

Guide to the Garden

Entry & Guide Booklet - \$5 by donation

GARDEN MAP

*Centre page
of this booklet*

Self-guided Walks and Panoramic Views
Intriguing Desert Plants and Gardens
Birdwatching and Wildlife Viewing
Historic and Cultural Sites



Olive Pink

Botanic Garden

Alice Springs

SEE THE DESERT COME ALIVE



7km from the centre of town
Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs, Northern Territory
www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
GOVERNMENT

How to use this Guide

As you explore the Garden, you will come across signs and information about Aboriginal culture, Miss Pink, desert plants and much much more.

There is a map in the centre of this booklet to guide you.

Follow our lovely themed self-guided walks, or wander freely along the many paths and discover some of the 600 Central Australian plant species in the Garden, including many that are rare or threatened. Stop and smell the flowers, watch the birds and have a picnic; trek up Tharrarletneme (Annie Meyers Hill) for superb views of Alice Springs and the MacDonnell Ranges; or just sit back, relax, and enjoy a coffee in the finest garden cafe setting for a thousand kilometres.

Eighty nine bird species have been observed in the Garden, including some that are rare. You may also encounter the attractive and rare Black-footed Rock Wallaby, the Euro (Hill Kangaroo), or some of the many reptile species that live in this native animal haven.

Please 'Like' us on Facebook, add a TripAdvisor review, and record your bird sightings on your Ebird phone app. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden hotspot page is <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1176748>

Self-guided Walks



Please Help Fund the Garden

Established in 1956, the Olive Pink Botanic Garden is a not-for-profit community organisation governed by a voluntary Board of Trustees. We rely on our friends and supporters to help fund the Garden. **Please help by making a \$5 donation or by making a tax deductible donation (see page 29).**

The Alice Springs Desert Park is an icon of the Red Centre and a key Garden partner. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden thanks the Desert Park for its assistance and close cooperation.

Miss Pink: An unforgettable woman

By Fran Kilgariff AM, FAICD, Chair, Olive Pink Botanic Garden Board of Trustees

The Australian Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve, now the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, was founded in 1956 by the indomitable Olive Muriel Pink, the Garden's first Curator. She lived in the Garden from 1956 until her death in 1975 aged 91.

I grew up in Alice Springs and lived not far from the Garden, on the other side of “The Creek” as the Todd River was known to locals. Miss Pink is a person who stands out strongly in my childhood memories as my brothers and sisters and I often encountered her walking around the town in her long skirt, long sleeves and trademark brimmed hat. We used to roam all over the hills here and occasionally caused Miss Pink so much annoyance that she would chase us with her salt petre gun. We certainly didn't appreciate, as children, the many sides of this gifted and determined woman, so it is highly appropriate that I can now add my efforts, as Chair, to give her the recognition she deserves.

Miss Pink was one of Alice Springs' most colourful characters. She was an anthropologist, an outspoken advocate for Aboriginal rights, a lover of art and flowers, and a botanical artist. She was very much a woman ahead of her time in many ways, including in promoting the cultivation of Australia's native plants.

As Julie Marcus stated in her landmark biography ***The Indomitable Miss Pink***:

“she pinpointed the most controversial issues of her day and highlighted them in ways that other anthropologists did not these issues continue to be important today.”

Today we treasure a globally unique arid zone botanic garden and continue to work towards Miss Pink's vision:

“... forty-nine acres of ground on which to preserve and grow, native trees, shrubs and flowers – as a ‘soulfeeding’ antidote to the restless rush and materialism of what ‘modern living’ entails for so many in this isolated town.”



Olive Pink in her garden in Sydney early 1920s. (Private Collection)



Olive Pink at the Australian Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve (now the Olive Pink Botanic Garden). c. 1960

Take the historic Olive Pink Walk

From the age of 72, Miss Pink lived in the Garden in a tent, then a small tin hut, and worked with Warlpiri gardeners, including the celebrated Johnny Jampijinpa (pictured right). Please do take the historic Olive Pink Walk, visit her tent site, and find out more about Miss Pink and the history of the Garden. The Walk is marked in pink on the Garden Map in the centre of this booklet.

Miss Pink is buried near the Aboriginal section of the Alice Springs Cemetery on Memorial Drive. All the headstones in the cemetery face east, except Miss Pink's – hers faces west – towards the important sacred site, Alhekulyele (Mt. Gillen). Her faithful friend Reg Harris later said:

'The old lady would appreciate the fact that she is a rebel still, even in death.'

Full recognition of Miss Pink's extraordinary life has a long way to go. You can find out more about her in **'The Indomitable Miss Pink'** by Julie Marcus or **'Olive Pink – A Life in Flowers'** by Gillian Ward, both available at the Café or online at www.opbg.com.au

Please also make a donation using either the donation box next to the Café entrance or the tax-deductible donation form at the back of this booklet. As a community organisation, the Garden relies on the generosity and help of volunteers, friends and supporters.



Johnny Jampijinpa



Miss Pink's resting place



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Donations are tax-deductible.

Olive Pink Botanic Garden: A globally unique treasure



By Peter Latz, renowned Central Australian botanist, author and Garden volunteer

To really get to know our native plants we need to grow them. Over time what we learn will enable us to develop and use plants that will produce new foods and medicines, replace roses and other introduced plants in our domestic gardens and provide refuge and a seed source for the desert's rare plants. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden, with more than 600 Central Australian plant species, is vital to these endeavours.

Bushtucker and Medicinal Plants

The desert grows few bushtucker plants that produce large quantities of palatable foods, but it excels in plants that produce new spices, and hence exquisite new tastes.

The Bush Orange (*Capparis mitchellii*) (right) - is a prime example. Although it produces little edible food, just a smidgen of its pulp is needed to give a unique flavour to ice-cream.

There are also many useful medicinal plants growing in our deserts, and the First Australians used them with great effect. These medicinal plants are limited in one important respect – they weren't developed to treat European diseases. The First Australians had no contact with the diseases that plagued Europe, so it is no wonder that first contact led to the death of a great many of our continent's first inhabitants. Even so, many of the desert's plants produce potent medicines and it's time we properly investigated their potential. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden has an extraordinary and unique collection of bushtucker and medicinal plants of great value to such work.



