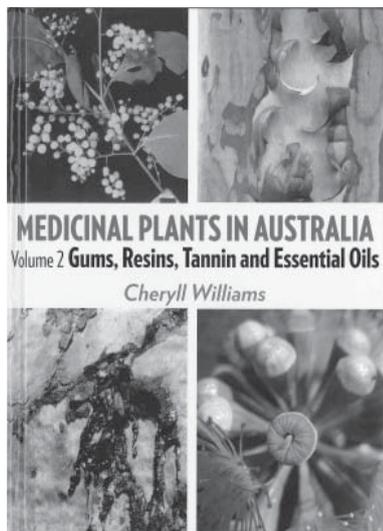


Book reviews



Medicinal Plants in Australia Volume 2 Gums, Resins, Tannin and Essential Oils

By Cheryll Williams

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Reviewed by Bettina Schmoll

This is the 2nd in a series of four by Cheryll Williams and her passion for Australian natives is obvious. The introduction links the research of today with the history of yesterday and her thoughts on our poor care of our native landscape is already made clear. I'm not sure why she has included 1½ pages on orchids in the introduction of a book titled *Gums, Resins, Tannin and Essential oils*, however the photos are lovely.

The historical information is wonderfully integrated throughout the book and anyone wanting to connect more with our past would find this book a must. This combines smoothly with supportive current information. For example in chapter 1, *Oleum eucalypti*, the focus is on Eucalyptus with beautiful photos including a colour plate from 1790 and the more recent references covering the chemical constituents of the essential oils, an excellent addition not only in this but also in other chapters.

Utilisation of drawings, lithographs and photos with use of botanical names is an absolute delight for a herbalist and teacher of basic botany such as myself. I cannot imagine how long it took to compile the tables of essential oil constituents throughout the book. Table 1.1 for example, the summary of the main chemical constituents found in *Eucalyptus* species, is 7 pages of fully referenced information.

Chapter 2 is devoted to kino, the resinous exudate from the gums. The author combines traditional information well with the contemporary and provides a table referring to plants which are a source of kino. This is expanded upon in chapter 3, Resinous Resources, and also discusses the concern with coumarin containing plants.

Chapter 4 on native pines provides valuable information for the botany student on gymnosperms, including *Ginkgo biloba* with great photographs.

Despite the fact that chapter 5 is titled The Myrtaceae: Hidden Chemical Treasures, I was disappointed to find no mention of the *Backhousia* spp. Lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) has become the second biggest native crop in Australia and some of its exceptional medicinal benefits were published in September 2009 in a RIRDC report. Why include information and a photo of lemongrass (*Cymbopogon* spp), which is not in the Myrtaceae family and is not native to Australia?

The chapter on tannins and trees focuses on the *Acacia* family, wattles and eucalypts. Tannin categories are presented in tabular format, very comprehensive and the chapter expands on plants high in anthocyanidins. Focus is on bilberries and raspberries with unfortunately no mention of Tasmanian pepper leaf, Davidson's plum or riberry whose anthocyanidin content is worth mentioning.

The wattle and *Acacia* genera and their value in revegetation as well as those which are considered weeds is covered in chapter 7. Chapter 8 then focuses on their medicinal uses and the author provides a comprehensive table with the common names, uses, treatment details (which include indigenous use) and the reference sources.

Research into tea tree essential oil is covered well in chapter 9 and even aromatherapy students will benefit greatly from the information throughout this chapter. The essential oil components of *Baeckea*, *Kunzea* and *Leptospermum* genera (the author calls them species) is extremely well represented in table form.

The last chapter is called Melaleuca: The Prosaic Paperbark, but also discusses orchids. There are 4 tables in this chapter which even address oils known for their 1,8 cineole content as well as those with a commercial or medicinal potential. Again excellent information.

This book is a tool which I consider to be of great value to any student interested in the traditional and current uses of some of our native species. There are very few textbooks incorporating such extensive, well researched information as well as photographs and colour plates. It is easy to comprehend, good value for money and an asset to any herbalist's library.

Available in the NHAA library reference only.