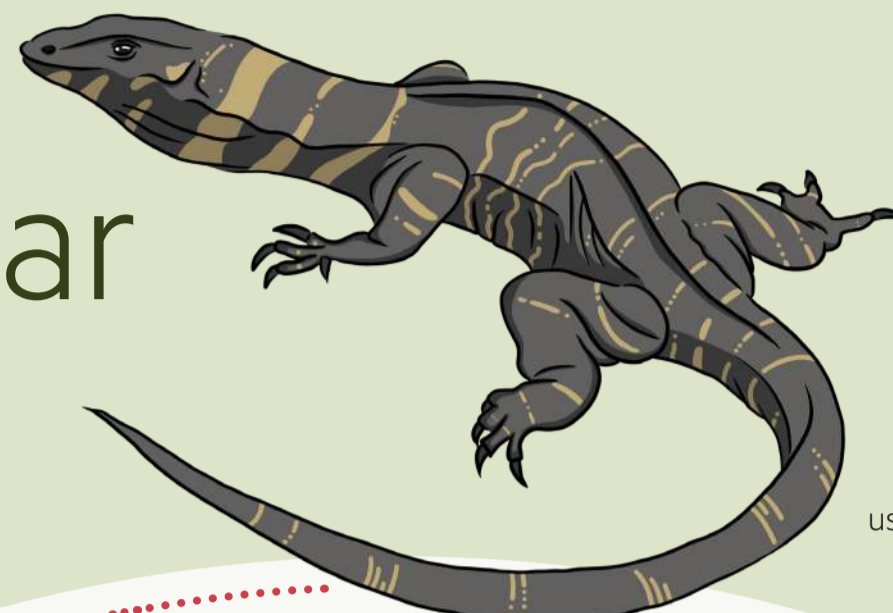


# WII (FIRE)



## Gomeri (Tamworth) Fire and Seasons Calendar

### DECEMBER - JANUARY

#### YARAAYBAA (SUMMER - TIME OF SUN)

YURRANAAU (TREE GOANNA), DHAGAAY (YELLOW BELLY PERCH), GUDUU (MURRAY COD), GAYGAY (CATFISH), BUGALII, GIIRRAY (YABBIES)

Dhagaay (yellow belly perch) is a significant fish, which is eaten from the rivers around Tamworth. These fish usually breed after a Spring or Summer flush of freshwater. They can live very long lives, up to 26 years old. Other river foods include gudu (Murray cod), gaygay (catfish) and bugalii, giirray (yabbies).

'When Dad forgot the frying pan, he would wrap the fish in paperbark to cook it. You can also use strips of paperbark as a plate.' - Donny Farmor.

'There are two varieties of the flax lily that you can eat. The purple berry can be used as a dye, or given to men for virility' - Kaliela Thornton.

There is a huge variety of root vegetables that grow in box-gum grassy woodland, such as yam daisies, fringe lilies, milkmaids and chocolate and vanilla lilies. Some of the common Summer grasses are kangaroo grass and barbed wire grass. The thatch of the Summer grasses can be burnt off at the end of Summer or early Autumn. This opens up space between the clumps of grasses and allows herbs to grow. Nhimin (kurradjong), blue flax lily and violet kunzea are flowering. The kunzea is used in the beauty industry and as a medicine. Nhimin is important for making rope and weaving. Mat rushes are another important weaving material.

'[Being on Country is important] to us as weavers because we are able to continue our women's business and ancestral weaving practices. Continuing our practises supports the health and wellbeing of our people and country' - Yinarr Maramali Weavers.

### OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

#### MURRUMAY (THUNDER, LIGHTNING)

YIILAY (HOP BUSH)

'You can crush the leaves of the hop bush and put them in your mouth to treat toothache. The hops can also be used to make beer, and the timber is good for making traditional tools and weapons' - Kaliela Thornton.

The hop bush, bush banana and wombat berry are fruiting. The wilga and quinine are starting to form flower buds. The kurradjong mistletoe, native clematis, blue flax lily, blue bells and Darling pea are flowering. During Yarragaa (Spring), sacred kingfishers return from northern Australia to breed.

### AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

#### YARRAGAA (SPRING WIND / SPRING)

MAALINHA (SOUTHWEST WIND), MAYYRAA (WIND), BILARR (SWAMP OAK), BILIRRI (RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO), GUWADHAA (QUANDONG), BINAMAYAA (OLD MAN SALT BUSH), GURRAARI (CYPRESS PINE)

Maalinha are the breezes that come with showers from the southwest at this time (Yaama Gamilaraay! 2022).

'The bilaarr is my grounding tree. It connects me to Country' - Donny Farmor.

