



Florida

Ethnobotany

BALD CYPRESS



BALD CYPRESS

(*Taxodium distichum*)

Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) is a conifer often found growing near water. Its name stems from the fact that, unlike most other cone-bearing trees, bald cypress trees lose all their needles each winter and grow new ones in the spring! This tree can be found growing from Maryland to Texas, primarily in swampy areas.

Top image from NC Extension Gardener,
bottom image from [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com)



HISTORY

The Aztecs used different parts of the Cypress tree like the resin and bark to treat ailments like burns and sores. They also used parts of the tree they referred to as the “anoéhoetl,” as a remedy for ulcers.



MEDICINAL USES

In modern-day, the Bald Cypress tree has been used for treating heart disease, malaria, bronchitis, liver disease, gout, and other intestinal issues. Research has determined that there are anti-tumor and anti-microbial compounds in the DNA.



FUN FACT

It is the oldest known living tree in eastern North America and the oldest known wetland species on earth!



BUTTERFLY MILKWEED



BUTTERFLY MILKWEED

Asclepias tuberosa

Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a perennial with clustered bright orange-yellow flowers that attract many different pollinators. This plant begins putting out new growth in the spring and tends to like dry, sunny areas.

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FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

HISTORY

Fibers from the stems of butterfly milkweed have been found in prehistoric textiles and have been used to make cords and ropes. Some indigenous groups also ate the shoots, stems, and flower buds of this plant after boiling them.



MEDICINAL USES

Some native peoples used the roots of butterfly milkweed to treat wounds as well as bronchial and pulmonary issues while European Americans used the root to treat edema, increase fluid circulation, and stimulate the vagus nerve. This plant has also been traditionally used to treat swelling and rashes, colic, and snakebites.



FUN FACT

Butterfly milkweed, as suggested by its name, is an important host plant for monarch butterflies!



COONTIE



COONTIE



The coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*) is the only cyad native to Florida, and as a gymnosperm produces seeds in seed cones instead of flowers or fruits. It can be found growing in the well-drained soils of pine flatwoods.



COONTIE:

HISTORY & USES

The Seminole people traditionally used the coontie plant as a source of flour. Parts of the plant contain central nervous system toxins so the plant had to be ground up, washed in water, left to ferment for around 7 days, and then dried up in the sun before it could be consumed. In addition to being used as flour for bread, the Seminole people also made a jelly-like dish called "sofkee" which contained a mix of honey and coontie flour



COONTIE:

ORIGIN & FUN FACT

The word "coontie" came from the Florida Seminole people who prepared a similar jelly called "conte" from the plant China breir, and after discovering the similar properties of what is now known as the coontie plant, distinguished between the two by giving the coontie plant its name.

In the late 19th and into the early 20th century, the starch from the coontie plant was harvested to make animal crackers!

Firewheel





Gillespie Museum

Firewheel

Gaillardia pulchella

Firewheel

Gaillardia pulchella - About



Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*) is an annual native to Florida and much of the United States. This plant sports bright red and yellow flowers that bloom through the summer and tolerates heat and dryness well, preferring dry plains and open areas.

Firewheel

Gaillardia pulchella - History



The Kiowa people have historically used this plant as ornamentation around their homes. Native Americans have also used dried flowers in medicinal teas.

Firewheel

Medicinal Properties



Tea made from the roots has been used to treat gastroenteritis and parts of the root can be applied to the skin to treat various skin disorders. This plant has also been known to be a treatment for sore eyes. The Kiowa people consider this flower to be a sign of good luck.

greenbriar





SMILAX ROTUNDIFOLIA

greenbriar

Greenbriar or *Smilax rotundifolia* is a deciduous climber native to Florida. This plant is also native to other parts of southeastern US and eastern Canada. The greenbriar vine can grow up to 20ft long.

Photo from Toadshade Wildflower Farm



Photo from NCSU Plant Database

history

The Cherokee Indians used *Smilax rotundifolia* to treat leg pain. The vines and roots were also boiled to create a tea for stomach aches and a prayer was spoken as the individual drank it.



Photo from the University of Michigan

uses

The plant is edible. The young shoots can be eaten raw in salads or cooked like asparagus. A beer can be made from the roots; the roots can also be ground up into a powder for baking purposes.



Photo from the Clemson University

fun fact

Smilax rotundifolia can
withstand fire by resprouting!

