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ISSUE 18  
QUARTERLY

# subTropical Gardening

**Irresistible irises**  
**Build a bird nest**  
**Favourite  
garden plants**  
**Gingers,  
orchids & palms**  
**Create a  
bushfood garden**

**local advice for  
local gardeners**



**GARDEN DESIGN**  
– fantasy + dinosaurs



**FEATURE**  
– justicias



**FRUIT & VEG**  
– wampee + basella



**CALENDAR**  
– Feb / Mar / Apr

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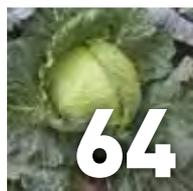
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# Just Justicia

Belonging to the family Acanthaceae, all *Justicia* species are loved for their flamboyant blossoms and reliability in the tropics and subtropics. It would be near impossible to have a warm climate garden without one or more of these stunning flowering plants. They are the royalty of tropical-style gardens.

## *Justicia aurea*...**The King**

(syn. *Justicia umbrosa*)

Yellow Jacobinia, Golden Plume

Origin: Mexico and Central America

Growing to around 1.5m in height, this warm climate shrub does best in the tropics or warm sheltered locations in the subtropics – it responds badly to cold temperatures. Each flower lasts only a few days, however when in bloom this plant sparkles with brilliant yellow plumes protruding from the dark coloured inflorescence stalk. In the tropics, flowers generally appear in late winter, whilst in the subtropics flowering occurs in autumn. Removal of spent heads will encourage more flowers.

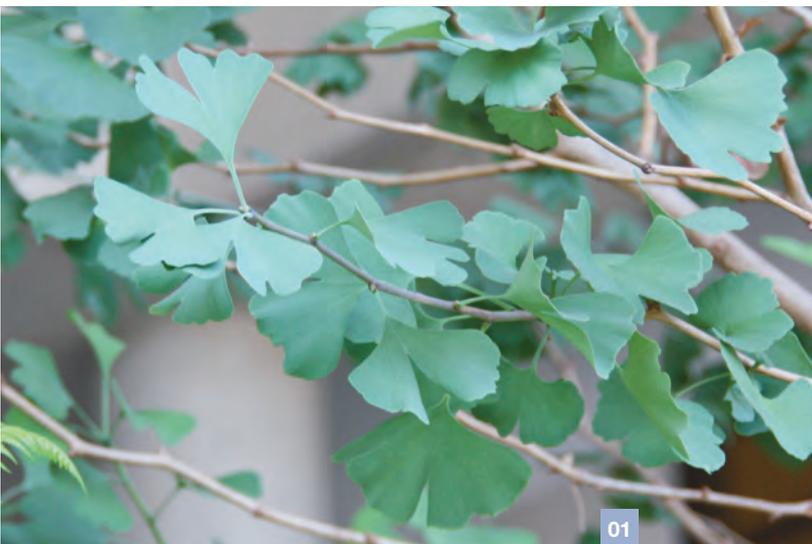
Prune in late spring to encourage growth prior to next season's winter.

# WHEN DINOSAURS ROAMED THE LANDSCAPE

In prehistoric times when dinosaurs were the dominant life form there was much less plant diversity, yet relatives of many of these Jurassic Era plants survive today in Australia's tropical and subtropical gardens. Now Master Landscaper, **Andrew Bottomley** and **Marcia-Grace Byriel** take us on a journey back in time to a place right at our doorstep. Images by **Paul Plant**.

**M**ore than 140 million years ago during the Mesozoic Era, the famous three-horned plant-eating *Triceratops* dinosaur grazed on the primitive vascular system of the Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*). The Mesozoic landscape was vastly different to modern-day landscapes. Most of the plants around us today are flowering plants, and these did not evolve until relatively late in the Mesozoic period. This period was much less biodiverse than today in both plant and animal life. To step back in time to the Mesozoic landscape, one only has to visit Energen Playasaurus Place at the Queensland Museum.

Playasaurus Place is a natural prehistoric setting featuring plant species related to those dating back to the prehistoric era and life-sized replica dinosaurs. It's a Brisbane landmark that will remain in its current form for the next two generations of visitors to the Brisbane Museum – those from Australia and around the globe.



