great

Dick Blair.

GARRANGAN (GRUB),

Jimmy Connors.

damage' – Dick Blair.

responsibility. We need to

realise the importance of this'

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

YARRAN (GUM FROM TREE), GURAYN (FLOWER),

'We had a good knowledge of what

We had hot burns and cool burns'

wood would burn at what temperature.

stones are used to crush the seeds of various plant species.

would stop the burn' – Jimmy Connors.

The **geebung** and **bulamin (native apple tree)** are fruiting. We crush

the seed of the geebung and put in water, then drink it as a healthy tonic. Geebung fruit are not ready to eat until they fall onto the ground. **Grinding**

'When we were kids we used to burn. We just had

a knack to it, we knew when to burn. We would just

throw a match here and there, it never used to cause any

'We boil the young leaves of the bulamin and drink them, they

people used to grind their grains and seeds' – Jimmy Connors.

have a lot of vitamins. We grind the seeds for damper and mix them

with flour. You can see the grinding holes near the creek where our

The wattle is flowering, so we know that the witchetty grubs are good to eat. We use wattle seeds in damper and use the timber to make stock whip handles, clap sticks and spears. The yarran (gum) from the black wattle was a good glue. If we find a T-shaped branch, we

turn it in the fire, and use it to make a walking stick. Mookrum fruit abundantly after a good season. Kookaburras are laughing to mark their territory. Many birds are getting ready to hatch their young. Bigibila (echidna) come out of their winter hibernation, they are poor to eat after hibernating but

'The old men used to do the burning. That's how I learned to make fire with sticks. They were still using

traditional fire drill. When it gets like this with long grass over other grass, pull it out of the ground and

set it alight, chuck it over there, and it will take off. The old men were burning because it is a traditional

kangaroos, they would burn it so the kangaroos can come and get it. They would burn some here, leave

thing. When the grass gets too long, up over your shin, the cows won't eat it and it is no good for the

it for a couple of weeks then when the grass starts coming back they would come down and shoot a

kangaroo, wouldn't have to carry it far. Sometimes they would burn just a little area, sometimes they

would let a big area burn and if it went down into the river, they would wait for it to rain and the river

BIRRAA GARARRNGAN, BIRRAAY,

BULAMIN (NATIVE APPLE TREE)

cicadabird, grey fantail and leaden flycatcher.

'We need rain in October to get sap

flowing in the trees so we can cut a

coolamon from the bark. Bushfires

MULINDJAL (RUFOUS WHISTLER)

such as **eucalypts** and wattles.

Jimmy Connors.

'The chocolate lily flowers come up during the hot time' - Greg Livermore.

The nhimin (kurrajong), Blakely's red gum, **chocolate lily flowers** and **prickly pear** are flowering.

'We called the mistletoe fruit and seed, snottygobbles.

There is one mistletoe for eucalypts (**box trees**) and

one for the kurrajong. You can eat them both'

The baan (mistletoe) is fruiting. The seeds of the nhimin (kurrajong) can be eaten. You can also empty a kurrajong pod, put some stones in, close it back up and use it as a rattle for kids. The **native raspberry** and

cherry produce fruit during the warm weather. Following a gentle cultural burn, many plants regenerate

'If there was a lightning strike, once it started going they would burn back to it. All the hills,

they would go up the top and set it alight and let it burn down. Then they would go to the

next hill and burn it. If you are going to do a burn it doesn't matter whether it is hot, cold

or not. If you know what the ground is like and how high the grass is, you can burn

NOV

they used to burn them. It would take them a month just to burn the hill. If it was January,

Wii (Fire)

FEBRUARY - MARCH

BIGIBILA (ECHIDNA), YURRANDAALI (GOANNA), BIBIL (BOX TREES)

ooki Bassendean is an important place for the people of the Kamilaroi Nation. It has cultural values such as axe grinding grooves, stone artefacts, scar trees, fish traps, graves and old settlements. It is a special place where the mob can come to practice their culture and connect with Country.

'When summer came in they did a burn because the grass was growing. It only came as high as your shin, so we called it shin-high. We must burn that, burn it all off... We did the burning around the end of summer, then it would all come back before winter, before the frosts come. Then you would have grass for the animals. It would only be about a fortnight and then

> 'After **prickly pear** finishes flowering, the pear will come. It is a good meal if you can put up with the spikes. You rub it on the ground to clear the spikes, use a stick to open up the fruit and turn it inside out, then eat it. Otherwise the prickles will make your lips and skin swell up' – Jimmy Connors.

> > GRASS CURE

you would get good rains. This river would flood...' - Jimmy Connors.

Bigibila (echidna) are good to eat. We used the fat, mixed with eucalyptus leaves, this was our Vicks. Yurrandaali (tree goanna) are active during the hot time. We didn't eat yurrandaali but we boiled it up for the oil. We were not allowed to dig up the eggs of the goanna, or eat them.

APRIL - MAY

MOOKRUM (URN HEATH), WII (FIRE), WIIMALI (LIGHT A FIRE)

'Getting the burning going again is a must. If people want to come out here and look after their country, yes' Jimmy Connors.

