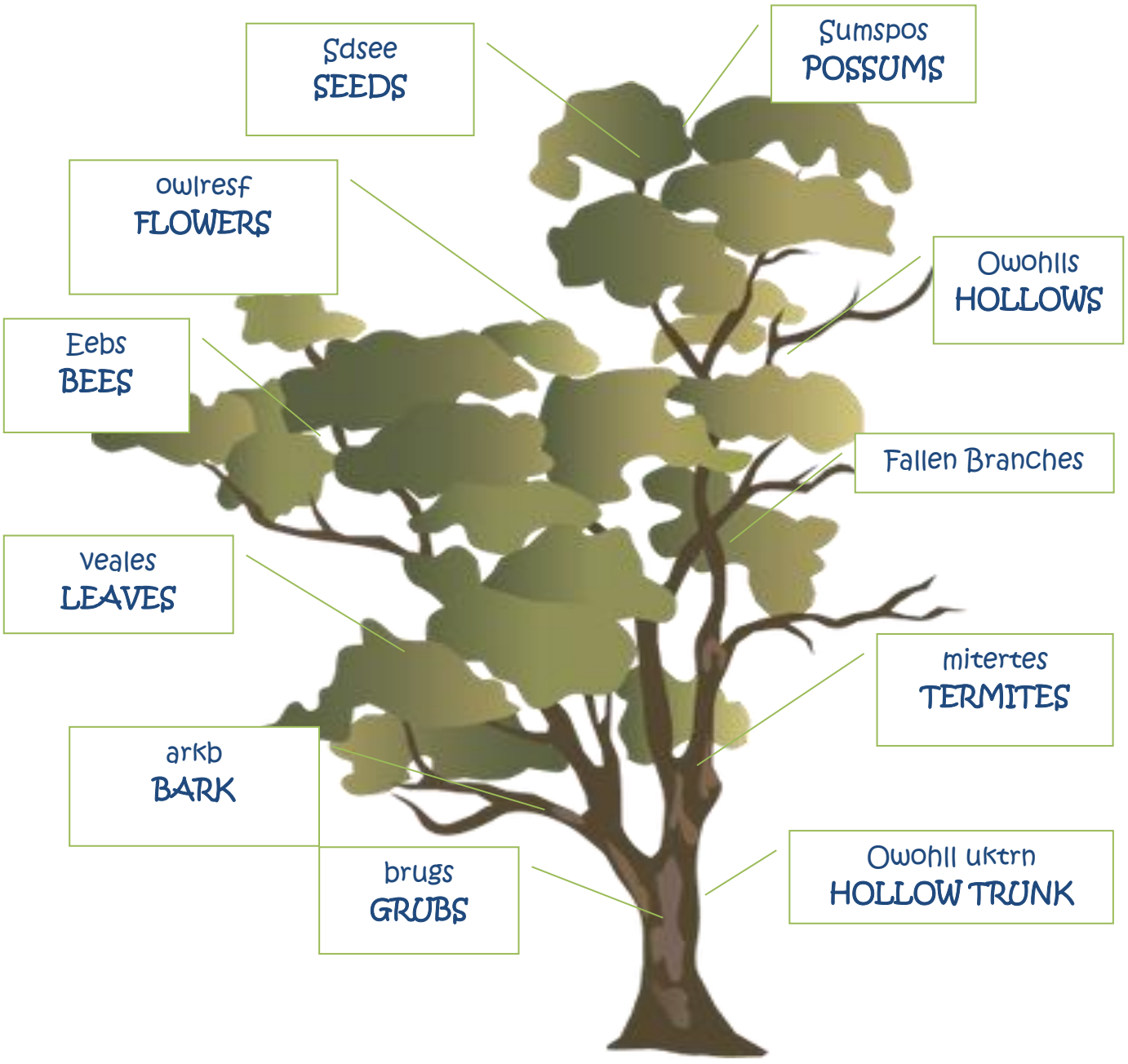
What If You Had To Live Here?