Bush Orange

Rare Plants and Buffel Grass

Many of the desert's plants are in severe decline, mostly because of changed fire regimes. Traditional Aboriginal patch burning has largely been replaced with hot wildfires fuelled by the introduced pasture grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* or buffel grass. Now widespread in arid Australia, this grass is propelling an unfolding ecological disaster.

The Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee has recognised buffel grass under the Key Threatening Process 'novel biota and their impact on biodiversity' 'for ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and species decline in arid and semi-arid Australia', noting:

“it threatens biodiversity by out-competing native vegetation and increasing fuel loads to produce hotter and more intense wildfires... ‘transformer weed’... widely considered to be the most debilitating ‘fatal injury’ weed of natural ecosystems in arid and semi-arid Australia and directly or indirectly displaces and threatens a large percentage of native and endemic plants and animals”.



Buffel Grass

With such a significant threat to the ecology and plants of Central Australia, the role of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden is ever more important. It is an important refuge for the desert’s plant species, including many that are rare and threatened. Although you will encounter buffel grass as you ascend the Hill Walk, the Garden is going to great lengths to control buffel. Please support its on-going efforts with a donation or by volunteering with the Olive Pink Landcare group.

Water-wise Garden Plants

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth. Seventy percent is classified as semi-arid, arid or is one of Australia’s ten deserts. Here, rainfall is unpredictable, soils are infertile, and droughts often long and merciless.

For these reasons it is essential we grow hardy, water-wise native plants in our gardens. Unfortunately, in Alice Springs, nearly half of our desert plants do not flourish under cultivation, mostly due to our highly mineralised water, which quickly increases soil pH and results in compaction. The Olive Pink Botanic Garden is conducting research on overcoming these problems. It is also bringing into cultivation spectacular and hardy desert plant species that in the future you may grow in your water-wise garden.



A land of extended drought

I’m sure you will enjoy the Garden and its walks as much as I do. Decades of dedicated work, by Olive Pink, Johnny Jampijinpa and other staff, as well as countless volunteers, has gone into producing this globally unique treasure-trove of biodiversity and store of potential foods and medical cures.

Any help you can offer the Garden – as a volunteer or financially - is well-placed, much needed and greatly appreciated.

Birds of the Garden

By Mark Carter, Zoologist and Wildlife Guide

Alice Springs has a worldwide status among wildlife enthusiasts as the premier birdwatching destination in the outback. Nowhere else on the continent comes close to offering a comparable suite of arid-zone birds so accessibly. Olive Pink Botanic Garden is at the top of most lists of birding venues in the Red Centre for very good reason. The Garden packs a variety of high quality habitats into a small area and functions as a lush refuge, particularly in times of drought.

Resident species present year-round include the charismatic Western Bowerbirds feeding on fruit trees, tribes of chatty Grey-crowned Babblers foraging in the undergrowth and pairs of bubbling Striated Pardalote in the treetops plucking insect pests from the leaves.

Species attracted to the verdant Garden in dry times include Red-capped Robins perching and pouncing close to the ground layer and mountain birds such as the Grey-headed Honeyeater in search of flowering mistletoe. This also is the time to look for the enigmatic Grey Honeyeater, one of Australia's most difficult birds to find.

Seasonal migration also occurs with Channel-billed Cuckoos (the biggest cuckoo in the world!) and Rainbow Bee-eaters arriving to breed and feed each summer. They are then replaced by more familiar birds such as Willie Wagtails and Hooded Robins between May and September who have travelled up from the southern states in search of some winter-sun!



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
(*Acanthagenys rufogularis*)



White-plumed Honeyeater
(*Ptilotula penicillata*)



Yellow-throated Miner
(*Manorina flavigula*)

Garden Birdwatching Calendar

JANUARY	Australian Ringneck Parrots feed on wild fruits such as bush banana.
FEBRUARY	Budgerigar flocks can appear in Alice. Listen for them passing overhead.
MARCH	Grey Shrike-thrush begin to sing to claim territories.
APRIL	Australian Owlet-nightjars bask at dawn as nights cool.
MAY	Hooded Robins arrive from Southern Australia.
JUNE	Black and Whistling Kites incubate eggs.
JULY	Mistletoebirds perform their mating songs.
AUGUST	Male Western Bowerbirds perform to attract females at their bowers.
SEPTEMBER	Most small birds are now breeding.
OCTOBER	Rainbow Bee-eaters return from Papua to dig breeding burrows in riverbanks.
NOVEMBER	Channel-billed Cuckoos return from Papua to lay their eggs in Crows' nests.
DECEMBER	Summer rains can provoke a second round of breeding in small birds.

Also present at the Garden but rarely seen are our nocturnal birds. Barn Owls, Southern Boobooks and Australian Owlet-nightjars are all active after dark.

We are still adding to the list of bird species using the Garden so don't forget to add any sightings to ebird (Garden's details on <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1176748>).

For wildlife tours in Central Australia, email: mark@birdingandwildlife.com, call ++61(0)447358045 or visit www.birdingandwildlife.com



A Land of Drought and Flooding Rains

Our desert landscapes, the arid 'outback' of Australia, has helped define Australia's identity. It is part of the mythology of rugged survival in a harsh climate. Its vastness, colour palette and light have long been inspiration for artists, naturalists and film makers.

From Albert Namatjira's hauntingly beautiful ghost gums to the modern day Aboriginal Papunya Tula art movement, our deserts and their plants and animals have been and remain a rich source of inspiration and a celebration of identity.

In this land of extremes, a variety of landscapes have emerged. From a plant's point of view, these can be divided into seven main habitats, each with its own set of environmental conditions and plant communities adapted to the harsh conditions.

The Garden showcases both common and rare species from each of these habitats. The Alice Springs Desert Park – an important Garden partner – showcases entire desert habitat types and is a must see!

Mulga Woodland - See Map

Mulga woodlands occupy half of Australia's arid zone. Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) grows on hillsides and plains often in association with spinifex.

