Angka Akatyerr-akert:

A Desert raisin report

Alyawarr speakers from Ampilatwatja, and Fiona Walsh and Josie Douglas
Background

The knowledge of Desert raisin (*Akatyerr*) recorded here is known to Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara and other people who collect *Akatyerr* (also called *Katyer* in Anmatyerr, *Yakajirri* in Warlpiri, *Kampurarpa* in Pitjantjatjara and other dialects). The copyright of this knowledge is communal. There are also certain traditional owners who have special rights and responsibilities to this species. Parts of this knowledge and practice have been recorded elsewhere (e.g. Turner 1994, Latz 1995, Laramba Women and Green 2003).

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Diagram showing contents of this report in relation to Desert raisin. This is extracted from the diagram on page 50.
**Purposes of this report**

The main reasons we made this report are to:

1) Record some skills and knowledge of Alyawarr people

2) Help keep traditional knowledge alive for younger Alyawarr people

3) Give a report to the Alyawarr women who generously shared their time and expertise in this research.

This report is important. It has Alyawarr text and English text. People at Ampilatwatja speak Alyawarr and other Aboriginal languages as their first language. There are very few reports or books in Alyawarr, so this adds to Alyawarr resources. It is a language resource that can be used in schools and at home.

Older Alyawarr people, like many Aboriginal people in central Australia, are worried that younger people have fewer chances to learn specialised traditional knowledge. This knowledge is vital to cultural and personal identity. They have asked that this knowledge be recorded.

This report complements other Desert Knowledge CRC research publications on bush foods (see end references).

Desert raisin is one of the most valuable plants in desert Australia. Aboriginal people hold a lot of specialised knowledge about where and when plants grow, how to manage them, and what animals eat the plants. This report records some of the public knowledge about Desert raisin. They know about the *Altyerr*, ancestral and human stories of the plants; some of this is undisclosed knowledge. The fruit of this plant and different seed species are collected and sold by many people, including those along the Sandover River and Highway (north-east of Alice Springs). In Alyawarr, there are special words for different plants, their growth stages, parts and preparation that either don’t have separate terms in English or are hard to translate.

This Alyawarr information is also important because there are non-Aboriginal people who want to learn about bush foods. Many of them do not know where bush foods come from, who collects them and how they are harvested. Bush food products can now be bought in supermarkets, and restaurants in Australia, America, Japan and other countries. More people want to buy bush foods. Demand for them is growing very quickly. Harvesters and senior Aboriginal people want their knowledge and skills to be recognised, respected and supported.
Elders want Alyawarr children to be strong in Alyawarr language and culture. This includes learning about bush foods and knowing about country.
How this report was made

This report is based on trips by Alyawarr people to collect Desert raisin, seeds and other bush foods. These trips were from 2006 to 2008 and were with Edie Holmes, Jilly Holmes, Angelina Luck, Eileen Bonney, Denise Bonney, Polly Mills, Joyrene Holmes, Evan, Kanisha and Garrick Teece. There are some quotes from Banjo Morton, Alby Bailey, Casey Holmes and Frank Holmes recorded by David Moore for this research and also the Alyawarr Picture Dictionary.

Some photos from work with Lucky Morton and others from Urapuntja Clinic, Arlparre and Arnkawenyerr have been used too. We have included quotes from Anmatyerr woman, Clarrie Long of Ti Tree because she adds details that were known to Alyawarr people but have yet to be recorded.

Some of the words in this report are records of what people talked about on the trips and others are about things we saw. The report has been set up to follow the steps taken to manage, harvest and prepare Desert raisin (Akatyerr). There is some information about seeds (ntang) because people also collect and sell seeds too.
Left: Women from Ampilatwatja and Irrwelty on the road between Irrwelty and Red Gum store talking with researchers. Middle: Edie Holmes records a story about burning and Desert raisin while David Moore, Jilly Holmes and Kanisha listen. Right: Fiona Walsh recording Angelina Luck, Joyrene Holmes, Edie Holmes, Kanisha and Evan grinding up Akatyerr.

Right: Angelina Luck reviews video footage of her talking about Akatyerr with Edie, Josie and Caroline.