Bilaarr (swamp oak) trees have a similar name to the bilirri (red-tailed black cockatoo), as these trees provide food for black cockatoos. Black cockatoos can breed at any time of year, and move around the country following food sources. Gurraari (cypress pine) was used as a disinfectant and burned to improve respiratory problems.

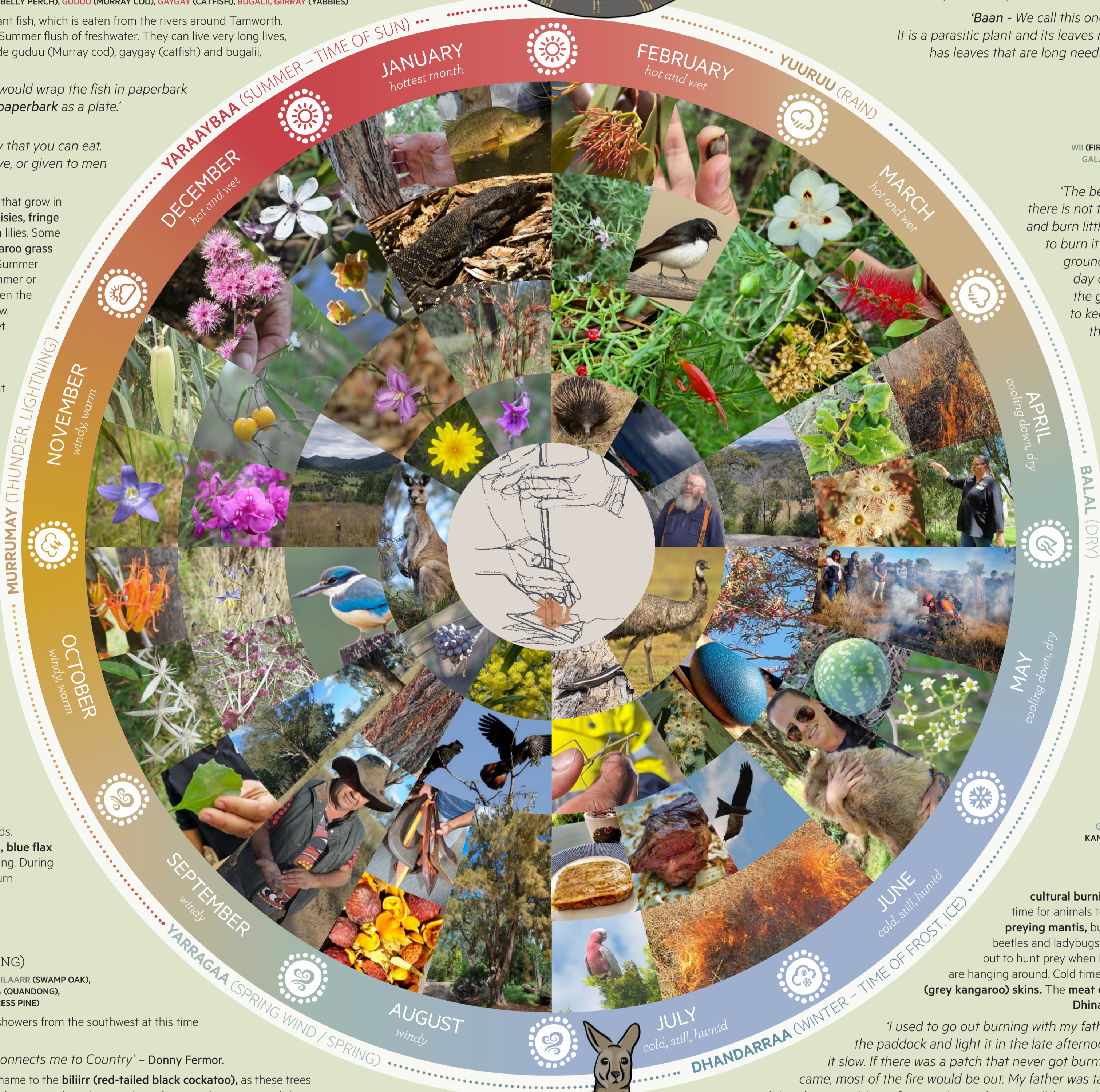
'We use the cones of the bilaarr tree for burning and to make toys for kids. With some species, you can suck on the leaves for their salt content. The timber is also used for tools and weapons' - Kaliela Thornton.

The large leaves of the binamayaa (old man saltbush) are delicious and can be used in a salad, to stuff a chicken or cook as chips.

'The gum of the ironbark is used to tan kangaroo skins. Gum, sinew and ochre is used to strengthen and reinforce tools' - Kaliela Thornton.

