The Hidden Beauty of Seeds & Fruits by Levon Biss

Blueberry Ash
Scientific name: *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*
Origin: Australia

This Australian tree is known for its bell-shaped flowers, often called 'fairy petticoats' because of their frilly edges. The flowers have a gentle liquorice scent and turn into bright blue fruits that attract birds such as the male satin bowerbird. This image shows a worn and weathered stone which has had the soft flesh and blue outer skin removed.

Location: Ground floor, group of four, top left

Sandalwood
Scientific name: *Santalum* sp.
Origin: India

Sandalwood is a small tree prized for its fragrant wood. Its single-seeded fruit is dark purple to attract birds for seed dispersal. The wood is used in carving, incense, fragrant oils and traditional Hindu rituals.

Location: Ground floor, group of four, top right

Oil Fruit
Scientific name: *Elaeocarpus* sp.
Origin: Australia

This genus includes around 480 tropical species, many with seeds that are beautifully textured and used in jewellery such as Hindu prayer beads. Its name comes from the Greek for 'olive fruited.'

Location: Ground floor, group of four, bottom left

Electric Shock Plant
Scientific name: *Blumenbachia insignis*
Origin: Brazil and Argentina

This white-flowered plant belongs to the rock nettle family, known for tiny stinging hairs that deliver a sharp, electric-like sensation to protect it from being eaten. Its fruit is a five-chambered capsule that twists anticlockwise; a trait shared by all plants in this genus.

Location: Ground floor, group of four, bottom right

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Giant Banksia
Scientific name: *Banksia grandis*
Origin: Australia

This Australian tree is named for its enormous leaves, which can reach nearly half a metre in length. The cone-like fruit head is left behind after hundreds of flowers have fallen from a single spike. The genus was named after Joseph Banks, an explorer and naturalist who collected the first specimens during Captain Cook's voyage to the Pacific in 1770.

Location: Ground floor, to the right of stairwell

Sandplain Woody Pear
Scientific name: *Xylomelum angustifolium*
Origin: Australia

Native to the sandplains of Western Australia, this small tree produces large, pear-shaped fruits that protect the seeds from animals and fire. The fruit splits open either gradually over the course of several seasons, or within hours in response to bushfires. This specimen, collected in 1905, shows the empty cavities where seeds once rested.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, first picture

Field Manioc
Scientific name: *Zeyheria montana*
Origin: Brazil

This shrub is native to the Cerrado, a fire-dominated grassland in Brazil rich in plant species. Its pod, sometimes called *bolsa de pastor* or 'shepherd's bag', splits in half to release many small seeds that are carried by the wind. The shape of the fruit helps the seeds travel away from the parent plant.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, second picture

Seraya Duan Kasar
Scientific name: *Shorea fallax*
Origin: Malaysia

This towering rainforest tree can reach up to 60 metres, rising above the canopy. Its seeds have two small wings that help them spin through the air and land away from the parent tree. The timber, known as meranti, is valued for construction, while its Malay name means 'the leaves are coarse'.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, third picture

BOWOOD

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Jacquemont's Hazel
Scientific name: *Corylus jacquemontii*
Origin: Western Himalaya

Endemic to the Western Himalaya, this tree grows between 1,500 and 3,500 metres. Each nut sits in a cup with delicate, tentacle-like projections and the seeds are edible like commercial hazelnuts. The tree is named after Victor Jacquemont, a French botanist who explored the region in the 1800s.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, mid landing, fourth picture

Melembu
Scientific name: *Pterocymbium tinctorium*
Origin: Malaysia

A large tree reaching up to 50 metres, often with smooth, silvery bark. Its winged fruit changes colour as it matures, helping the seeds to be carried by the wind. The bark is used for rope making and dyeing cloth, which is reflected in its species name, *tinctorium*.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, fifth picture

Grapple Plant
Scientific name: *Harpagophytum* sp.
Origin: South Africa

This herbaceous plant produces attractive purple flowers. Its hooked fruit, which inspired its scientific name, is also sometimes called Devil's claw. The spiky pods can be sharp enough to hurt if stepped on, a reminder of the grappling hooks used by the Romans in warfare, that gave the plant its Latin name.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, sixth picture

Shell Ginger
Scientific name: *Alpinia* sp.
Origin: Thailand

This ginger-family plant grows throughout warm parts of Asia, often in forests or at forest edges. The round, hairy fruit contains three rows of fragrant seeds. Some species of Alpinia, like galangal, are rare outside South East Asia.