Far right: Angelina, Joyrene and Jilly look at an earlier version of this report.
**Ingkerrenh**

Fiona-atherr Josie atherr apetyek, town-they
Alethepereng-they ratherrap ayenh ikngwenh,
Akatyerr anwantherr akerl-alpetyek, Edie-rnem
anwenantherr atnwenhek, akngek anwenhantherr
mwetekel, kel anwantherr akenh, Akatyerr aketyek
anwantherr alhek. Akenh-anem anwantherr kwart-then
mixup akenh, alhethen-antey. How much anwantherr
aketyek rerem arenh, alakenh arenh anwantherr
“How much rerem ineyel Akatyerran wenh?”
Nthwekern weth-ilkwer inetyek angetherr weth-ilkwer
aretyek atnwenhek anwenantherr. Kel anwantherr
showemilenh, yanhey akeynenh-anem areynenh-anem.
“That’s how to pick Desert raisins”. (Eileen Bonney)

Denise-rnem anenhantherr amenheng-antey
akngewan. (Edie Holmes)

Fiona and Josie came from town, they took me out to pick
Desert raisins, Edie mob went as well and they took us and
we took the Desert raisins. We picked yellow and brown
Desert raisins, they were mixed. They saw how many we
pick: “How do they get Desert raisins?” They witnessed us
picking Desert raisins like that. We showed them, we picked
the Desert raisins and they watched us, “That’s how to pick
Desert raisins”. (Eileen Bonney)

Denise was going along too, with her mum.
(Edie Holmes)
People involved

Angelina Luck  Polly Mills  Jilly Holmes  Edie Kemasre Holmes  Joyrene Holmes and Kanisha Teece

Eileen Bonney  Denise Bonney and Michael  Lily Morton  Banjo Morton  David Moore  Josie Douglas  Fiona Walsh

Photo by Ros Vaughan, Ampilatwatja Health Service
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Photo by Gary Marshall, Ampilatwatja Health Service
Lands and communities where Alyawarr people live

The Sandover region showing Ampilatwatja, a settlement with 300 people on a land excision. Other Alyawarr settlements are on Alyawarra and Angangapa Aboriginal Land Trusts.

(Map section from IAD Press 2002. Reproduced with permission of IAD Press.)
Country, rain and fire

Apmer nthenh-angkarr akngerr ntwek wenh?


Where are a lot of Desert raisins growing?

We pick Desert raisins by the roadside if we see a lot growing there. When we are out bush we harvest them in the burned ground. When we know that there are a lot of Desert raisins there, “Where are there a lot of Desert raisins growing?” that is where we pick them. That is where we go, to the places where they are abundant, where there is a good patch. We harvest them at that bush location. (Edie Holmes)


We search for places where the grass had been burned and we go there. Many plants live on the burned ground. Bush tucker grows on the burned ground and we look around the burned ground. There might really be a lot of bush tucker there. We might be collecting there for a couple of days, until we have collected enough. If there isn’t so much it might be one day. Desert raisins increase on the burned ground. (Eileen Bonney)
A small patch of *Akaryerr* on burnt ground between Irrultja and Red Gum store.

*Akaryerr* grows by the roadside north of Red Gum store where the grader has broken the ground.
Long ago they would burn for Desert raisins

Long ago they used to burn the country. They would burn it for Desert raisins. They burned grass when it was too thick and overgrown so that later the Desert raisins would grow at that place. After the rain came and grew up the plants there would be a lot growing. We would gather up the Desert raisins. There would be a huge number on the burned ground. There are a lot of Desert raisins growing on burned ground, but not many on the overgrown ground. We go to the burned ground and we pick a lot of Desert raisins there. They are there now, at that place. (Edie Holmes)

They would burn the ground before rain. Then later on it would rain and grow the Desert raisins up really quickly. They would increase. There would be edible ripe ones and the unripe ones and the dried ones as well. That’s how they would typically burn the ground and get a lot of Desert raisins growing. (Edie Holmes)
Long ago they would all burn the ground and it was accepted. They would all do it – it was our custom. We would burn the ground for game and for Desert raisins and for yams. The bush potato tubers would grow on the burnt ground. There would be a lot of Desert raisins and a lot of goannas. That is how we would always burn the country. A lot of bush tucker would grow there then. (Edie Holmes)

Making rain

The old people thought about rain. They made rain. They would go to a sacred site and make rain. They would sing the correct songs. It was the Kemarr and Pwerl skin group who would sing those songs. The old men would go to a sacred site. It was the initiated men and they would take younger ‘middle-aged’ men and teach them.

The main sites were around Elkedra. After making rain the trees and grass would grow. (Banjo Morton)
Ilpatiley-angenh arrangkw

Awankan arrtyenh ampwernemel ilpatilenh alhewertangkwel. Rlengk-rlengk arrangkw-anemarl.


