

Sarsaparilla (Smilax glyciphylla) and False Sarsaparilla (Hardenbergia violacea)

Both of these plants grow naturally on my property. The leaves of the Sarsaparilla (Smilax) are used to make a tea with a sweet taste. The leaves of the False Sarsaparilla can also be used to make tea, and the flowers can be used as a dye.

Blue Flax Lily (Dianella caerulea)

The blue flax lily produces bright blue berries during a short season and these are very attractive to birds and lizards, so you have to be quick. While I have a variety with edible berries growing naturally, it should be noted that the leaves are toxic and that there are some species of Dianella with toxic berries and leaves.

I also have a number of European fruit trees including apples, plums, apricots, figs, mulberry, olives and various citrus so with all of this I am almost self sufficient in fruit and vegetables. The garden can only be seen as totally self sufficient as long as I am happy eating mostly weeds as they are abundant. Apart from Warrigal Greens and Coastal Saltbush, which are prolific, the other indigenous plants can only be seen as an interesting addition—they take too long to mature and production in any quantity would require a much larger investment in time and effort than I am willing to provide. I am also aware that a lot of people are reasonably conservative so, apart from slipping some greens into dishes where they are camouflaged, I tend to reserve the indigenous foods for my own meals.

I am happy with this limited production, it is sufficient to make my own table an interesting place to be and a different place than that dictated by the foods available in our markets—a table that reflects the seasons, the soil and the land I live on.

NOT A HOLLYHOCK IN SIGHT

HOME GARDENS OF WOMEN IN REMOTE AUSTRALIA IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Paul van Reyk

*How many kinds of sweet flowers grow
In an English country garden ?
I'll tell you now of some that I know
And those I miss I hope you'll pardon.
Daffodils, heart's ease and phlox,
Meadowsweet and lily stalks
Gentian, lupins and tall hollyhocks,
Roses, foxgloves, snowdrops, forget-me-nots
In an English country garden.*

So runs the 18th century Morris dancing song *Country Garden* set to music by the Australian-composer Percy Grainger in 1918. It's a pretty picture but I suspect it might have drawn a snort from women in remote rural Australia in the late 19th and early 20th century should they have heard it. Their country gardens were hard fought for from the unforgiving soils and the bipolar vagary of droughts and flood of the Australian climate.

In this paper I look at two such gardens to see what light they throw on how women lived in remote Australia in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. I look at what they grew and what they did with it: what impacted on what they could grow; and what became of the gardens. I also look at what else they ate as it bears on how they lived.