



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

**Sydney Ideas**  
Public talks program

# Bruce Pascoe: Perennial Soil

*The inaugural Arthur and Hilda Winch  
annual lecture in pre-colonial Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander culture*

Monday 19 October, 2020





## Sydney Ideas – Perennial Soil

### The speakers



**(Chair) Professor Lisa Jackson**  
**Pulver AM,**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous  
Strategy and Services), University of  
Sydney

**@ProfLJP**



**Bruce Pascoe**

Author of *Dark Emu*



**Dr Angela Pattison**

Plant breeder and agricultural  
scientist, University of Sydney School  
of Life and Environmental Sciences

**@angepattison**





*Images: (pictured right) The university's research plot, about 10 hectares. From the air it looks bare, because just before we took this photo, we put a cool burn across it. (pictured left). You cannot really see it from the photo, but the land is put into three sections. Because we are going to try to do it three slightly different ways and see which one works best.*





*Images: Technician, Callum, harvesting button grass (pictured left). Pictured right: Rosedale Reaper which is basically a big vacuum. The yellow thing at the front is just a set of paddles. As it drives forward through the field, it taps the heads of the grain, and if it is ripe, it falls off and is sucked into the big receptacles at the back. And if it is not ripe, it stays in the field and we can come through again*





Images: (pictured left) A few of the grain samples we have collected from Gomeroi country and similar areas. Right: The diversity of grain size, shape and colour. The darker one is not a grass species, but it grows in grassland, called Dhamu, or purslane or pig weed. That is one of the highest plant-based sources of omega three fatty acid that you can get, right up with linseed. The bottom is acacia, very high in protein and the plants are very important in the ecosystem because they increase the nitrogen content of the soil. All the others are grasses.



*Images (from left): Callum with Uncle Bruce and his wife doing some johnnycake cooking on the barbecue. Centre: Dr Angela Pattinson's two-year-old daughter being taught how to make Johnny Cakes by the women at Wee Waa. Right: Johnny Cakes being cooked on country over hot coals.*





*Images (on left): One of the johnnycakes that we made. It is pure native millet flour, the red in the middle is a quandong that was baked into the cake. Right: three loaves that were baked in the lab. The two on the outside are 15% warrego grass, the middle loaf is made from quinoa and the rest is wheat.*





*Images: Callum in the glasshouse (pictured left). Part of working with the community has not just been doing science experiments for us but also getting involved in planting with school kids. Right: Mitchell grass seed, showing the ways you can use it for planting. When you coat the seed it's a lot more expensive. The coating is not a fancy chemical, just a dye added to a clay mineral, which helps the seed to germinate.*





*Image: Group shot of researchers, community organisations and local volunteers on Gomeroi country.*



## Further resources

- **OPEN TO ALL BUT OF MOST RELEVANCE TO INDUSTRY AND POTENTIAL GROWERS:** A series of three industry-focused webinars during November (overlapping with NAIDOC Week). These will be very practical, and of most relevance to organisations and businesses wanting to grow, buy or sell native grains/foods. [MORE INFO](#)
- **FOR SCIENCE TEACHERS:** The University's Science Communication team are hosting a workshop late November about how to integrate Indigenous knowledge into teaching (including providing practical resources). Bruce Pascoe and Angela Pattison are speaking there too. *DETAILS TO COME.*
- **FOR ALL:** 40 page report on the paddock-to-plate of native grains that will be released NAIDOC week on the [Indigenous Grasslands for Grains project website](#). *STAY TUNED.*
- **FOR ALL BUT MOST RELEVANCE TO STUDENTS:** 2-5 minute videos on various aspects of native grains, to be released NAIDOC Week on the [project website](#). *STAY TUNED.*





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