Its upside down umbrella shape intercepts rain and funnels it down to the roots around the trunk of the tree. This is the 'Empire of the Ants' where mulga woodlands produce seeds with attachments and glands of sweet nectar which are like lollipops to ants.

Other Woodlands - Follow the Mallee Walk

Other common Central Australian woodlands are home to the Witchetty Bush (*Acacia kempeana*), Desert Bloodwood (*Corymbia opaca*), Beefwood (*Grevillea striata*), Dogwood (*Acacia coriacea*), the Flat-leaved Hakea (*Hakea macrocarpa*) and Mallee species.

If summer rains occur, native grasses germinate and flourish. Winter rains bring on opportunistic herbs and spectacular wildflowers. The Mallee Walk displays some of these species.



Saline Habitat, Saltbush Shrublands and Salt Lakes - See Map

The edges of salt lakes as well as the saline plains south of the MacDonnell Ranges support plants from the Chenopodiaceae family including dominant genera Saltbush (*Atriplex*), Bluebush (*Maireana*) and Copperburrs (*Sclerolaena*).

Spinifex Sand Dune and Sand Plains - Follow the Miss Pink Walk

Spinifex grasslands thrive in the poorest arid sandy soils. It is one of the most extensive vegetation types in the Red Centre, occupying one third of arid Australia. It provides habitat for abundant termite and lizard populations. Although the magnificent Desert Oak (*Allocasuarina decaisneana*) reigns supreme in much of this habitat, the dominant plant association is mulga woodlands and spinifex.

Riverine Habitat - View the Todd River from the top of Tharrarletneme

Shady River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* subsp. *arida*) create corridors of green, lining (usually) dry river beds.

After good rains, these rivers spill from the ranges, wind through the desert and empty into channels and swamps lined by Coolabah (*Eucalyptus coolabah* subsp. *arida*) or into salt lakes and claypans.

Gorges - See the Garden's Waterhole

Concentrating and harvesting the rain, gorges are frequently havens for spectacular desert oases.

These oases are locked in time, harbouring survivors of a wetter time, relict plant species like the MacDonnell Ranges Cycad (*Macrozamia macdonnellii*). Deep permanent pools provide refuge for birds and fish.

Rocky Desert Ranges - Take the Arrernte Trail

Exposed to extremes of wind and the hot desert sun, only the hardiest plants and plant species survive. Stunted shrubs, tussock and herbs eke out a precarious existence. White Cypress (*Callitris glaucophylla*) and the striking Ghost Gum (*Corymbia aparrerinja*) grow where their roots can find moisture hidden among cracks in the rocks.



Olive Pink Walk

WALK TIME: 40 Minutes



Olive Muriel Pink

In 1926, Olive Pink (17 March 1884 – 6 July 1975) accepted an invitation to stay with anthropologist Daisy Bates in remote Ooldea on the Nullarbor Plain.

From that time on, her heart and imagination were captured by the desert landscape and Aboriginal culture. Throughout the 1930's, she travelled to and from Central Australia to conduct anthropological fieldwork, relocating permanently to Central Australia in 1940 at the age of 56.

Olive Pink pitched her tent between these two ironwood trees (pictured above) in 1956 at the age of 72. Please see site 3. on the Olive Pink Walk for the historic site of Miss Pink's tent. She lived here in her tent for 17 months until her 'Home Hut' was relocated to the Garden in 1958. During this time, she successfully campaigned for the area to be declared as the Australian Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve. The Garden was renamed in Miss Pink's honour in 1985.

For the first year of her occupancy, there was no electricity or running water. Despite living in a tent, Miss Pink entertained her many visitors, serving Bickfords lime cordial, cups of tea or glasses of sherry with madeira cake, a tradition continued in the Garden each year around the anniversary of her birth. Eventually her hut was improved in the 1960s through the charity of her friend Reg Harris and his helpers.

To find out more, follow numbers of the Olive Pink Walk (opposite) marked in pink on the map (centre of this booklet).



A Bean Tree planted by Miss Pink in honour of Sir Paul Hasluck c 1960.



Bean Tree in Flower.

1. Bean Tree planted by Miss Pink

Bean Trees (*Erythrina vespertilio*) were a favourite of Miss Pink's. In the 1960s she planted over 30. Ten survive today. The bright red bean seeds produced by these trees are commonly used for ornaments and necklaces. The soft wood can be easily worked and was used to make bowls for carrying anything from babies to water.

2. The Gazebo

Interpretive panels on Miss Pink.

3. Miss Pink's tent site

Interpretive sign on Miss Pink and the founding of the Garden; the historic site where she lived in a tent for 17 months.

4. Nurses Hill and view of Mt Gillen

This was Miss Pink's favourite spot in the Garden to sit and contemplate or talk with friends.

