



Keraudrenia

CREDIT: Stanley Breeden



Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is home to more than 400 different plants, and several rare species.

Unlike the less arid parts of Australia, where eucalypts dominate the landscape, at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park where the average yearly rainfall is less than 300 millimetres, the most common group of trees are the acacias.

Wanari (*mulga*) – includes several acacia species which form dense woodlands of low, rounded shrub-like trees. The dominant species of wanari is the **common mulga** (*Acacia aneura*). Other species include **Uluru mulga** (*Acacia ayersiana*) and **witchetty bush** (*Acacia kempeana*). Wanari provides important resources for Anangu, who still collect maku (witchetty grubs that are found in the roots), hunt the large game that shelter in the shade and use wanari wood to make several important tools such as spear throwers, digging sticks and spear heads.

Muur-muurpa – itara and altarpa are the three most common **eucalypts** (*gum trees*) in the park.

Muur-muurpa (*desert bloodwood, Corymbia terminalis*) – have rough, square patterned bark and produce a red sap traditionally used as a disinfectant and an inhalant for coughs and colds.

Itara (*river red gum, Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) – have smooth white and grey bark with red patches, and grow along creek lines.

Altarpa (*blue mallee, Eucalyptus gamophylla*) – have rounded blue-green leaves and grow in sandy areas. After fires they can re-sprout from a large underground root to form several new trunks which gives them the characteristic multi-stemmed ‘mallee-form’ appearance.

Pukara (*thryptomene, Aluta maisonneuvei*) – is a small woody shrub which forms dense stands on the slopes of sand dunes. Pukara produce small white and pink flowers with edible nectar.

Kurkara (*desert oak, Allocasuarina decaisneana*) – can be seen scattered across the spinifex grasslands. The juvenile trees are narrow with a straight trunk; upon reaching maturity the trees form a large spreading canopy and deeply furrowed corky bark which protects the trees from fire.

Kurkara – is a very slow growing tree, and many of the adult trees you see are likely to be in excess of 1000 years old. Anangu prefer a piece of kurkara as a fire stick, as once alight, the dense resinous timber does not easily go out.

Aṅangu have many uses for plants including food, medicines, tools and weapons



Hairy mulla mulla



Desert oak seeds



Kaliny-kalinypa (honey grevillea, *Grevillea eriostachya*) – is a straggly shrub with long, narrow leaves that produces bright yellow and green flowers in long spikes.

The flowers contain thick, honey-like nectar which can be sucked directly from the flowers; a favourite treat for Aṅangu children. The flowers can also be soaked in water to make a sweet drink.

Tjanpi (spinifex grass) – forms spiky hummocks which are the dominant ground cover on the sand dunes and plains in the park.

There are four species which occur in the park – **soft spinifex** (*Triodia pungens*) and **hard spinifex** (*Triodia basedowii*) are the most common, and **porcupine grass** (*Triodia irritans*) and **feathertop spinifex** (*Triodia schinzii*) are found amongst the domes at Kata Tjuta. Both soft and hard spinifex produce resin which Aṅangu use to make kitji, a glue-like gum used in tool making. Tjanpi provides habitat for many small mammals and reptiles; when the tjanpi gets old and dense Aṅangu burn it to open up the landscape and to produce foraging areas for animals.

Tjulpun-tjulpunpa – is a generic term for wild flowers, such as various species of **daisy** (*Asteraceae* family) or members of the 'pusstail' genus, Ptilotus.

Rare plants

There are several regionally significant rare plant species that occur in the park.

These include one threatened species, species with restricted distributions, and several relictual species.

Relictual species are remnants of broader populations which existed in the past when the climate was very different.

Mangaṭa (desert quandong, *Santalum acuminatum*) – is a threatened species which is listed as vulnerable in the Northern Territory.

Mangaṭa are a favourite food of camels, and so while mangaṭa are common in other parts of Australia, the large numbers of camels in the Northern Territory have significantly reduced populations in this state.

Mangaṭa are eaten straight from the tree, providing a rich source of vitamins today as in traditional times.

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