(Edie Holmes)

Nowadays we don’t burn

Long ago the old people used to burn the grass quite openly. Nowadays we can’t. Everything is overgrown. Why don’t they like burning? It’s because of the white people. The fires might burn up their cattle. They get angry and scold people. Long ago they used to burn grass freely. Not now, we just walk through thick bush. Long ago we used to go through [station], to places where we got kangaroo and goannas. We would just take the kangaroo meat back to camp. If we had two or three we would cook them in camp. We can’t burn around [station] because the white people don’t want the grass to get burned – the grass for the cattle. We only cook the (meat) back at camp. (Edie Holmes)
Above: Jilly Holmes searches for Desert raisin in old spinifex that hasn’t been burnt for a while.

Right: Recently burnt sandplain on the Alyawarra Land Trust where consequently bush foods regenerate. A Desert raisin plant is in the foreground.
**Aktyerr arlkwey-angker ingkerr**

Arwengerrpel Akatyerr arlkweyel, intwek-anem, intelty-anem.

Akatyerr arlkweyel ankerrel, Akatyerr, Arrarntenh arlkweyel, intekw, anwekety, angey-angey arlkweyel ankerrel, amernan ikweren nh.

**Animals that eat Desert raisins**

The bush turkey eats Desert raisins and other fruits and grasshoppers.

(Alyawarr Picture Dictionary, translation modified)

The emu eats Desert raisin, Bush plums, Conkerberries, and other plants. These are its foods.

(Alyawarr Dictionary 1992, translation modified)

In turn, emu and turkey are important meat for Alyawarr people.

Photos by Michael Barritt and Karen May
Arwengerre akatyer-ren, intew-then arlweyel.

The bush turkey eats desert raisins and fruits.
Picking and processing Desert raisins

Apmwerrkel anantherr alhew Akatyerrew


Yesterday we went looking for Desert raisins

Yesterday we went [looking] for Desert raisins to Aherrarl-arlkew. We found a few Desert raisins on ground which had earlier been burned. Desert raisins grow on the sandy ground at Aherrarl-arlkew. We just got a few when we went out yesterday. [There has been no rain] so they were the dried out ones. We just went a little way, not far. (Joyrene Holmes)
Above: Satellite photo from Google Earth 2006 of Ampilatwatja and surrounding areas where Desert raisin was collected.

Right: Desert raisin patch and harvesting by Joyrene, Kanisha, Edie and Jilly.
Akerl-apenh anantherr

Areynenh-anem yanhey rlwanenh arwerl-penh akeyneyel, arrerneyneyel pwelapirreyneyel mixup-antey. Kel rerunemap pwelapirrenty ineynenh. (Eileen Bonney)

Picking as we went along

They saw us picking them out from the plant and filling them up, a mix of both types. They picked them till there was a whole lot. (Eileen Bonney)


We ate tucker. OK. We picked one lot. We picked another lot and then came back to camp. They saw it. That is how they pick them – the hard way. (Eileen Bonney)

Akerl-apenh anantherreeeeey, amentew-amentew arwerl arrpanenh-itwew. Ratherran arerl-apenh anngetherrantey “Alakenhaym inngan akerl-apeyel Akatyerran wenh!” (Eileen Bonney)

We were picking as we went along, each person picking in their own place. They saw at first hand, “Ah, that's how they harvest Desert raisins!” (Eileen Bonney)
Top: Eileen sits to pick Desert raisin fruit. She uses both hands to collect the fruit.

Bottom: Jilly, Denise and Michael, and Kanisha pick fruit. They stand up to pick when there are fewer fruit on each bush.
Alakenh-anyem rernem akalthenhanem, irlwartilenh


Picking and processing fruit in the early days

I will tell this story about long ago when I saw my Mum harvesting Desert raisins. Well, she used to pick them and then dig a hole and then poke at the fruit which still had stalks attached and then put [the fruit] all together into one hole. After she had filled up the hole she would stand, leaning on her digging stick. Using her feet, she would break off the fruit from their stalks. After the stalks had broken off, there would only be fruit in the hole. Then she would separate the fruit in a coolamon and clean the fruit. Then she would throw away the trash. That is what they used to do in the early days. I saw my mother doing that process. (Edie Holmes)
A woman threshing seed with her feet. (Devitt 1988 p. 134)

This method is similar to what Edie Holmes describes in her story about her mother cleaning Desert raisin fruit.
Rerrk-warl alperlewem

*Going to our dinner camp*

Fullupirrentyan anantherr rerrk-warlarl alperlewew, arey-alpew alakenh kwart ament-warl arrpemarl arrernenh alha ament arrpemarl arrernenh. (Edie Holmes)


After picking a lot of them, we went to the dinner camp and it was there that we had a look and separated the unripe ones and the overripe ones. (Edie Holmes)

When we got hungry we would go to a dinner camp, “Let’s get more!” The containers would be full. We would stay there a while and boil the tea. (Eileen Bonney)

We go in the heat. We pick until we are tired. Then we go back to the shade. We stay in the shade. We pick out Desert raisins. We ate some. We ate dinner. (Eileen Bonney)
Above: Women ready to sort and clean *Akayerr* fruit.