5. Our Story: Miss Pink and the Garden

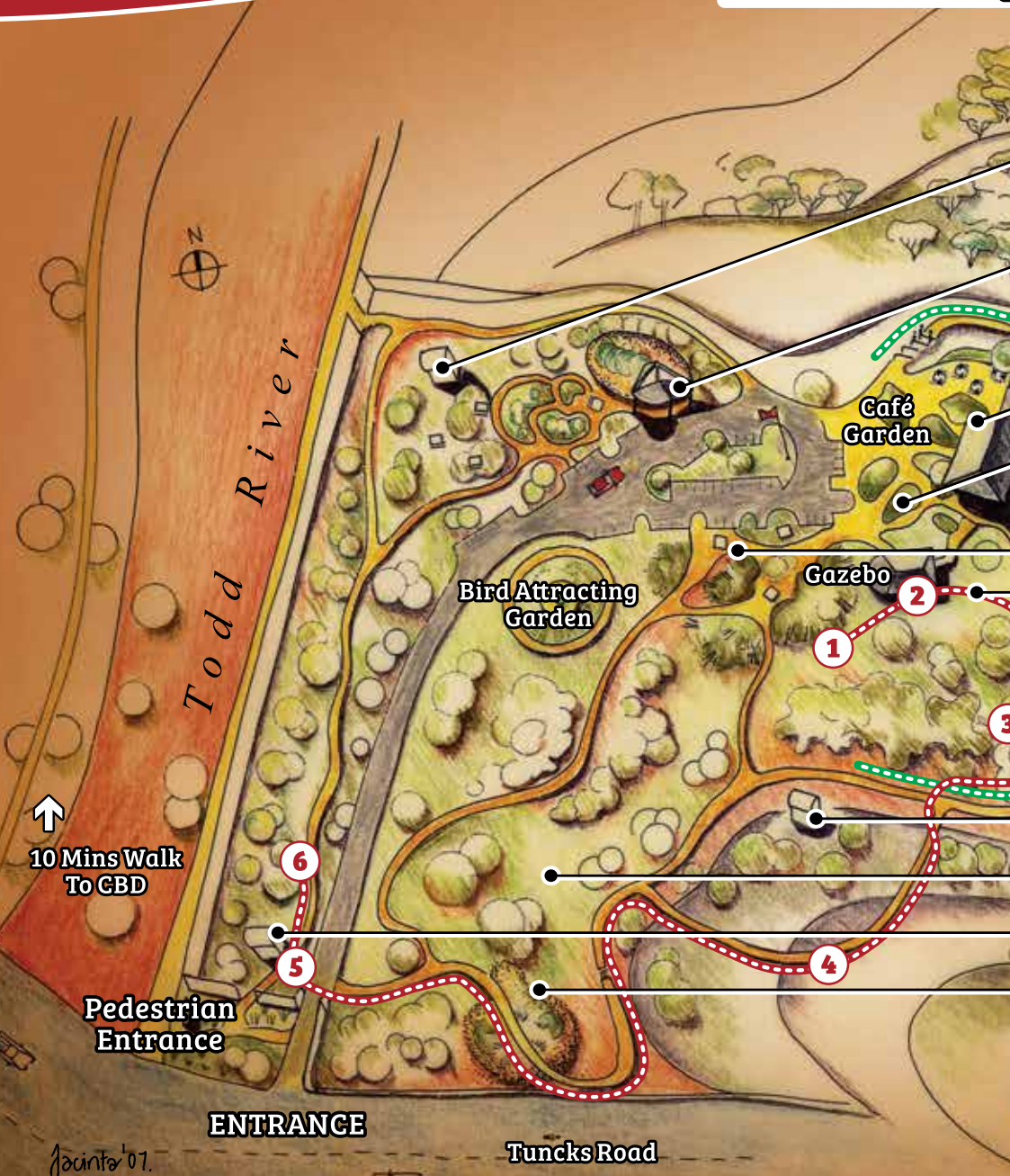
Interpretive signage on Miss Pink and the Garden today.

6. Bean Trees planted by Miss Pink

You will see two Bean Trees at the end of this walk. One she named for her friend, Sir Paul Hasluck.

Garden Map

Hill Walk - Arrernte Trail



↑
10 Mins Walk
To CBD

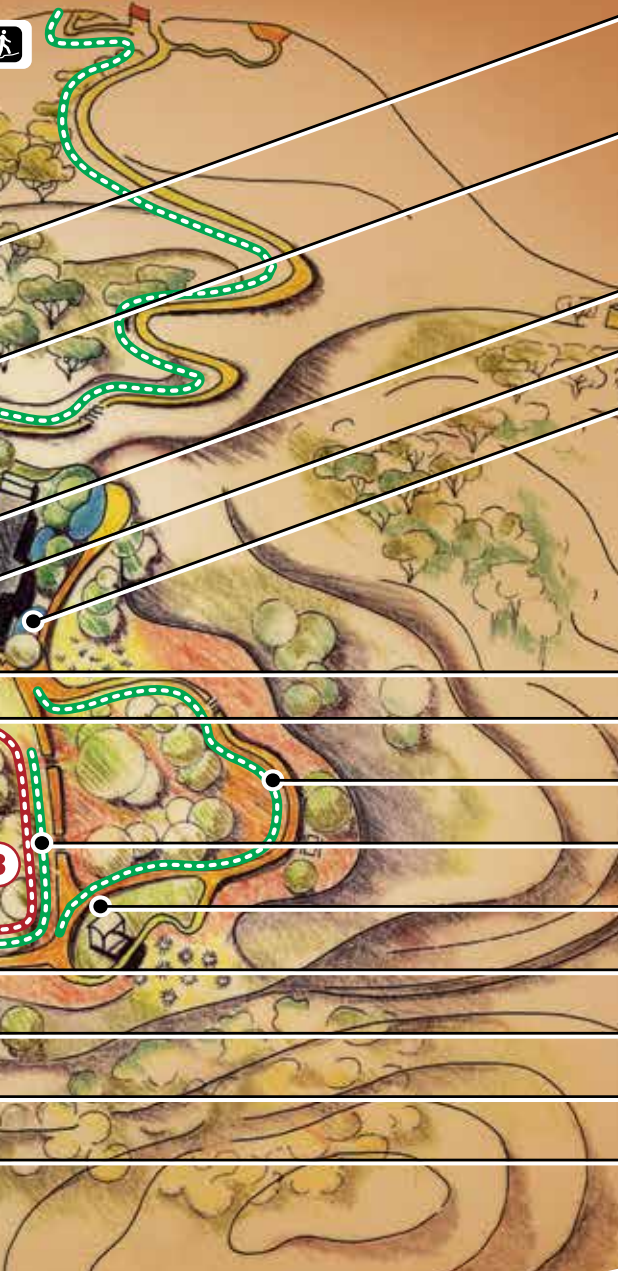
**Pedestrian
Entrance**

ENTRANCE

Tuncks Road

Jacinta '07.

Tharrarletneme



ARRERENTE STORIES



BLAKEMAN GARDEN & SHELTER

VISITOR CENTRE & BEAN TREE CAFÉ



MEDICINE & BUSHFOOD GARDENS

WATERHOLE

MULGA WOODLANDS



OLIVE PINK WALK



WATTLE WALK



MALLEE WALK



ANCIENT LANDSCAPES



PLANT ADAPTATIONS



SALINE GARDEN

OUR HERITAGE



DESERT DUNES



Olive Pink

Botanic Garden

Alice Springs

Hill Walk - Arrernte Trail

WALK TIME: 30 Minutes

Please do not attempt after 5.20 pm. The Garden closes at 6 pm.

