

## Austromyrtus dulcis – Midgen Berry

*Austromyrtus dulcis*, commonly known as Midgen Berry, occurs naturally from Byron Bay in northern NSW to Fraser Island in southern QLD. It grows as a spreading shrub up to 1m in height although in colder conditions it is smaller and can be used as a ground cover. Its most frequent occurrence is in sandy soils in heath, scrub or open forests and occasionally on the margins of rainforests. A popular bush tucker plant, Midgen berry grows well in exposed coastal areas out of direct contact with salt winds and spray.

Leaves are glossy dark green, lanceolate arranged in opposite rows. The undersurfaces of the leaves are hairy, appearing paler. New shoots are silky hairy, coppery coloured. The leaves have dense translucent oil glands.

It produces a mass of delicate white fluffy flowers in Spring and Summer.

Although only a small, bush it can produce many small, round, white speckled berries twice a year in January and April. The berries are usually quite sweet, pleasantly edible and popular with both birds and people - one of the truly naturally edible bush foods.

*Austromyrtus dulcis* is an adaptable species that can take a range of climates including some humidity and frost. It is best in well-drained soil but very adaptable to most sites if reliable water is available. It grows happily in the Australian Botanic Gardens in Canberra - as a low shrub to some 40cm by 1.5m when grown as an understory with some tree cover to protect from the harshest frosts, and as a groundcover in more shaded positions.

Propagation from fresh seed is reliable without the need for pre-treatment.

Surface sow seeds and only just cover seeds – don't bury too deep!

Use a good quality propagation mix and keep moist but not too wet.

Germination in 4 to 5 weeks.