Left: Tea break after sorting fruit.
## Akatyerr akngakem, irrarkem


_Alakenh-anyem anwantherr akalkeyelan, akngakeyel anwantherr, aheranelan anwantherr irrarkem._

(Edie Holmes)


## Separating and cleaning Desert raisins

_Then we would put them out to dry. We would clean them, placing the unripe ones and the ripe ones separately. That is how we arrange them. That’s what we did with them._ (Eileen Bonney)

_This is how we separate them out and clean them with sand._ (Edie Holmes)

_We took them back to the shade. We had a look at them in the shade, picking out some, putting the unripe ones separately. We cleaned them with earth. They thought that it was easy, they just send people out as though it’s an easy job._ (Eileen Bonney)
Top left: Fruit are sorted and separated into piles of green or unripe, ripe yellow and brown, dry fruit.
Top middle: The stalks and bad fruit are thrown away.
Top right: Fruit is rubbed on canvas or in sand to remove wax, bitterness and small hairs, so people are less likely to get a headache or gut ache (stomach ache) from the fruit.
Right: Different stages of Akatyerr fruit: green fruit; kwart – ripe yellow fruit; alha – wrinkly, dry, brown fruit.
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Irrarl kem ahernel-anem


Wal ratherrap arenh, “Alakenh-aymant Akatyerr rernem akaltheyel wenh!” Akwerrpel ratherran arenh anwantherarl Akatyerr akngakenh an clean-emilenh anantherr. (Edie Holmes)

Cleaning with sand

When we had a large quantity, we went to the dinner camp and it was there that we had a look and separated the yellow ripe fruits from the brown, wrinkly ripe ones. Then we were cleaning them with sand, in the way that was done traditionally. Those two saw it, “Ah, that’s how they harvest Desert raisins!” They didn’t know about it before that. We separated out the Desert raisins and cleaned them.

(Edie Holmes)

Close-up of Desert raisin showing sticky coating and tiny hairs on the fruit.

Akatyerr has the sticky stuff and little hairs. Rubbing on the ground cleans them off. The sticky stuff gives you a headache. The hairs on it give you a headache. You feel dizzy. If you clean it you can eat it and that is fine. You get a gut’s ache but after you clean it that is fine. (Clarrie Long Kemarre, translated from Anmatyerr)
Edie Holmes uses sand to rub and clean the fruit. This removes the waxy coating and small hairs from the fruit. These can give you a stomach ache or headache when not cleaned off.
Amern anantherr arlkwem

Kel amern anantherr arlkwek.
Arlkwey-alpek anwantherr. Rten anwantherr arlkwenh.
(Eileen Bonney)

Anantherr apey-alpew-anem Akatyerr-rnenenpan


Ikwer-penh anantherr apey-alpew-anem Akatyerr-rnenenpan. (Edie Holmes)

We eat the fruit

We would eat that tucker.
We ate some. We ate dinner. (Eileen Bonney)

We came home with our Desert raisins

In the evening we knocked off. It was like that after one day.
We went home. “That is how they wear themselves out doing that work.” That is what they saw. OK, now Edie can talk.
(Eileen Bonney)

After that we came back with our Desert raisins.
(Edie Holmes)
Clockwise from top left:

- Children from Arnkawenyyerr at Clinic school with *Akayerr*
- Denise Bonney eats some *Akayerr*
- A container of sorted *Akayerr* fruit ready to take back home
- Joyrene gives fruit to Kanisha
- Polly Mills, Jilly Holmes, Denise, Michael and Eileen Bonney (hidden), Josie Douglas and Edie Holmes with *Akayerr* they picked.
Aktyerr tekewem, akwernem paket-wark


Drying and storing Desert raisins

We go back and put the yellow ones out to dry, until they get brown. We put them out in the morning, and in the evening we put them away in case the dogs eat them or the kids scatter them everywhere. We put them back in a drum. I put the Desert raisins away in a place where the kids can’t touch them. (Eileen Bonney)