We ask visitors to keep to the path as this is a very significant Arrernte cultural site associated with 'caterpillar dreaming' and registered under the NT Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act.

Please ensure you have appropriate footwear for the rocky path and supervise children.

The Garden is dominated visually by Tharrarletneme (Annie Meyers Hill). From the top you will have superb views of Alice Springs, the Todd River and the MacDonnell Ranges. The plant species on this walk have evolved to tolerate drought and survive in rocky harsh conditions, which is why some of the shrubs you see are clearly waiting for the next lot of rain!

1. Whitewood (*Atalaya hemiglauca*)

Arrernte name: Arlperre



Whitewood grows to 7m, produces creamy flowers in the warmer months, and winged 'helicopter' seeds. An attractive tree widespread across central and eastern inland regions, it occurs on a wide variety of non-spinifex habitats such as rocky hills.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: Aboriginal people harvest edible witchetty grubs from the roots and the white sap is edible. Its soft white timber is used to make ornaments.

2. Dead Finish (*Acacia tetragonophylla*)

Arrernte name: Arlketyerre



The drought-resistant nature of this spiky wattle is captured in its common name – Dead Finish: the last species to peg out in severe drought. Growing up to 3m high, it is found in a range of habitats across inland Australia. Very showy in flower, these dense shrubs create good habitat for nesting birds.

Bushfood & Medicinal Use: The seeds while not prolific, are an important bushfood. Arrernte people use the sharp spiky leaves to treat warts. The bark from roots is also steeped in water to make an antiseptic solution for treating sores.



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3. Ironwood (*Acacia estrophiolata*)

Arerrnte name: Athenge



Mature trees are very graceful, with drooping foliage and rough-barked trunks, while immature plants have broader, spiny, short leaves. Ironwoods are fairly common throughout arid parts of the Northern Territory and SA, and small parts of Western Australia and Qld. Most of the specimens in the Garden are self-sown. Hot fires will kill mature trees, and the foliage is palatable to cattle and camels.

Bushfood, Medicinal & Traditional Uses: The bark from roots can be used to make a solution to treat sore eyes and other infections. The resinous gum and lerp honeydew that can be found on the leaves makes a tasty snack. The hard, red wood was used to make implements, fence posts and for firewood.

4. Mountain Wanderrrie (*Eriachne mucronata*)



A widespread perennial grass in Central Australia that grows mainly in rocky habitats. It grows in tufts that can be up to 40cm high and it is very drought tolerant. Euros (Hill Kangaroos) don't seem to graze this grass, even when few other plants are available.

5. Smoke Bush (*Ptilotus obovatus*)

Arerrnte name: Awerreke-alyeye-alyeye



This low rounded shrub grows up to 60cm high, flowers prolifically after rains and is very drought tolerant. It is widely distributed in a range of habitats across inland Australia.

Bushfood & Medicinal Use: Aboriginal people sometimes harvest an edible grub from the roots.

6. Witchetty Bush (*Acacia kempeana*)

Arrernte name: Atnyeme



This species is both drought and fire-tolerant. It is widespread across a diverse range of habitats in Central Australia.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: Witchetty grubs (larvae of a moth) found in the roots of this wattle are a tasty and favoured food of Aboriginal people in Central Australia. The seeds are also an important bushfood. The Arrernte people used the inner bark from roots to make string.

7. Dense Cassia (*Senna artemisioides* subsp. *sturtii*)



Common and widespread in a range of habitats across inland Australia, this species grows up to 2m high and produces masses of sweetly-scented yellow flowers in the cooler months. Like Silver Cassia, it is somewhat short-lived, but is easy to propagate and keep in cultivation.

8. Silver Indigo (*Indigofera leucotricha*)



This attractive silver-grey shrub grows up to 1m high on rocky country in the Alice Springs region, parts of northern SA and western Qld. Purplish-pink pea flowers are produced in early summer, or after rainfall. This species is very drought tolerant, but is not common in cultivation, as it grows well only in very well-drained, acidic soils.

9. Long-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea lorea* subsp. *lorea*)



The thick, corky bark gives rise to the common name for this species and helps protect it from fire. Growing to 7m, Long-leaved Corkwood occurs on rocky hills, spinifex sandplains and in woodland communities across a large part of inland Australia.

Bushfood: Large nectar-rich yellow-green flowers can be harvested for nector.

10. Silver Cassia (*Senna artemisioides* subsp. *artemisioides*) **Arnernte name:** Apwene



Very common and widespread across the drier parts of the rangelands, Silver Cassia grows to 2m high in a wide range of habitats. Along this path you will see other Cassia species, and you may also notice the distinctive “prayer” shaped structure of dead Cassias. Buttercup yellow flowers appear in August.

Bushfood & Medicinal Use: Aboriginal people harvest edible grubs from the roots, and the leaves are used to make a medicine.

11. Crimson Turkey Bush (*Eremophila latrobei*) **Arnernte name:** Atnyerlenge



Widespread and common across inland Australia, this species grows to around 1.5m high in a range of mulga-dominated habitats or on rocky hillslopes.

It normally produces nectar-rich crimson flowers after rain events; however there are different forms, one with much greyer leaves, and another with yellow flowers. It can die back in dry times and reshoot from ‘dead’ branches after good rains.

Medicinal Use: Arnernte people use the juice from leaves as a rubbing medicine or in a solution to treat flu symptoms, headaches and infections. Fresh stems are also used to treat toothache, and the nectar from flowers eaten to cure sore throats.

12a. Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)



This is one of the most widespread and recognizable members of the grass family (*Poaceae*). It is also naturally occurring in Africa and Asia.

Often used in rockeries as part of a native habitat garden, this hardy attractive perennial tussock grass grows to a metre in height.

It occupies various habitats in Central Australia, but it is most often found in small gravelly watercourses or on the fringes of cracking-clay plains. It is now less common in Central Australia as it occupies the very habitat most favoured by invasive species such as buffel grass.

12b. Buffel Grass - across the hill (*Cenchrus ciliaris*)



The grass blanketing much of Tharrarletneme and the hills around Alice Springs is the introduced species buffel grass.

