

focus on

KAKADU PLUM

Terminalia ferdinandiana



**RURAL
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Corporation

Part of an R&D program managed by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation



Overview

Kakadu plum is the most common name for this fruit, although it is found from the Kimberley to Darwin and in Queensland. Other names, depending on location, include gubinge, gabiny, kabiny, mardorr, murunga, bush plum, billygoat plum and salty plum.

The pale olive-green, ovoid fruit has a central wooden stone, similar to an immature olive, and is fibrous with a tart and bitter taste.

Kakadu plum is considered a gift of the Dreamtime by Aboriginal culture and has been an important bush food for millennia for people in northern Australian.

Traditionally, both the fruit and seed were eaten raw. The sap was roasted and the bark was boiled and used by Indigenous people to treat skin conditions and sores, or drunk as a tea for colds and flu.

Production is primarily wild harvest, and one of the key challenges for the industry is how to maintain profitable Indigenous involvement and ownership while also supporting significant growth in supply to take advantage of commercial market opportunities.

While Kakadu plum can be eaten fresh, these days it is primarily used as a value-added product in jams, preserves and sauces, as well as in sports drinks and beauty products including cleansers, body lotions, hand cream and lip balm.

The fruit contains the highest recorded level of natural vitamin C content globally, and also displays superior antioxidant properties, so there's enormous potential for its use in dietary supplements and health foods.

Kakadu plum

Kakadu plum is found naturally in open woodland across Northern Australia, namely in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland.

Commercial harvest of Kakadu plum commenced in the late 1990s. The majority of production still stems from wild harvest, which requires government permits. There are also a handful of small orchards.

Following a period of oversupply, the market is currently undersupplied with demand steadily increasing. Production is estimated to average 15-17 tonnes per annum.

Growing conditions

A small to moderate sized semi-deciduous tree, Kakadu plum typically reaches 4-10 metres high. From seed, it generally takes less than five years for the tree to bear fruit.

Suited to its natural hot and coastal environment, the density of Kakadu plum varies, with the highest concentration of trees measured near the coast.

Harvesting

Like many wild-harvested native foods, weather conditions including drought, bushfires and cyclones may impact on the volume of fruit available, so production is highly variable from year to year.

In Western Australia, the main harvest time is January, although some trees have multiple flowerings and can produce fruit up to July. In the Northern Territory harvest occurs in April.

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Other uses

There is an enormous potential market for Kakadu Plum because of its functional properties, although further research and development is necessary and it would also require a much larger and more stable supply.

There is interest from major international health and cosmetic companies and it is already found in beauty products including cleansers, body lotions, hand cream and lip balm.

However, the export of seeds and germplasm in the past has created unease about the potential for product development, market share and profits to be lost to overseas enterprises, especially at the expense of Indigenous Australians.



Dried Kakadu plum



For more information

This fact sheet is one of a series summarising Native Foods R&D from 2007 to 2012. In a partnership between government and industry, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and Australian Native Food Industry Limited (ANFIL) are working towards an innovative, profitable and sustainable Native Foods industry.



Australian Native Food Industry Limited (ANFIL) was formed in 2006 and is the peak national body which represents all interests in the rapidly growing Australian native food industry. ANFIL has taken the lead in working with industry, governments and other organisations to determine and prioritise research and market development strategies to progress the industry.

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RURAL INDUSTRIES
Research & Development Corporation

The Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation (RIRDC) is a statutory authority established to work with industry to invest in research and development for a more profitable, sustainable and dynamic rural sector.

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