Right: Polly Mills (blue beanie), at Welere, east of Irrweltye with Akatyerr out to dry.
Above: Young woman next to bowl of Desert raisin. The bowl is stored out of reach of children and dogs.
Left: Containers of Akatyerr ready to sort and clean.
Grinding up Desert raisin to make a seed cake

They would crush the *Akatyerr* with a stone. They would make seed cakes. Big round ones like footballs. They would line them up. They would rub them in ochre, cover them and put them in the sun. We’d put them into the sun and then onto the tree platform high up. We would make a bed out of spinifex and tie them up like eggs. We would place them on the grass. It’d be dry. It would be covered in a web, like spider web. They might keep them for a couple of years. They might go green and mouldy but the inside would be good. We did not cook the balls in the fire. (Clarrie Long Kemarre, translated from Anmatyerr)

Desert raisin starts as yellow ripe fruit and is picked and crushed up and made into a cake.

Then we eat the cake. The dried fruits are picked and crushed up with a grindstone to make a cake which will be eaten. (Alby Bailey, Casey Holmes and Frank Holmes)
Left page: A special grindstone found in a Desert raisin patch in 2008. In earlier
times it would have been used mainly to grind up Akatyerr fruits.
Left: Angelina Luck grinds up Akatyerr on this grindstone.
Below left: After the fruit are ground up, water is added to make a cake out of the fruit.
Below centre: Kanisha shows a ball of the Akatyerr cake.
Below: Balls of Desert raisin covered in ochre and ready to store. Made by people from Yuendumu.
Arrwekeleny-rnemel amern pwety-areny arlkwenh

Long ago we lived on bush foods

People lived on that tucker before the coming of Europeans.

Captain Cook found that the ancestors were living on bush tucker. They used to make the seeds into seed cakes *ikelh*.

(Banjo Morton)

Ampernem akaltyirreyel

Children are learning

The children are learning. They should have two-way schooling to teach the children about the bush plants so that they can collect seeds when they get older.

(Banjo Morton)

Arrwekeleny-rnemel akaltyilenh ingwer-rnem-anemarl.

Arrwekeleny-rnemel akaltyilenh ingwer-rnem-anemarl.

The old people taught the next generation. There will be people to take over when the older generation passes away.

(Banjo Morton)

Menty ipmey-angenh. Amern arrwekeleny iterl-antey-areyel.

Menty ipmey-angenh. Amern arrwekeleny iterl-antey-areyel.

They keep holding on to that knowledge, they can’t leave it, they remember that traditional bush tucker [*Impen* – special, important]. They lived on those foods before flour and sugar.

(Banjo Morton)
**Aktyerr-then ntang-then tharlemileyw**

Retangkwel ayernek ntangek.

Apwert angernenty-penhek, irrka rernem arteynenty. Ahern rernem ntwem arrpemarl arteynenty-penh.

Ingwerenty arlkwententyekant, ntang akngerrarl akwetyem. (Banjo Morton)

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**We sell Desert raisins and seeds**

Rod Horner was asking for seed first and that is how we got started.

The seeds are used mainly for revegetation work. Covering up the places which have been dug up.

If people wanted to buy more seed, we would like to collect more. (Banjo Morton)

We like doing this work. We like going off with our buckets [of Desert raisins] and picking them and eating them, especially on the newly burnt country. (Clarrie Long Kemarre)
Top left: Lily Morton and Angelina Luck threshing Ilkerte (Whipstick wattle) to separate seeds from pods.

Top right: Cleaning up Alhanker (Sandhill wattle) seeds by yandying in a coolamon.

Left: The shed in which Banjo Morton and Lily Morton store the seed and fruit before sale.

Right: Cleaned Akatyerr and Nyerrm (Dogwood) in drums ready to sell.
I sell seeds and go to get more

I got two buckets of Dogwood seed. I left them first. I got two of *Acacia colei*. I put them down. Then I went out for *Acacia tenuissima*. I brought it back.

Rod Horner came up to buy seeds. He bought this many [showing one hand]. He told me, “Get more again. Arlep [*Acacia victoriae seed*], Arnkwerren [Coolibah seed].” He comes here with money. He bought this many drums [showing five fingers].

Now I am going to get Arlep [*Acacia victoriae*]. Coolibah too. (Angelina Luck)
The page contains images of Angelina Luck cleaning and winnowing Ilkerte (Whipstick wattle) seeds. The captions read:

Top left: Angelina Luck cleans Ilkerte (Whipstick wattle) seed.

