

“Paying attention is a form of reciprocity
with the living world, receiving the gifts
with open eyes and open heart.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer



www.castlemaineseedlibrary.org.au

Cover image – Frances Cincotta

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information that is correct and relevant at the time of
publication.



Lomandra longifolia
Spiny-headed Mat-rush/ Basket Bush

The Indigenous Seed Project acknowledges the local Dja Dja Wurrung people as the first inhabitants of the land we live upon. We recognise their continuing connection to this land, rivers and creeks and to their rich ancient culture.

We acknowledge that at the time of European arrival the totality of the lands that are now known as Victoria were occupied by sovereign Indigenous nations who owned, cared for and enjoyed their land in accordance with their laws, customs and traditions.

We acknowledge, with full respect, the strength and power of all Traditional Owners, Elder, Ancestors, and young leaders who fight to protect and look after Country, Community, Language and Lore in the face of ongoing colonial interruptions and cultural genocide.

To Learn more please visit djadjawurrung.com.au

The Indigenous Seed Project supports a Treaty for Victoria.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Frances Cincotta for her all-round local plant wisdom – having access to lived knowledge is such a privilege. Thank you also for your excellent proofreading skills and constant support for the project.

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Jo Matthews, Indigenous Seed Project coordinator

Terminology

Indigenous

Refers to a plant species that occurs naturally in a region but not exclusively. For example, River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) is indigenous to our shire but it is also indigenous to many other parts of Australia.

Endemic

Refers to a plant species that grows only in a specific designated area. In Mount Alexander Shire we only have one plant species that is endemic - the Southern Shepherd's Purse (*Ballantinia antipoda*), a highly threatened species that occurs only on Mt. Alexander. It is also correct to say that Southern Shepherd's Purse is indigenous to Victoria, or indigenous to Australia, or indigenous to Shire of Mount Alexander.

River Red Gum, which occurs naturally in every state and territory of Australia except for Tasmania, is endemic to Australia, meaning it does not occur naturally in any other country.

Provenance

Refers to the area that the seed was originally collected from. Across Mount Alexander Shire conditions for plants vary from place to place with changes in soil type, altitude, aspect, annual rainfall, frost severity, etc. so where the seed is sourced from influences how well the plants grown from that seed will thrive when they are planted out. For example the summit of Mt Alexander is 430m higher than Castlemaine, receives 2 inches more rain annually, and is granitic in geology whereas Castlemaine is sedimentary so plants grown from seed collected on the mountain would not do so well in Castlemaine and vice versa.

Hello and thank-you for taking some Indigenous seeds to germinate!

The Indigenous Seed Project emerged from the desire to raise awareness of the local flora in Leanganook (Mount Alexander).

The project will create the opportunity for anyone to experience propagating indigenous seeds and to also learn about the ecological and cultural significance of the plant they are growing. The accompanying booklets will also provide valuable information about how to use the plant in a garden context and information on growing conditions for each plant. With only 15% of the local Box Iron Bark forests remaining, it's more important than ever that we get to know these plants and include them in our gardens. This will help extend habitats for the local fauna and make your garden more resilient to future climate changes by using plants that have adapted to local conditions.

I hope you will sit with this little book, read its content and create a connection to the plant/s you have chosen to grow. Perhaps next time you are in the bush you will be able to recognise, name and appreciate these plants deepening your connection to the local environment.

Jo Matthews, Coordinator Indigenous Seed Project

Spiny-headed Mat-rush/ Basket Grass

Lomandra longifolia

Family : Asparagaceae

Description:

This robust, grass-like plant has vivid, green, strappy leaves and a clumped form. The prickly, straw-colored flower spikes are nestled amongst the leaves from August to December. The male and female flowers appear on separate plants. Seeds are held in clusters until they ripen and shed in January. The clumps grow to around 0.5 m to 0.7 m wide. A popular landscaping plant that is commonly grown en masse in public spaces to create a swathe of green.

Growing Conditions:

A tough, adaptable plant that tolerates a wide range of soils. Grows well in full sun to part shade. Survives dry periods and waterlogging, but thrives with plenty of moisture, forming a dense, green ground cover. *Lomandra longifolia* will tolerate compacted soils and frost to -5 degrees C.

Cultivation and maintenance:

A low maintenance plant that is generally trouble free. With prolonged dry spells, it begins to look scrappy as the leaves roll up and their tips dry off. It can be rejuvenated by cutting the clump close to ground level but is slower to recover.



Lomandra revegetation plantings along Campbells Creek. Photo - Frances Cincotta

Cultural values:

Lomandra is a highly versatile plant for many indigenous people with uses relating to food, fibre and medicine. Its use as a weaving material has been revived over recent years amongst different indigenous communities. Traditionally women gathered the leaves which could be woven into bags, baskets, mats and eel traps. Each rush was split, then tied into bundles to be soaked allowing the fibres to become pliable for weaving.

Lomandra seeds are high in protein, traditionally they were collected from the non-woody-capsules and pounded into a bread mix, while the core of the plant and the base of the leaves were eaten as a vegetable. The roots were also used to treat bites and stings.*

*Note: Traditional uses vary between communities, these descriptions are not specific to the Dja Dja Wurrung people.

Websites cited:

www.recreatingthecountry.com.au

www.tuckerbush.com.au

Garden value:

A striking ground cover in a grassland or cottage garden, providing structural form throughout the year. Its tolerance of both dry and waterlogging and its capacity to filter pollutants from stormwater make it a good choice for swale planting or a rain garden. The dense foliage makes it an excellent refuge for frogs and lizards and it's an important host plant for local butterflies. If dead material is removed and plant is kept green, it is recognised as a low fire-risk plant.

Ecological value:

Common in the understory of forest and woodlands in moister sites such as along watercourses and in higher rainfall areas of Castlemaine. Its fibrous roots mean it is an effective soil stabiliser in flood prone areas. Leaves are an important food source for caterpillars of skipper butterflies such as the Barred Skipper and the Yellow and Heath Ochre. Seeds are eaten by granivorous birds, skinks and lizards and its tiny flowers provide a pollen and nectar reward for native bees, wasps, butterflies and beetles.

Seed collection and propagation:

Collect seed pods mid to late January into a paper bag. The pods will open as they dry out. The seed is a similar shape and size to rice grains. It is best sown September to October. Place in tubes with approximately 6mm seed raising mix covering. Water seeds in and place in semi shaded position, keeping moist. Seedlings should be ready to plant out in the following May.



**Lomandra pods and seeds.
Photo : Frances Cincotta**