

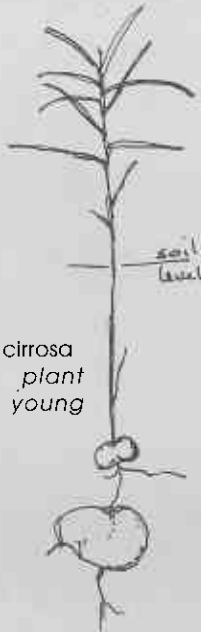
UNDER old York Gum or Wandoo trees there is often a lot of leaf litter and it may seem as though there are few plants growing there - but look closely. In autumn, an inconspicuous spindly upright plant with dark green leaves, will be in flower. It's in the carrot family, and it carries an umbel of small cream flowers on a long stalk. Its scientific name is *Platysace cirrosa*.

I was first shown this plant many years ago by an elderly gentleman from York, who told me he learnt about it from the aboriginal kids he went to school with. "We used to dig up the tubers on our way home from school on a summer afternoon" he said, "it was like eating a crunchy ice cream!" Well, I'm not sure I agree with the comparison, but maybe it's an acquired taste!

The plant is found throughout the Wandoo and York Gum woodlands, always growing in the leaf litter beneath the crown of mature trees. An old plant may have half a dozen tubers, some of them quite large. It was an important food source for the Nyoongar people, who called it Kanna (various

FLORA

KANNA



Platysace cirrosa
Seedling plant
showing young
tubers.

spellings - even given it's name to a townsite in the northern wheatbelt). Noel Nannup, of the Department's Indigenous Heritage Unit, said that the tuber contains a lot of moisture, so if eaten raw would be a good thirst

quencher. Alternatively it could be roasted in the camp fire, when, like a roast potato, you get a crisp skin around a fluffy inside. I wonder how it would taste when roasted in aluminium foil with a dab of butter?

Kanna survives well, even in remnants that have been lightly grazed. Its presence is an indicator of good understorey condition in remnant woodlands. Why not have a look for it in your woodlands? If you can find several plants, you could dig one up to find the tubers. Then, that evening, "throw a Kanna on the barbie!" Not only a new taste sensation, but a living link to past land use.

At the same time, you could do a little experiment to help increase our knowledge. Carefully replace the small tubers and, because we do not know if they will survive this treatment, please mark the place with a stick, and check it a year later for regrowth. We presume that Aboriginal people did this, and it worked, but no-one is sure - so, could someone find out please?

Penny Hussey

Southlands - enthusiasm and energy!

ALBANY'S Southlands Christian College has joined the *Land For Wildlife* scheme and dedicated 'Monday afternoons' to managing their 5