Top right: Angelina winnows Ilkerte to separate seeds from chaff.
Rod Horner packages the Desert raisin he has bought from Alyawarr people.

The Desert raisin and seeds sold from Alyawarr and other central Australian communities ends up being made into jams, sauces and other products that get sold in shops around Australia and overseas. Photo at the Alice Springs Desert park shop.
Aherrenge store is the main shop where Ampilatwatja people buy their food. There are bush food paintings in the shop. As well as getting bush foods from country, Alyawarr people would like more bush foods for sale in their shop. At times when Akatyerr jam was there it sold very quickly.
Alyawarr people collect many different bush foods and medicines

Desert raisin is just one of many different bush foods and medicines that are collected by Alyawarr people. It is one of the more important ones. It is easy to collect. It grows in many places. It is good to eat. It can be sold. It has a strong story.

Other bush foods that are important to Alyawarr people and continue to be eaten include bush potato, conkleberry, bush banana, bush currant. Of the seed species, only some green seed species are eaten nowadays. Alyawarr people also collect and sell dry seed species.

Other bush medicines that are used today by Alyawarr people include Arreth (*Eremophila freelingii*) and Ilpengk (*Eremophila dalyana*). Other bush meats that are important to Alyawarr people include hill kangaroo, bush turkey, emu, and sand goanna. There is also sugar bag and witchetty grub.

Left: Joyrene with bush medicine plant (*Eremophila goodwinii*).
Above: Anayte (Bush potatoes).
Below: Edie Holmes harvesting *Arreth*. 

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Young person with a sand goanna.

Evan Teece with Coolibah bark to make into ashes for tobacco.

Eileen Bonney collects Ilpengk to make into bush medicine.
These terms are specifically related to harvesting and processing bush foods that are mentioned in this report. Some of the words are specialist terms which only relate to Desert raisins. Some of the words have a more general meaning but are used in this report in a more specific way.

**Akaltheyel** (verb) breaking off, applied to breaking off the stems

**Akatyerr** Desert raisin (*Solanum centrale*), refers to both the plant (*arwerl*) and the fruit (*amern*). There are words to describe the different ripening stages of the fruit: *kwart*, *amern*, *alha* (see separate entries)

**Akeyel** (verb) pick, harvest

**Akngakeyel, Akalkeyel** (verb) separate out the ripe and unripe Desert raisins

**Alerrey** *Acacia cowleana, A. colei*, group of wattle shrubs with edible seeds

**Alha** dried, wrinkled, brown Desert raisin

**Altyerr** Law, dreaming

**Amern** food, tucker, edible desert raisin

**Anthelk** trash, including stalks and other inedible plant parts

**Antywenp** overgrown, area of thick grass. Bush tucker is not able to grow there. These areas are usually burned

**Apalyarrileyel** (verb) making desert raisins into a cake

**Apert-atweyel** (verb) pounding with a hammer stone

**Apwert alyer** hammer stone used for pounding desert raisins. The base stone is called **ather**

**Arlep** *Acacia victoriae*, Acacia bush, kind of wattle

**Arnkengeny** many, an abundance

**Arnkwerern** Coolibah (*Eucalyptus coolabah*) seed

**Arreth** Hill fuschia, (*Eremophila freelingii*) medicinal plant

**Arrtyeyel** (verb) burning something

**Aymperneyel** (verb) clean with a coolamon dish, yandy
Ikelt cake made from ground Desert raisin fruits

Ilkert *Acacia tenuissima* Whipstick wattle

Ilpat ground which has been burned recently, open area

Ilpat-penh means that significant regrowth has already occurred.

Ilpatileyel (verb) burning an area to create an open area

Ilpengk *Eremophila dalyana* plant with medicinal properties

Impen special, unique, important

Inta stalk of the Desert raisin

Intert Desert raisin fruit with a stalk still attached

Irlwartileyel (verb) separating ‘cleaning’, to make clear, separate out fruit from trash

Irrarlkeyel, Ipareyel (verb) cleaning fruit with sand

Kwart yellow firm Desert raisin fruit

Lyapelhileyel (transitive verb) water and people growing plants

Ntang edible seeds

Ntweyel, lyapeyel (intransitive verb) plants grow up

Ntyerrm seeds of the Dogwood tree (*Acacia sericophylla*) which is called *awenth*

Rerrk dinner camp

Rlwaneyel (verb) choosing and picking out ripe fruit

Tek-arrerneyel putting something in the sun to dry it out
**School curriculum-linked learning activities: ideas for teachers about Desert raisin**

This report on *Akatyerr* (Desert Raisin) and the Alyawarr knowledge contained in it can be used for many purposes when it comes to classroom learning. Any classroom learning about bush foods needs to be done in conjunction with country-based (field) learning. Country visits are where inter-generational transfer of language and cultural knowledge occurs. Country-based learning needs to involve elders working with teachers and students in a process of two-way learning, and include teaching about cultural aspects connected to *Akatyerr* (or other bush foods being learnt about).