> The mookrum (urn heath), everlasting daisies, billy buttons and blue bells are flowering. The nutgrass sedge is producing fruit. As the weather cools down, migratory birds such as the silvereye and fan-tailed cuckoo leave the area.

> > 'We usually eat the mookrum fruit but it was damaged by the bushfires, it has not recovered yet' - Greg Livermore.

JUNE - JULY **BUNWANGIN (BLACK WALLAROO),** YULAMA (WALLAROO), **BANDAARR (EASTERN GREY** KANGAROO), MUDHAY (BRUSHTAIL POSSUM), GARRAWIRR (RINGTAIL

POSSUM), DHALAN (GRASSTREE)

'We need to do more burning, with Aboriginal people involved, to stop bushfires coming through' - Sue Blacklock.

Bunwangin, or Black Wallaroo, is the name of the mountain near Bassendean. Kangaroo, wallaroo and possums were eaten over winter when other food resources were low. The bandaarr (eastern grey kangaroo) was the best winter. People camped here because there was a lot of food which made for good eating. You can see

climbing grooves in old trees where people would climb the tree to catch a possum. 'To catch a possum, you had to find a hole, poke it with a stick, grab the tail, pull it out, kill it, pluck all the hair off, make a fire and roll it over in the flames.

This kills the evil spirits, and stops you from going goopie. You cook the possum in a hole in the ground with coals over it. Or you could take it home and skin it to make a possum fur coat' – Jimmy Connors.

After fire, dhalan (grasstree) flowers abundantly. We dig down to find water at the roots. We use the resin from dhalan to bind spears. Black nightshade is fruiting: beware, this plant is poisonous.

When the white man took up all the pasture land he didn't want his property burned. We had no boundaries, we could light a fire here and it didn't matter if it burnt 5 or 6 kilometres, it was just clearing the land. The white man put up fences, he didn't want us speaking our language, burning our country / his property, that's when it stopped. There were some people (graziers) that utilised Aboriginal people for their fire burning skills, but most of them said no more burning. That was when it stopped. That was when we had to give away our culture. Our language, all our traditional cultural practices, we had to give them away because it was against the law. The generation before me had a lot of knowledge but very few of us had an opportunity to tap into it because they told us black culture doesn't put food in your mouth. The only

for nothing to get it, it was only rations. The only culture you learned was what you were told. They told us stories about this place. That's the only cultural knowledge then I started to learn the history' – Shane Levy.

place to get food was on the property, you had to work

'Until today, there has been no cultural fire here on this country since around 1960. Sixty years ago, when I was twelve years old, I remember going out with the old people and lighting the fire'

'People who know their Country, know when the right time is to do things. That is not my knowledge, I am just passing it on' – Greg Livermore.

CULTURAL FIRE PROTOCOLS We need to burn right country at the right time.

A Mother Fire needs to be started using an Aboriginal fire drill. Using traditional fire lighting methods and knowing how to burn culturally is important, and helps to revive two very important cultural practices.

Firesticks from country (red gum, stringybark, native apple, grey and white box) need to be gathered and placed in the Mother Fire. They must be kept alight and used to ignite the cultural burn. Remember, fire was so important to our people for many reasons. and everyone involved needs to know that keeping the Mother

Fire alight was a big responsibility. tucker and medicines were available, some of this knowledge is shared in this Fire and Seasons Calendar for the Tingha Aboriginal Community. This is knowledge that our community can hold, pass - Greg Livermore

YAAMA NGINDA, NGAYA

Ngiyani winangay ngiyaningu dhilaag yinarraa yilambu.gu Nhalay ganungu dhawun ngiyani yanay.ga yaray Gomeroi barra wurrugga

WELCOME TO COUNTRY We acknowledge the people from the Kamilaroi Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land

take this opportunity to acknowledge our Elders, past and present, and entrust that knowledge to our future leaders, on whose responsibility, the foundation of our culture rests. On behalf of the Aboriginal community from the Kamilaroi Nation and with specific reference to our friends within the Tingha community, we extend a very warm welcome to you all, and invite you to share, learn and enjoy.

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES The Aboriginal language words included in this calendar are from the Gamilaraay¹² language which is the used in the Tingha region

The Tingha Fire and Seasons Calendar is supported by the Rural Fire Service Hotspots Program, Rural Fire Service Association, Firesticks Indigenous Alliance, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and the NSW Government. This project is part of the \$19.32 million of Catchment Action NSW investment that Local

Land Services is delivering to enable better management of our water, soil, vegetation, biodiversity and cultural heritage. CONTRIBUTORS Jimmy Connors, Shane Levy, Greg Livermore, Sue Blacklock, Dick Blair, Terry Munroe, Sarah Munroe, Neville & Ingram Williams Joshua Williams, Kirra Edwards, Richard Ellis, Jamie Bertram,

Michelle Mckemey, Greg Livermore, John Hodge, Phil Spark, Cactus man, Marshal Hedin, R Clarke, Arindam Bhattacharya,

Kerry Hardy (BlackSheep Studio: www.baabaa.net) Jacqueline Gothe, Sian Hromek and Lyndal Harris

LOW INTENSITY FIRE TIME. GOOD TIME TO BURN

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