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Calandrinia balonensis

[Synonyms : *Claytonia balonensis*]

PARAKEELYA is an annual, biennial, or perennial. Native to Australia (particularly northern areas), it has daisy-like, long-lasting, reddish-purple (occasionally white) flowers.

It is also known as Broad-leaved parakeelya.

Warning – the plant can be poisonous. (Roots and seeds need to be processed before they are eaten.)

Balonensis means ‘of or from the Balonne River in the Australian State of Queensland’ where it is believed parakeelya was first collected.

Parakeelya provides grazing for cattle as a satisfactory alternative in arid regions for both pasture and water. However cattle bred on this diet find it difficult to adjust to traditional grazing and watering, and have to be trained to accept this strange concept before they are moved away from their familiar food. Apparently they will hunt for the parakeelya from which they must be isolated and water is a whole new ballgame. They will paw the water they have never seen before, can be scared by their own reflection in the water’s surface, and have to learn by trial and error how to drink and swallow (instead of eat) the strange smelling and moving substance. Only then can they be transported to parakeelya-free territory

The roots and seeds have not only provided a famine food for Australian Aborigines in central Australia but also formed part of the diet of early settlers.