These ideas can be linked to the Language and Culture section of the NT Curriculum Framework. *Akatyerr* is ideal for use with the school curriculum because it is a common plant known to many children and easily found around schools, settlements, roadsides and burnt areas with red sand country. It is one of the most valuable plant species in central Australia.

### Teaching from the known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar

*Because Akatyerr is something the students know about, and applying the principal that learning is most effective if you move students from the known to the unknown, then studying Akatyerr can be used to help students reflect on and learn about their own world and use this knowledge to compare and contrast it to things in the wider western world. This may encourage students to research something beyond their own context.*

At the beginning of a unit of work about *Akatyerr* give students a chance to talk about what they already know, and what they want to learn. This will help them engage with the learning process. The information that comes out of this session can form the basis of a plan for the unit.

### Learning about science

The information in this report gives students an opportunity to develop scientific ways of working. Science teaches students to think about and ask questions about everyday things, to evaluate information and the methods used to generate it, to identify issues of a local and global nature, to pose and evaluate arguments, to explain and predict natural phenomena, and to read and converse more widely about things.

### Country-based learning

Some of the equipment needed for country visits includes camera, voice recorder, video camera, sketch pads and pencils, small blackboards and chalk, bags/billies for collecting, a plant press. You might also want to take paints, plasticine, glue, magnifying glasses or a hand lens, crowbar or shovel, etc.

Try to ensure that students are involved in recording the information they learned in a useful and meaningful way. This may be through making a book, painting, poster, powerpoint presentation, video, labeled photo album or song writing, etc. It is important to see every trip as an opportunity to add to literacy activities.