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01 Maidenhair Tree  
(*Ginkgo biloba*)

Playasaurus Place at  
Queensland Museum

# CREATING A BUSHFOOD RAINFOREST GARDEN

## PART 1

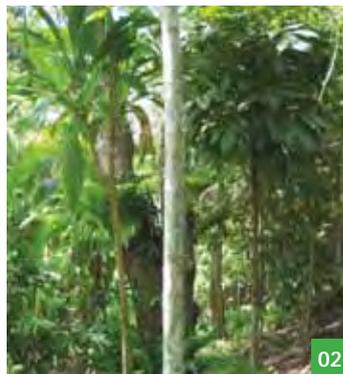
By Queensland Bushfood Association  
Images by Graeme White

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Anyone, with a little effort and imagination can enjoy the tastes of the rainforest from their own backyard. Space is not a restriction – even a small courtyard can be transformed into a tranquil sanctuary with the right selection of native food plants. The larger the area available, the greater the opportunity is to transform it into something very special. By utilising a wide selection of bushfood plant species, we can create a haven for the native wildlife as well as for ourselves.

The range of unique taste experiences that will come from your bushfood garden will stimulate your palate as well as your imagination. The bushfood garden is truly a feast for all of the senses.

Just about any site can be transformed into a productive bushfood garden. Ideally the site should have a northerly aspect, protected from the western sun and sheltered from frosts and strong winds. Soils should be well



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structured loams, rich in organic matter with unimpeded drainage. In reality most sites are anything but ideal, however, with careful planning and plant selection many less than perfect conditions can be overcome. A certain amount of sun is required by most plants for optimal growth and to maximise fruiting.

Designing the garden in such a way as to position plants according to their growth habits, the taller trees to the south of the plot with the rest of the planting gradually decreasing in height to the north, will make the best use of available sunlight in a garden with any aspect. Where a site is exposed to the full force of the western sun, plant a protective shelter-belt of more hardy lillipillies and myrtles, before planting less hardy species.

- 01 Birds nest in finger lime.
- 02 Bushfood garden.
- 03 A bushfood harvest in hand.

### Preparing the Ground

It is said that if you look after the soil, the plant will look after itself.

Rainforest plants seem to prefer an acid soil with a pH of between 6 and 6.5. They will tolerate soils that are more acid, but if the pH falls below 5.5 then some correction with



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# SUBTROPICALIA COLLECTOR

## SCENTED PLANTS

### Botanical

*Jasminum laurifolium* forma *nitidum*

### Common

Angel Wing Jasmine, Confederate Jasmine

### Family

Oleaceae

### Synonym

*Jasminum nitidum*

Grown as a sprawling shrub or climber, the Angel Wing Jasmine is popular in warm temperate, subtropical and tropical climates due to its adaptability in gardens. Either trained to a frame, pruned into a shrub or draped over an arbour this scented plant always satisfies the nose with its heady perfume over the flowering season.

The pinkish buds open to reveal 2.5cm wide tubular flowers that actually appear to have up to twelve petals - the result of the corolla tube dividing into various lobes. At the base of the flower tube are 5-7 stiff radiating calyx bracts. Flowering commences in winter with spot-flowers occurring well into summer.

The fragrance is distinctly jasmine but not over-powering like *Jasminum polyanthum*.

Flowers only last on the plants for a day or two before falling. Luckily an abundance of buds provide an ongoing supply of flowers.

Leaves are dark green and glossy making the plant well suited to pruning and forming an attractive shrub or hedge even when not in bloom.

Angel Wing Jasmine is readily propagated by cuttings and layering.



### BEST GROWING CONDITIONS

- full sun to partial shade
- adaptable to most soil types
- slightly acid soil, 5.5-7.0pH
- fertilise twice a year with a complete plant food.

### LANDSCAPE USE

- Hedging plant along pathways.
- Feature container plant.
- Sprawling plant over embankment.
- Espalier specimen against wall, fence line or arbour.