

BILLARDIERA SCANDENS

In this article I deal with another most unusual vine that is also a bush tucker plant.

This plant also has the common names of Apple Berry or Apple Dumpling. It is usually described as a shrubby slender climber and is not one that stands out in the bush. The plant extends from southern Queensland to NSW, Victoria and South Australia. It can be found growing in cool, sheltered gully forests to mallee scrub. I personally describe it as a twiner rather than a climber.



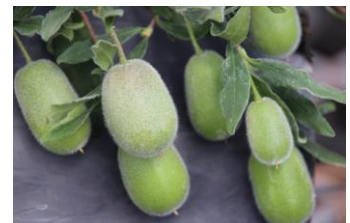
The flowers are bell shaped greenish yellow followed by berries that are yellowish green and a soft light brown colour when fully ripe. They are not edible until they are fully ripe and fall off. At this stage they can be daunting to the uninitiated because they appear to be rotten.

Under cultivation they can be grown in shade to full sun. In full sun they need regular watering until fully established and they will grow in almost any soil from sandy loam to clay soils but it must be well drained. Once established they are hardy to most frosts. They will also grow quite well under established Eucalyptus providing they are given extra fertiliser.



At Riverdene, we have been growing this plant for a number of years and trying to select superior forms. The plant pictured to the left, is one that we have selected and developed for its dense bushy habit, large fruit and long term cropping. We are growing it from seed in the hopes of getting better ones and at present

we are trying to propagate it by cutting. If this is successful we will name it as Billardieri Allyn Awesomeas. If our efforts are successful it will be an ideal plant for pots, baskets or raised garden beds.



There is another species known as Billardieri longiflora that grows at high elevations from the Barrington Tops southward. I have three of these growing in my riverbank forest, they have climbed three shrubs and formed a dense straggly mass at the top of the shrubs and what amused me was that in each mass of vine there was at least 3 bird nests and all they had to do was sit in their nests, poke their head out and have a feed on the fruit dangling in front of them. Clever birds!