### Table of Learning Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching from the known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar</strong></td>
<td>Ask students what they already know about <em>Akatyerr</em>. Write this up. If students are little, the teacher can write these things up on a board or large wall chart. If they are older and can do it, get them to write their thoughts themselves. It is good to talk first. Ask elders what they think children should know about the plant. Write up some of the questions or subjects on a chart. As you go through the learning process, help them to answer the questions they have asked. Ask students how they think they might learn these things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Alyawarr and other languages through <em>Akatyerr</em></strong></td>
<td>Use the learning about <em>Akatyerr</em> to extend students’ own language knowledge. Get elders to talk to them and teach them on country. Reinforce new or ‘hard’ language by going over it in the classroom, labeling, describing, drawing, listing new words and meanings, etc. Use the texts in this report and other books either orally or for reading, making cloze exercises, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning about English through <em>Akatyerr</em></strong></td>
<td>Use activities like ‘speed copying’, retrieval charts, labeling and classifying samples, making plant profile cards, describing a process of preparing <em>akatyerr</em>, making books, maps, etc. to help develop students’ English. Try to find avenues for them to explain in English to English speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy through <em>Akatyerr</em></strong></td>
<td>Use such activities as cloze activities, getting students to summarise paragraphs, Q &amp; A based on sections in the report, reading, writing in report format, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation/biology/taxonomy</strong></td>
<td>Walk around your school, homes or country and find different bush food plants. Collect a small branch of each. Identify which one is called <em>Akatyerr</em> in Alyawarr or another language you know. How do you know it is <em>Akatyerr</em>? How is it different from other bush food plants? Write on separate cards the names for each of these plants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation/recording/biology</strong></td>
<td>Find an <em>Akatyerr</em> plant. Look at it closely. Make or draw it to show the different plant parts – stem, leaves, flowers and fruit. Say or write the Alyawarr and English names for these parts. Colour in your drawing to show the flowers. What colours are its fruits? See <a href="http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/tcland">www.schools.nt.edu.au/tcland</a> p. 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sorting/classification/palatability</strong></td>
<td>Collect lots of different <em>Akatyerr</em> fruits. Sort the fruits into different types. Arrange them into groups by their order of ripeness. Match these words to the fruit types: green, hard, yellow, soft, brown, wrinkly, dry, black. Sort the fruits again into groups by order of their taste. Which types taste best? Which types taste bad? Which should you not eat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation/checking up/biology/burning</strong></td>
<td>Find an <em>Akatyerr</em> plant. Carefully dig to follow its root system (like when digging Bush potato). Is it short or long? Does it connect one <em>Akatyerr</em> plant to another? How would you redo the drawing in <a href="http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/tcland">www.schools.nt.edu.au/tcland</a> at p. 52? Ask old people (your grandmother or aunty, grandfather or uncle) about how people burnt country in the olden days (there were special rules for burning country). Why did they burn country? Why would a plant with roots like this benefit from burning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography/mapping</strong></td>
<td>Make a map of where the <em>Akatyerr</em> patches grow near your community. Show on the map the features that are important in helping people to find the patches. These could be sand plains, roads, creeks, water holes. You might be able to see the plants there now. You might remember where they were when you collected them in the past. The map can be made in three dimensions using rocks, rope, etc, or on a satellite image or written on paper. Add a distance scale to your map. Measure how far it is to the patches. Is this distance by road or is it in a straight line?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>What are the skin names in your area? Who do you know who is related to <em>Akatyerr</em>? Do you know any ‘<em>Akatyerr</em> people’? Is their relation to the plant by kinship, as a totem or by another connection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecology/food webs</strong></td>
<td>What animals eat <em>Akatyerr</em>? What animals live on the plant? Look closely at the sand near <em>Akatyerr</em> plants. Notice the tracks of different animals. Sit and watch the flowers and fruits to see what insects visit. Make clay or plasticine models of these animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food preparation/microscopic features</strong></td>
<td>Alyawarr people know when they rub the fruit these are being removed so the fruit is less bitter and more can be eaten. Look at <em>Akatyerr</em> under a hand lens or microscope. Can you see the waxy surface and fine hairs? How might the wax and fine hairs help the plant survive? Compare how they look before and after rubbing in sand. Discuss why this preparation method might be important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maths/mass/weight</strong></td>
<td>Collect lots of <em>Akatyerr</em> fruit. Fill up cups, billy cans, tin cans or plastic containers. Line up the containers from those with the most fruit to those with the least fruit. Weigh each container. Work out the total weight of fruit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time/seasons</strong></td>
<td>On a calendar, mark when different bush foods ripen and can be collected. Can <em>Akatyerr</em> fruit be picked for days, weeks or months? Compare it to when <em>Anatye</em> (Bush potato) can be dug up. Is the season for <em>Akatyerr</em> longer or shorter? Does it fruit every year, or only some years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-relationships/systems science</strong></td>
<td>Keep working through the circle diagram (p. 50). Look at and work on documenting the white circles. Identify how they inter-relate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For useful education references:**


http://www.science.org.au/primaryconnections/plantsinaction.htm#resourcesheets


www.schools.nt.edu.au/tcland
Other Aboriginal knowledge concepts inter-related to *Akatyerr* (Desert raisin)

This report records a small amount of the knowledge that Alyawarr people know about Desert raisin. There are many other subjects associated with this plant, and many other plants in which Alyawarr people, especially older people, have expert knowledge and skills. Some of the subjects in this report are shown in yellow on this diagram. Other subjects which have not yet been recorded are also shown in white. Aboriginal people want others to recognise and respect the existence and inter-relation of these concepts and the multiple roles and values of plant species (see V. Dobson, F. Walsh and J. Douglas DVD 2008 and paper 2009).

References


Desert Knowledge CRC. 2009. *Along the value chain: information = power*, 15” DVD, Ampilatwatja women, Produced by Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs.

Devitt J. 1988. Contemporary Aboriginal women and subsistence in remote arid Australia, Ph.D Dissertation, School of Anthropology and Society, University of Queensland, Brisbane.


Dobson Perrurle V, Walsh F and Sati W. 2008. *Anpernirrentye: Relationships between bush foods, creation laws, people, country and all things, illustrated by three plants*, Desert Knowledge CRC. DVD 13’22”.

Dobson Perrurle V, Walsh F and Douglas J. in prep. Arrernte values in landscapes and iconic plant species, for submission to *Ecology and Society* special edition on traditional knowledge and western science.


Merne Altyerr-ipenhe (Food from the Creation time) Reference Group, Douglas J and Walsh F. in prep., Protocols for people involved in commercial bush foods enterprises, research and development with plants, products or Aboriginal knowledge sourced from Central Australia, Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs.


Angka Akatyerr-akert: A Desert raisin report

Kel!