

## Food Plant Solutions

Established in 2007, Food Plant Solutions (FPS) creates publications that help people understand the connection between plant selection and nutrition, and empowers them to grow a range of highly nutritious plants with differing seasonal requirements and maturities. The work is underpinned by the Food Plants International database of edible plants for all countries of the world, developed by Tasmanian Agricultural Scientist and Officer of the Order of Australia recipient – Bruce French.

With program partners, FPS encourages the establishment of demonstration food gardens in schools and communities, as these provide ongoing education and improve the health and nutrition of participants through the availability of nutritious food prepared from these gardens. The focus to date has primarily been on developing countries, (publications have been created for over 30 countries), although this solution can be applied to any situation where there are nutritional challenges. The approach remains the same – focusing on education about what is nutritious food.

Many people associate eating with easing hunger. Those affected by both malnutrition and over-nutrition may not know that feeling full does not necessarily equate to having adequate nutrition.

The State Government has a goal to make Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025<sup>1</sup>. The 'Healthy Tasmania Five Year Plan' states in part 'the prevalence of overweight and obese adults in Tasmania continued to increase between 2011–12 and 2014–15 to 65.9%'.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Diabetes Tasmania has estimated that an average of 129 Tasmanians are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes each month<sup>3</sup>. It is recognised that Type 2 Diabetes can be at least delayed, if not prevented, with lifestyle changes.

The 'Central Coast Council Local Food Security Strategy – Growing Our Health, June 2016' found 'Only 46.3% of adults in Central Coast eat the recommended two fruit and only 10.8% eat the recommended five serves of vegetables per day. Potentially, this means that almost 90% of the adult population has a less than ideal nutritional diet. A poor diet leads to poor health – being overweight or obese, having heart disease, diabetes and cancers.'<sup>4</sup>

There are countless gardening books on both 'common' and 'indigenous plants'. Very few, if any, of them combine both, whilst also providing nutritional data. FPS has created a guide that contains this information, giving those educating the community on the benefits of healthy eating a very valuable tool. The guide contains information on approximately 40 edible plants, from all the major food groups, covering how and where to grow, what parts are edible, how to use those parts, nutritional information and a photo to assist with identification.

The printing of this guide was made possible by a funding contribution provided by the Council's Small Community Grants Scheme, which was reviewed to include a 'healthy food' criteria as an action of the Central Coast Local Food Security Strategy. Additionally, the Strategy enables the guide to be made available from the Council's Administration Centre and Ulverstone and Penguin Visitor Information Centres, so that people in the Central Coast can learn about the nutritional value of foods.

There are many programs operating around the state, at all levels, most working from different resources. This guide could be a very valuable tool to each of these organisations and help to achieve consistency in the message that is being delivered.

For further details contact us at [info@foodplantsolutions.org](mailto:info@foodplantsolutions.org) or [www.foodplantsolutions.org](http://www.foodplantsolutions.org)

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/224567/Healthy\\_Tasmania\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Web\\_v8\\_LR.pdf](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/224567/Healthy_Tasmania_Strategic_Plan_Web_v8_LR.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/224567/Healthy\\_Tasmania\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Web\\_v8\\_LR.pdf](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/224567/Healthy_Tasmania_Strategic_Plan_Web_v8_LR.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/joint/Submissions/PHC%20No.%2021%20-%20Diabetes%20Tasmania%20Submission%20160215.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au/pdf/food/Local-Food-Security-Strategy.pdf>