Location: Ground to first floor stairwell, seventh picture

BOWOOD

The Hidden Beauty of Seeds & Fruits by Levon Biss

Medang Pajal
Scientific name: *Ternstroemia* sp.
Origin: Malaysia

This small tropical tree is named after the Swedish naturalist Christopher Ternstroem. Its bright orange-red fruit contains a single seed, which are dispersed by birds. The wood is used in light construction and veneer, while the bark has traditional uses, including fish poison and treating head lice.

Location: First floor landing

Bofiyu
Scientific name: *Esenbeckia cornutata*
Origin: Peru

A small tree native to a remote patch of dry forest in northern Peru. These forests are rich in unique plant species but are under threat from farming and overgrazing. This tree is an example of the high level of unique plants found in these isolated forests.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, first picture

Sandillón
Scientific name: *Eriosyce aurata*
Origin: Chile

A barrel cactus that grows in the arid regions of central and northern Chile. Its spiny ribs protect the plant, while the red funnel-shaped flowers produce white fruits containing black seeds dispersed by the wind. It survives extreme temperatures, from freezing nights to intense daytime heat.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, second picture

Berembang
Scientific name: *Sonneratia caseolaris*
Origin: Indonesia

This mangrove tree produces shiny, green fruits known as ‘mangrove apples’ with buoyant seeds in a whitish pulp. The fruit can be eaten raw or cooked and immature fruits are used to flavour curries. Ripe fruit tastes like cheese. Traditionally, it has also been used in medicine to reduce bleeding and soothe coughs.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, third picture

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Himalayan Hazelnut
Scientific name: *Corylus ferox*
Origin: China

Native to the Himalayas and Tibet, this medium-sized tree grows at high altitudes, sometimes above 3,600 metres. The nuts are enclosed in sharp, spiny burs and can be eaten raw or roasted. Local people forage them from the wild and manage the forests to maintain the trees.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, mid landing, fourth picture

Himalayan Pear
Scientific name: *Pyrus pashia*
Origin: Nepal

This small Himalayan tree produces gritty, pear-like fruits that become sweet when softened. Locally, the fruit juice is used for medicinal purposes, while the leaves are cut for fodder and the wood is used to make walking sticks.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, fifth picture

Candlestick Banksia
Scientific name: *Banksia attenuata*
Origin: Australia

This shrub or small tree is adapted to survive regular bushfires in its native habitat. After a fire, it can regrow from buds hidden within its trunk. It is pollinated by the tiny nectar-feeding honey possum. Scottish botanist Robert Brown named this species in 1810 during his extensive study of Australian plants.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, sixth picture

Gourd
Scientific name: *Cucurbita* sp.
Origin: Cultivated

This plant belongs to the same genus as squash, pumpkin and courgette and includes some of the first crops cultivated in the Americas. Gourds have tough rinds that protect their seeds. Those considered inedible are often dried to make ornaments or musical instruments. Archaeological evidence shows *Cucurbita* was being grown as far back as 5000 BCE.

Location: First to second floor stairwell, seventh picture

BOWOOD

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Rosary Pea
Scientific name: *Abrus precatorius*
Origin: India to Malaysia

This climbing plant produces striking, bright red seeds that look like ladybirds. The seeds are highly toxic but are widely used as beads in jewellery and musical instruments. In traditional medicine, the leaves, roots and seeds are carefully prepared to reduce toxicity and treat ailments such as fevers and arthritis.

Location: Top floor landing, picture to left of door

Birthwort
Scientific name: *Aristolochia* sp.
Origin: USA

Birthworts are climbing plants or shrubs known for their unusual flowers that trap insects to help with pollination. Historically, parts of the plant were used in childbirth remedies, but the roots and stems are now known to be toxic. The specimen shown here is an unopened fruit.

Location: Top floor landing, picture to right of door

Love-in-a-Mist
Scientific name: *Nigella damascena*
Origin: Cultivated

This plant is widely grown in gardens for its delicate, feathery foliage and attractive flowers. It has also been called ‘ragged lady’ for its untidy leaves and ‘devil in the bush’ for the horned appearance of its fruit. Traditionally, the seeds have been used as a spice, a healing herb and even to protect clothes from moths.

Location: Top floor landing, picture to the right