

Plate 459 Apium Prostratum.var.filiforme

Apium decumbens - tenellum

Oohourage, New Zealand 19th - 20th November, 1769

Plate 460 Apium Prostrataum (umbelliferae)

Apium decumbens - sapidum

Teoneroa, New Zealand 8th – 11th October, 1769

Māori name: Tūtae kōau – Shore celery

Sometimes called Māori celery, it is an edible coastal herb used as an anti-scorbutic by Cook on his first voyage to treat and prevent scurvy in his crew as a result of long sea voyages without fresh fruit and vegetables. It is essentially, a dune plant with green foliage and small clusters of white flowers. The flowers develop into small oval seeds which ripen January to March. The natural habitat of *apium prostratum* is a sandy bank or beach above the high tide mark. The plant sprawls on banks and cliffs rather than growing upright and is a native to Australia and New Zealand. There are two main varieties of *apium prostratum*, and the variety *filiforme*, also known as headland sea celery, grows on coastal dunes and headlands. This variety is considered to be the most palatable. A second variety, known as mangrove sea celery, grows in swamps and marshes. A number of sub-species are also to be found and vary in relation to differences associated with environmental conditions.

Cook makes several entries in his journals of the First Voyage describing the collection of celery.

Friday 27th October, Tolago Bay. *'The other place I landed was at the North point of the bay, where I got as much Sellery and Scurvy grass as loaded the boat.'*

Saturday, 28th October. *'...As I intend to sail in the morning some hands were employed picking Sellery to take to sea with us. This is found in great plenty, and I have caused it to be boiled with Portable soup [blocks of dried meat] and Oatmeal for the people's breakfast...I look upon it to be very wholesome and a great Antiscorbutick.'*

Apium prostratum played a significant role in the establishment and development of European colonies such as the Sydney Colony where it was eaten as a survival food in the colony's early days. Even today both leaf and stem are eaten, and dried leaves used



in native Australian spice mixes which are used as flavourings for soups. The variety, *filiforme* was cultivated by colonists around Albany, Western Australia, as a vegetable.

The plant also figured greatly in Māori culture in New Zealand. The plant was used less as a food source and more as a medicine. Interestingly, there is evidence to show that following Cook's visits and those of other sailors, Māori people took a greater interest in the plant as a food source. However, a medicinal use of the plant was more important as it fits better into the Māori philosophy of an holistic approach to healing and health. This approach consists of a number of elements including rituals, various types of massage, and a wider concern with well-being. The belief is that good health is achieved by maintaining general well-being rather than simply the addressing of a specific disease and its symptoms. This approach is called Te Rongoa and includes various rituals along with an ongoing relationship with nature and other species in the form of a life-balance philosophy. Te Rongoa promotes a lifestyle that prevents ill-health rather than simply requiring a cure and in some ways, this philosophy reflects that of Cook and his actions concerning the prevention of scurvy among his crew.

The finished artwork relating to Plate 459 in the *Florilegium* was carried out by John Frederick Miller. This work was based on the original sketches and notes produced by Sydney Parkinson while on *Endeavour's* voyage. The importance of Parkinson's notes and sketches was magnified after his death in Batavia, en route back to England. Other deaths en route in Banks' team were Charles Green and John Reynolds, all of which were recorded in *Endeavour's* Muster Roll.

John Frederick Miller, along with his brother James, produced much of the watercolour artwork required for the copperplate engravings as part of Banks' grand project. James Miller produced the artwork for Plate 460, again based on Sydney Parkinson's sketches and notes. This plate was engraved by Jabez Goldar.

Robert Parkinson

Sources

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Apium Prostratum – Finished drawing by John Frederick Miller.

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