Drought and traditional Aboriginal patch burning, normal cyclical features of the desert, results in the death of some plants. However the increasing spread of buffel grass since its mass introduction in the 1960s for pasture and to curb erosion, has degraded desert ecosystems.

Not only does buffel grass outcompete local grasses and forbs, decreasing biodiversity, its vigour results in hot wildfires sweeping across large areas, incinerating native shrubs and further reducing biodiversity. The Garden is in the long process of controlling this introduced weed.

13. Fork-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea divaricata*)



This small gnarled tree's thick grey corky bark helped protect it from a buffel grass wildfire that swept across Tharrarletneme in 2009.

A large percentage of the native vegetation did not survive the fire. Many dead, burnt branches and trunks from the larger shrubs are still standing or lay scattered across the hill. Regeneration of local native plants has been slow, hindered by vigorous competition from buffel grass.

Bushfood: The seeds of this hakea can be eaten. Honey can be sucked from its flowers or the flowers can be steeped in water to make a sweet blackish coloured drink.

14. Striped Mint-bush (*Prostanthera striatiflora*) **Arrernte name:** Arrwatnurkle



This showy, prolifically flowering species grows to 2m and is relatively short-lived. In drought it looks almost dead on hill-slopes, but generally revives well after rains.

It grows on rocky hill slopes and along rocky creeklines in Central Australia and semi-arid parts of SA and NSW.

Medicinal Use: The fragrant leaves are crushed by Arrernte people and mixed with fat or oils to make a rubbing medicine; the juice can be used to dry out sores. The leaves are either burnt to make inhaling smoke or made into a rubbing medicine to treat flu symptoms.

15. Rock Fuchsia Bush (*Eremophila freelingii*)

Arrernte name: Arrethe



Growing to 1.5m high, Rock Fuchsia Bush is common on the ranges and hills around Alice Springs. Large lilac flowers are produced after rains. In droughts the lower leaves are shed to conserve moisture.

Medicinal Use: An important medicinal plant for Arrernte people, its leaves are either burnt and the smoke inhaled or steeped in water and drunk. It is used for skin ailments and headaches. A rubbing medicine is also made from leaves to treat chest infections.

16. River Red Gums - in the Todd River

(*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* subsp. *arida*)

Eastern Arrernte name: Apere



The largest tree species in the desert, this subspecies can be found all across the arid interior along watercourses and on alluvial plains where their roots can reach water hidden below the sand.

The large trees often have hollow trunks and branches that provide important habitat for many kinds of animals including parrots, cockatoos, bats, skinks and geckos, native bees (producing honey), and (in a few isolated places), possums.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: A very important tree in traditional Aboriginal society. White sweet scale on leaves produced by lerp infestations, remains a favourite bushfood. Edible grubs can be harvested from both the trunk and roots. Sweet sap on old bark exuded by another type of lerp was used to make a sweet drink. The wood was used to make coolamons and shelters.

17. Native Fig - eastern branch of the trail

(*Ficus brachypoda*)

Eastern Arrernte name: Utyerrke



This large shrub can be found throughout the desert on rocky hills, in gorges or other sheltered places above the frost line. Related to the tropical species, it is one of the most important bushfoods as it produces abundant fruit in a good season. Desert Figs are fire-sensitive. This fig narrowly survived the 2009 wildfire that swept across Tharrarletneme.

Bushfood: The fruits are ripe when they change colour from yellow to red or orange.

Wattle Walk

WALK TIME: 15 Minutes

There are close to 1000 wattle (Acacia) species in Australia and 1350 worldwide. Wattle is our official floral emblem and gives us our national colours of gold and green. The species which adorns our national coat of arms is the Golden Wattle (Acacia pycnantha) which grows in southeastern Australia.

The wattle has been regarded as our national flower since the 1890s and was incorporated into the nation's coat of arms in 1913. The same year a huge crowd gathered on the steps of the Melbourne GPO to buy the first stamps featuring wattle blossom.

Wattles occupy vast areas of Australia, from coastal to sub-alpine regions and areas of high rainfall to the arid inland. Wattles are particularly prevalent in the arid, semi-arid and the dry sub-tropical regions of the country.

Wattles have been used extensively by Aboriginal people for firewood, food and medicine. The seeds of several different species were an important food resource for traditional Aboriginal people. More recently wattle seed products have been developed for the growing bushfood market.

1. Red Mulga (*Acacia cyperophylla*)



With its distinctive curls of reddish bark, Red Mulga captures the evening light beautifully. It flowers after good rainfall events and can grow up to 8m high. Red Mulga or Minni Ritchi occurs in scattered populations along stony ephemeral watercourses across the Lake Eyre Basin.

2. Waddy Wood (*Acacia peuce*)

Arnernte name: Arripar



This threatened species is only known from three different populations on the fringes of the Simpson Desert. The only NT population is preserved at the Mac Clark reserve southeast of Alice Springs. The immature trees are much spikier and less elegant than mature specimens which grow up to 17m high, have pendulous branches and large and silvery seed pods.

Traditional Use: The timber was used by Aboriginal people for clubs (waddies), and by early European settlers for fences.



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3. Ironwood (*Acacia estrophiolata*)

Arerrernte name: Athenge

See Hill Walk, species 3, page 15 for details.

4. Witchetty Bush (*Acacia kempeana*)

Arerrernte name: Atnyeme



See Hill Walk, species 6, page 16 for details. Sometimes in this species, you can see clumps of parasitic Pale-leaf Mistletoe (*Amyema maidenii*). Mistletoe is spread by the Mistletoe Bird, and usually doesn't kill the host plant, except when the plant is very stressed by drought or disease.

5. Dead Finish (*Acacia tetragonophylla*)

Arerrernte name: Arlketyerre

See Hill Walk, species 2, page 14 for details.

6. Mt Conner Wattle (*Acacia ammobia*)



This rare wattle is only found growing on sand dunes and low gravelly hills within a 100km radius of Uluru. Growing up to 4m high, it produces a flush of cylindrical yellow flowers in winter. The ripe seeds were traditionally harvested for food by Pitjantjatjara people.