Teachers Info

Background info

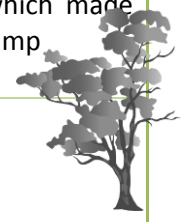
- The Aboriginal People have lived in Australia for over 40000 years, Europeans have only been here for a bit over 200 years
- Everything the Aboriginal People needed for food, hunting, shelter, etc came from the land
- They formed a close bond with the land, air, water, plants & animals and had an intricate knowledge of how their environment worked
- Knowledge was passed down from community elders through stories, songs, art and practical demonstrations
- Women would spend 10—15 hours/day gathering while the men hunted
- The Urrbrae Wetland has over 100 different plant species that are endemic to this specific area and represent what local Aborigines would have had access to.
- The Urrbrae area was home to members of the Kaurna community and possibly the Ramindjeri community



Discussion Points

River Red Gum (Karra) – students discuss the various uses for different parts of the tree and the animals it housed

Part	Use	Part	Use
Seeds	The seed vessels (*kanggulya*) were eaten after they had been soaked in water	**Flowers**	A source of nectar and used as decorations
Grubs	Large grubs burrow into the body of the tree and its roots. These grubs are a rich source of protein and energy and were obtained by hooking them out with a strong stick or bone. If they were collected from the body of the tree they were called *barti* and only men were allowed to eat them but if they came from the roots they were called *koope* and everyone could eat them.	**Leaves**	Where lerps are found. Lerps are the waxy, scale like coatings formed by some insects that suck the sap out of leaves. They are a rich source of sugar and by running the leaves through their teeth Aboriginals would get the lerps and the insects they contain. Leaves were also used as medicine by soaking them in water to form a tea or burning them on a fire and inhaling the vapour and smoke.
Bees	Native bees often built hives in hollows which provided wax and honey (*tiwa*) which was a prized food source and used for trading	**Hollows**	Provided habitat for a variety of animals that provided food, fur & feathers including bees, possums and birds such as cockatoos
Bark	Ngarrindjeri people along the Murray River made canoes by cutting a 3m strip of bark from the tree and holding it over a fire to curl the edges. They would then tie both ends with rope made from the inner bark and use smaller branches as cross pieces to stop the sides collapsing. The Kaurna people would use the bark to make shields called *wocalti*.	**Possums**	Hunted for meat & fur. Females weren't permitted to eat them until the birth of their 2nd child as it was believed the possums strong grip could be passed onto unborn children making birth difficult
		Termites	Good food source that provided high levels of protein
Fallen branches	Used as a source of fire wood and the hard nature of the wood made it perfect for spear throwers, boomerangs etc.	**Hollow trunk**	Trees would often be hollowed out by fire but continue to grow which made them ideal places to set up camp



River Red Gum

Many eucalyptus trees have similar features so students can examine the ones around the wetland.

- **Crush a gum leave and smell it – how is the medicinal quality of the gum leaf used now?** Eucalyptus oil is used for the relieve symptoms of colds, flu, chest congestion. The oil is antiseptic, therefore is used to treat burns and sores. Helps relieve the pain of aching, pains and stiffness in joints. Also used as an insect repellent for mosquitoes and fleas.
- **Look for gum nuts and flowers to decorate your hair**
- **Imagine how big a tree would have to be to provide bark for a canoe or shelter a whole family**

When walking around the wetland, you will come across the following plants. **For each one, circle its uses and write which part of the plant was used and any other interesting facts.**

Cyperus

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Women gather stems to make rope and string. This could then be used to make mats, baskets and nets.

Lerps

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
The lurps and the insects they contain were collected and eaten. The Lurp is a rich source of sugar

Flax Lilly

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Seeds can be eaten. Leaves boiled to make tea or split to make string. Leaves could also be pounded to make a sponge to gather nectar from yacca's flower spikes.

Kangaroo Grass

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Seeds pounded to make flower. Leaves and stems were used to make stirrers when cooking.

Native Lilac

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Leaves bolied to make a sweet tea. Flowers used for decoration and to make purple dye.

Galls

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
The galls contain grubs, which were eaten. The fluid that is in the galls was drunk as a source of energy.