'Dried seeds of the guwadhaa (quandong) were traditionally an important trade item.

The dried seeds kept for years' - Ted Fields Jr.



### FEBRUARY - MARCH

#### YUURUU (RAIN)

BAAN (MISTLETOE), YUURRAA (EURAH), DHARRINGARRA (THUNDERCLOUD), BURRA (RUBY SALT BUSH), GUNDAU / YURU (CLOUD), WALAWALA (STORM), YARAAY (SUN), DHRRIDHRI (WILLIE WAGTAIL)

The mat rush (lomandra), bottle brush, emu bush and native rosemary are flowering. The nectar of the bottle brush can be sucked from the flower, it is best to do this in the morning when it is fresh.

'The emu bush is a species of eremophila. There are hundreds of eremophilas, which are small bushes that are great for birds and an important part of the ecosystem. Some of these shrubs, such as the emu bush and yuurraa (eurah) are sacred, ceremonial plants and can be used for healing' - Kaliela Thornton.

The mat rush, eremophila and burra (ruby salt bush) are fruiting. We crush the brown fruit of the mat rush and use it for flour - it has a nutty flavour. The tender shoots of the leaves can be eaten with salad. The burra fruit can be eaten, it has a soft, sweet flesh around a small hard seed and can be eaten raw.

'Baan - We call this one snottygobble, we chew on the fruit. It is a parasitic plant and its leaves mimic its host plant. On the sheok it has leaves that are long needles, like the sheok' - Kaliela Thornton.

### APRIL - MAY

#### BALAL (DRY)

WII (FIRE), DHIL (WILGA), YARRAAN (RIVER RED GUM TREE), GALAN, GALAAN (NATIVE SPINACH / WARRIGAL GREENS), YARRAAN (RIVER RED GUM)

'The best time to burn is when it is cool but there is not too much wind. Protect the trees first and burn little patches at a time, instead of trying to burn it all at once. Burn this section, let that ground cool down, make a patchwork, next day come back and burn over here. Then the ground doesn't get too hot. You need to keep the heat down, the heat will kill all the microbes and the good stuff in the soil, which is the hardest thing to replace' - Mick Miller.

'Fire helps the seeds of plants and brings on the tucker for the animals' - Donny Farmor.

The mugga ironbark and yarraan (river red gum tree) are flowering. The dhil (wilga) flowers from around May. The young shoots of the galan, galaan (native spinach) can be eaten cooked or raw.

'Dhil (wilga) is a special tree. We make tea from it, and we use the black seeds for damper. Dhil is good for building the immune system, depression, anxiety, anti-inflammatory and respiratory problems. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are advised not to drink it. Burning the leaves drives away mosquitoes' - Kaliela Thornton.

### JUNE - JULY

#### DHANDARRAA (WINTER - TIME OF FROST, ICE)

GARRIL-GIL (COLD MONTH - JUNE), BANDAARR (GREY KANGAROO), GILAA (GALAH), BUNBUN (GRASSHOPPER), GURRA (SPIDER), WALLUBAAL (TREE LIZARD), WANDHALA (EAGLEHAWK), DHINAWAN (EMU)

Winter is a good time of year to do some cultural burning. The cultural burn is gentle and allows time for animals to escape, like the walubaal (tree lizard), preying mantis, bunbun (grasshopper), gurra (spider), small beetles and ladybugs. The wandhala (eaglehawk) might come out to hunt prey when it smells the smoke. Mobs of gilaa (galah) are hanging around. Cold time is also the best time to harvest bandaarr (grey kangaroo) skins. The meat of the bandaarr can be eaten year-round. Dhinawan (emus) lay their eggs in May - June.

'I used to go out burning with my father. He would go out in the middle of the paddock and light it in the late afternoon. Let it burn against the wind, burn it slow. If there was a patch that never got burnt, he would leave it. By the time night came, most of the fire would be out. My father was taught by my grandmother, she was a traditional woman. Most of my uncles and aunts did everything in secret because of persecution [for their culture] which was their life back then. I am sure he was doing cultural burning' - Donny Farmor.

'The black wattle makes the best walking sticks. You collect the tap root, harden it in the fire, and make a walking stick' - Donny Farmor.

'Wattle seeds help with diabetes by bringing down blood sugar. They are also good for indigestion. But you have to be careful which variety you use. You can use wattle seeds to make a delicious damper' - Kaliela Thornton.

'I grew up in Moree, Gomeri person. I used to burn on the river bank when I went fishing, you could walk all the way along the riverbank. My uncles and old man used to start the fires. If there were snakes or lizards around they would smell the fire and take off. We didn't kill the snakes, they would crawl between our legs and we didn't worry' - Trevor French.



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