7. Mulga (*Acacia aneura*)

Eastern Arerrernte name: Artetye



Mulga is one of the most common Central Australian acacias. A large shrub or tree, it most commonly occurs as dense stands on flat red earth plains but can also be found on hillsides. Flowering occurs after heavy rain.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: Mulga seeds were roasted and ground into a nutritious paste tasting a little like peanut butter.

8. Horse Mulga (*Acacia ramulosa*)



Horse Mulga grows into a dense rounded shrub across a range of habitats in inland Australia. In the Northern Territory it can be found in salt lake-edge habitats and on sandplains in association with Mulga. It produces a flush of cylindrical Wattle flowers after rain events, and the seeds are collected as bushfood by Aboriginal people. As with Mulga, Horse Mulga is killed by hot summer wildfires.

9. Hill Mulga (*Acacia macdonnelliensis*)

Arerrnte name: Irrkwarteki



Growing up to 5m high in rocky range habitat in Central Australia, Hill Mulga differs from Mulga in being less bushy, having darker, more furrowed bark, and narrower seed pods.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: The timber is favoured as firewood, and some Aboriginal people harvest the seed to eat.

10. Silver Witchetty (*Acacia cuthbertsonii* subsp. *cuthbertsonii*)



Occurring sporadically throughout northern arid parts of Northern Territory and Western Australia, Silver Witchetty occurs mostly on gravelly hills or along watercourses.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: It produces large, gnarly seed pods after good rainfall events, and the green seeds are harvested and eaten by Aboriginal people. The fibre from the inner bark is used for bandages, or making bark sandals.

11. Undoolya Wattle (*Acacia undoolyana*)



Undoolya Wattle is listed nationally as a threatened species due to its limited distribution in the East MacDonnell Ranges and its vulnerability to hot summer wildfires. It grows up to 15 m high on rocky hillslopes, and it mainly flowers in August. It is most easily seen in the wild at N'Dhala Gorge Reserve. Like other threatened arid zone wattles, this species does not set viable seed readily in the wild, and these specimens are mostly derived from seed harvested from cultivated plants.

12. Des Nelson Wattle (*Acacia desmondii*)



The common name of this rare wattle honours local botanist Des Nelson, who first collected this species in 1964. Known from only a few locations in the area, this stunning wattle grows to 5m high on sandstone ridge habitat. It propagates readily from seed, and seems to do well in cultivation in many Alice Springs gardens.

13. Latz's Wattle (*Acacia latzii*)



This nationally-listed threatened species is only known from two range systems in the NT and northern SA. First collected in 1974 by Peter Latz, a prominent botanist in Central Australia (author of 'Bushfires and Bushtucker'), this species grows on silcrete mesas, gravely hillslopes and along creeklines. The Australian Plant Society Alice Springs has been monitoring populations of Latz's Wattle in the Bacon Ranges for over a decade. There is very low seed set in the wild, with the only recorded events occurring in 1974 and in 2000.

14. Mt Olga Wattle (*Acacia olgana*)



Mainly occurring on granite hills and ranges and along creeklines in the Central Range system that straddles the Northern Territory, SA and Western Australia, this species grows to around 6m high. Pitjantjatjara people are reputed to eat the seed and, like a number of other wattles, this species is killed by hot wildfires.

15. Georgina Gidgee (*Acacia georginae*)

Arreernte name: Urrenyenke



This dense, small tree occurs in clusters on floodplains and creeklines around the Georgina Basin in western Qld and in eastern parts of the NT. Poisonous to stock due to compounds in the seeds and seed pods, this species is disliked by pastoralists. The flowers and foliage also emit a strong sulphuric odour after rains, but these negative qualities are more than compensated for by its attractive gnarled appearance, silvery foliage and contrasting dark bark.

Mallee Walk

WALK TIME: 15 Minutes

Mallee is the name given to multi-stemmed trees which belong to the genus Eucalyptus. There are around 900 different Eucalypts worldwide. The majority of these only occur in Australia. Mallee was a very common vegetation type across drier parts of southern Australia at the time of European settlement, but was extensively cleared for agriculture.

Mallees provide an important source of firewood, timber, gum, honey and Eucalyptus oil. Unlike other parts of Australia, mallees and other gum trees are relatively rare in Central Australia, where wattles predominate.

1. Victoria Spring Mallee (*Eucalyptus trivalvis*)



This mallee grows up to 6m high and is most common around the Pilbara and Great Sandy Desert regions in Western Australia, but also grows in southern Northern Territory and northern SA. It usually grows on sandy plains but also occurs on rocky hillsides and sand dunes. The pinkish-grey bark provides an attractive contrast to the glaucous leaves.

2. Shiny-leaved Mallee (*Eucalyptus lucens*)



Endemic to the MacDonnell Ranges in the Northern Territory, this smooth-barked mallee grows on sandstone and quartzite ridges. Growing up to 5m high, the distinguishing feature of this small tree is its bright green shiny leaves. It is now cultivated in some gardens around Alice Springs.

3. Round-leaved Mallee (*Eucalyptus minniritchi*)



This attractive small mallee can be found growing on the upper slopes of Mt Sonder and other parts of the West MacDonnell Ranges, as well as in range country in Western Australia and northern SA. Round-leaved Mallee is popular in cultivation because of its beautiful blue-grey foliage, creamy-yellow flowers, and dark red curling (minni ritchie) bark.



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4. Sturt Creek Mallee (*Eucalyptus odontocarpa*)



Growing up to 4m high, Sturt Creek Mallee is a smooth-barked mallee occurring in a variety of habitats from the Pilbara in Western Australia, across the arid regions of the Northern Territory to Mt Isa in Qld.

5. Red Mallee (*Eucalyptus socialis* subsp. *eucentrica*)



One of the most common mallees of inland Australia, Red Mallee grows up to 7m and produces masses of creamy yellow flowers, a source of much of the honey produced in inland regions.

Bushfood: Aboriginal people harvested water from the roots in very dry times, and Pitjantjatjara people are reputed to eat the seeds.