Phragmites

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Young shoots and tubers (roots) eaten to treat sore throats. Stems used to make baskets, bags & light rafts. Stems also used to make ornaments (necklaces, nose ornaments)

Golden Wattle

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Sap eaten raw. Flowers used as decoration. Seed pods roasted and eaten.

She-oaks

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Cones roasted and eaten. Leaved boiled to make tea. The wood used to make spearsn boomerangs, etc. Womens trees because, nothing grows underneath, thus no snakes and children were easliy seen.

Ruby Saltbush

Food Fibre Tools
Medicines Other

Comments:
Red berries eaten. This plant fruits all year round.

Other Information

Useful plants at the Urrbrae wetland –Students may be able to sample some plants but close supervision of this is needed and it should only occur with the plants indicated.

Cyperus – *Marrngatoo*

Some species used to produce rope. Women would collect the stems and chew them to breakdown the pith (some women wore their teeth away!). They would then comb the pith away from the internal fibres with their fingers and hand these fibres over to the men who would twirl it into string. The string was used to make many things including baskets, mats and nets to catch emus, fish and flying birds. Students can examine the stems to see how this process may have worked.

Lerps

Lerps are the waxy, scale like coatings formed by some insects that suck the sap out of leaves. They are a rich source of sugar and by running the leaves through their teeth Aboriginals would get the lerps and the insects they contain. Students can try to remove a lerp from a leaf and see if they can see the insect underneath but only do this on a few leaves & eating is not recommended.

Flax Lilly

The leaves can be boiled and made into a tea or they can be split lengthways and rolled to make instant string. They were also pounded into fibre, rolled into a ball and then used as a sponge to gather nectar from the flower spikes of yacca's. The tubers, blue fruits and black seeds are all edible and are a good source of carbohydrates. Students can try to make string from some leaves.

Kangaroo Grass

The grass was gathered in large wooden bowls and the seeds were then separated and ground into flour using grinding stones. This flour was mixed with water and baked to make damper. The leaves & stems were also used as stirrers when cooking.

Native Lilac

The leaves were boiled to make a sweet drink while the flowers were used for decoration or as a source of purple dye.

Galls

Galls are out-growths on the surfaces of plants caused by another organism invading the plant. The invading organism is often an insect like a wasp or mite, which burrows into the plant and feeds while the plant grows extra tissue over the top of it (the gall). Galls can occur in the stems of plants or on the leaves. They were sometimes called desert apples and were a good food source as they provided protein from the insect or grub plus energy from the plant fluid. Galls can provide up to a tablespoon of fluid. Students can try and squeeze a gall to see how much fluid it contains.

Phragmites

The young shoots & tubers are edible and the young shoots may have been used to treat sore throats. Because the young growth was more desirable reed beds were commonly burnt to generate regrowth. Their stems were also used to make baskets, bags & light rafts to for gathering on the water. Stems were also cut into segments to make ornaments like necklaces, hair beads or nose ornaments.

Golden Wattle – *Minno (the tree & gum), Perromba (blossom) & mingka (seeds & pods)*

Gum nodules form on the trunk which were eaten raw and provided a rich source of energy. The lighter coloured gum was preferred and it was a principal food in summer. The flowers were used for decoration by wearing them in the hair or weaving them into armbands, necklaces etc. The seed pods were roasted and eaten. Wattle seed is now becoming a popular coffee substitute in alternative agriculture. Other wattle species were used for medicines, weaponry, musical instruments, fire wood and ceremonial items.

She-oaks – *Karko*

The young cones, stems & leaves were chewed to relieve thirst during times of drought and the cones were also rosted and eaten. The leaves could be boiled to make tea and the tree also had ceremonial and medicinal uses. The wood was also used for spears, boomerangs etc. They are called sheoaks because they were known as womens trees. Nothing really grows underneath them so children could be easily seen and they were safe from 'the bush devil' (snakes).

Ruby Saltbush

The fruit and seeds can be eaten raw all year round and the fruit can be soaked in water to make a drink. Students can sample the red berries if they are present