6. Finke River Mallee (*Eucalyptus sessilis*)



Finke River Mallee is a small, straggly, smooth-bark mallee mainly growing in the ranges to the south and west of Alice Springs, and occurring in a small area of range country in Western Australia. It has large leathery leaves, large reddish-brown buds and creamy yellow flowers which produce large quantities of nectar.

7. Sharp-capped Mallee (*Eucalyptus oxymitra*)



Sharp-capped Mallee grows up to 6m high, and occurs on sandplain and rocky hill habitat in arid parts of north-western SA, Northern Territory and adjacent parts of Western Australia. It has smooth, reddish-brown bark, leathery grey-green leaves, and large yellow flowers produced in the summer months.

Bushfood: Aboriginal people harvest an edible lerp scale from the leaves, and honey from the flowers.

8. Blue Mallee (*Eucalyptus gamophylla*)

Arernte name: Uleperre



A distinctive blue-leaved mallee growing up to 8m high, Blue Mallee grows on rocky hills or red sand habitats mostly in association with spinifex.

Bushfood & Traditional Use: Creamy white flowers appear in summer, and the seeds are eaten by Aboriginal people. Water can be obtained from the roots, and the wood is used by Aboriginal people for making implements.

9. Red-bud Mallee (*Eucalyptus pachyphylla*)

Arernte name: Ntyenye



This attractive, pink-barked mallee grows to 6m high in spinifex sandplains and sand dunes. The red pointed caps of the flower buds are very ornamental, and are followed by clusters of yellow flowers.

Bushfood: Pintubi people eat the large seed, and the edible lerp found on the leaves of this species is reported to be sweeter than that found on any other gum tree.

10. Mallee Red Gum (*Eucalyptus gillenii*)



The botanical name honours Francis Gillen, Telegraph Stationmaster in Alice Springs in 1892 and collaborator with anthropologist and natural historian Professor Baldwin Spencer. Common along the ridges of the MacDonnell Ranges and stony hills elsewhere in Central Australia, this mallee grows to 5m and produces white flowers in summer.

11. Snappy Gum (*Eucalyptus leucophloia*)



Although often growing in tree form, this species sometimes occurs in a mallee form growing up to 7m on gravely soils or stony rises. Its distinctive smooth white bark makes Snappy Gum an attractive garden specimen.

Medicinal Use: The inner bark is used by Aboriginal people in medicines to treat a range of ailments.

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You can volunteer, make a donation, hold an event, or come to the Café. Whatever you decide to do, please help the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. We are a not-for-profit community organisation consisting of passionate and dedicated local people.



Garden Volunteers

Vibrant and dedicated volunteers are integral to the success and life of the Garden.

Volunteers propagate our plants (the Growers Group), govern and advise the Garden (the Board of Trustees, the Curatorial Reference and the Scientific Advisory Groups), undertake planting and weed control (Olive Pink Landcare), work on special projects, or help with events, fundraising and administration. If you can help, please call, email, or drop into the Garden. Meet new and interesting people, enjoy a unique aspect of Alice Springs' cultural and botanical heritage, and learn something new!



Peter Latz and Connie Spencer AM in front of an *Acacia latzii* in the Garden. Connie and Peter are key Garden Advisors and volunteers.

Pictured top left: Key volunteers at the launch of our Garden Design Masterplan: Connie Spencer AM (right) thanking Libby Prell (left) for her tremendous contribution as Chair of the Board of Trustees, and welcoming Fran Kilgariff AM (centre, holding the Masterplan) as the new Chair. All three played central roles in the development of our Garden Design Masterplan.

See <http://opbg.com.au/garden-master-plan/> for details of our future plans.

Local Native Plant Sales

We hold very popular plant sales in the Garden each autumn and spring. Email us to go on our Plant Sale Contact List, or **Like Us on Facebook** to receive Facebook notices.

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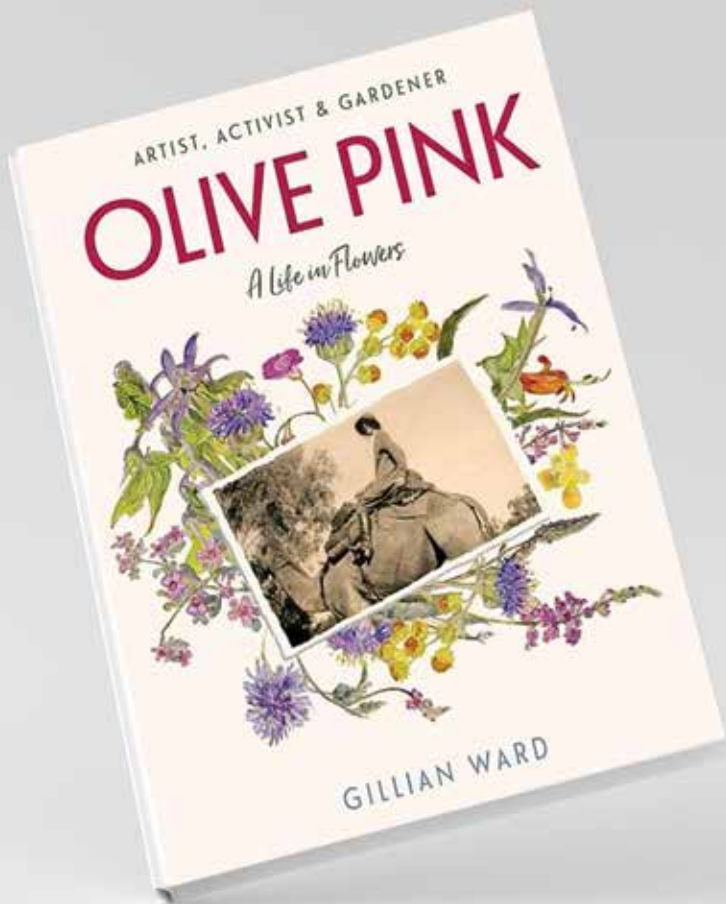
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Written by Gillian Ward - Published by Hardie Grant

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Also available:

Bushfires and Bushtucker: Aboriginal Plant Use in Central Australia by Peter Latz

The Indomitable Miss Pink: A Life in Anthropology by Julie Marcus

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