LONGLEAF PINE

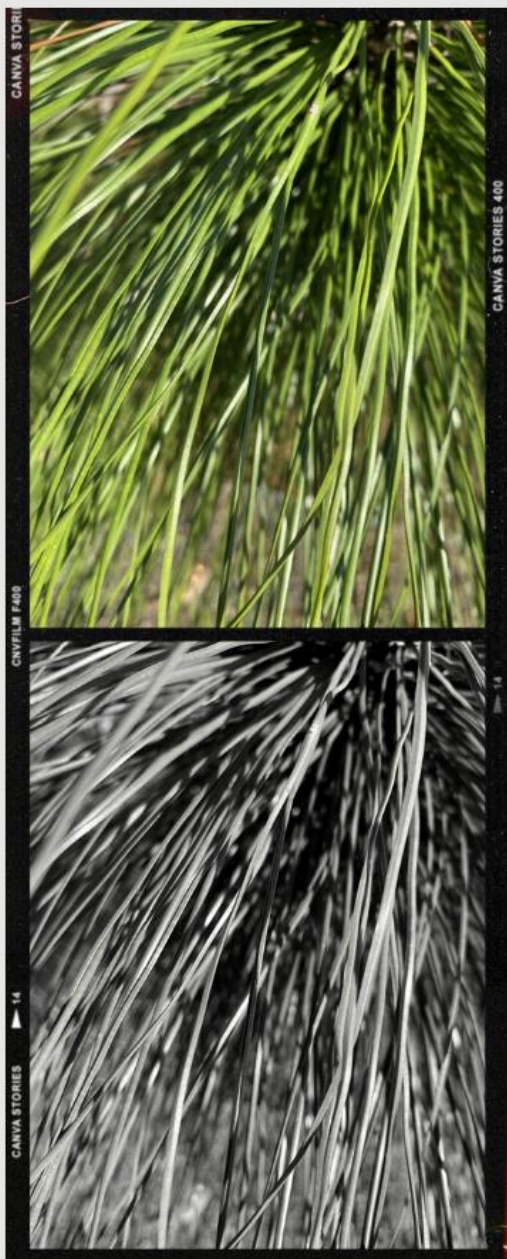


LONGLEAF PINE

The longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) is an evergreen conifer that favors dry sandy upland environments, flatwoods, and sandhill environments like our very own Volusia Sandhill Ecosystem adjacent to the Gillespie Museum. This pine can be found growing along the Atlantic and Gulf coastal plains

GILLESPIE MUSEUM





LONGLEAF PINE

Longleaf pine needles have traditionally been used to make baskets by weaving clusters of needles into a tight spiral and working outwards into a bowl shape. Upon the arrival of European settlers to the Southeastern US, colonists began to log longleaf pines for wood to build homes as well as for turpentine, pine oil, tar, and pitch.

GILLESPIE MUSEUM





LONGLEAF PINE

The turpentine from longleaf pine resin has been used as an antiseptic, diuretic, and has been known to aid with kidney and bladder complaints, wounds, sores, and burns.

GILLESPIE MUSEUM



LONGLEAF PINE

Native peoples knew that longleaf pine forests require fire to thrive and had a reciprocal relationship with longleaf pine forests, setting fire to the forest to maintain the habitat they depended on for survival.

GILLESPIE MUSEUM

Prickly Pear



OPUNTIA FICUS-INDICA



Prickly Pear

Prickly Pear

ABOUT

Prickly pears are members of the Cactaceae or cactus family, which includes about 97 genera and 1,600 species. The species are found in Europe, Mediterranean countries, Africa, southwestern United States, and northern Mexico. Plants in the genus *Opuntia* prefer a dry, hot climate and consist of perennial shrubs, trees, and creeping plants. Prickly pear can grow 5 to 8 m in height; its roots are shallow, but the plant can spread up to 40 m in diameter over the ground.



Prickly Pear

HISTORY

Prickly pear has a long history of traditional Mexican folk medicine use, particularly as a treatment for diabetes. In South Korea the plant has been used to treat abdominal pain, bronchial asthma, burns, diabetes, and indigestion.

Prickly pear has also been planted on steep slopes to control erosion!



Prickly Pear

MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

American Indians used prickly pear juice to treat burns, but it has also been used to treat diabetes. Its use in treating diabetes, lipid disorders, inflammation, and ulcers, as well as its other pharmacologic effects, have been documented. However, there is limited clinical information to support these uses, so the effectiveness is unknown.



RED BAY



RED BAY

Persea borbonia

Red Bay, or *Persea borbonia*, is part of the Lauraceae (Laurel Family). This tall evergreen shrub is native to Florida and all states South of Delaware, as well as states west of Florida to Texas and the Bahamas. Red Bay has leathery leaves and pale yellow flowers which are followed by dark-colored fruit.



HISTORY

Persea borbonia

The Seminole Indians used Red Bay for body cleansing as well as inducing vomiting in emergency situations.



MEDICINAL & USES

Persea borbonia

The Seminole Indians used Red Bay for body cleansing as well as inducing vomiting in emergency situations.

The bark of the plant is used to build cabinets and for lining the interior of structures. The spicy leaves can be used in soups and flavoring meat, as well as a condiment when dried. Birds, Deer, and Bears eat the fruit of the plant and some wildlife species even eat the leaves.



FUN FACT

Persea borbonia

Extractions from the leaves can be used as an external wash to treat arthritic pain in the joints as well as other body pains.



RED CLOVER



HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!



RED CLOVER

Trifolium pratense

HISTORY

Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is a high-quality forage legume that can be grown throughout Florida when planted on moist, fertile soils with good drainage. It can be grazed in late winter and spring or used as a hay crop. In northern states, red clover is a short-lived perennial that persists for 1–3 years, but in Florida it normally behaves as a winter annual.

Red clover grown in pure stands or in combination with a small grain or ryegrass have been used to provide high-quality grazing for stocker cattle, replacement and first-calf heifers, or as a supplement for mature cows.



MEDICINAL USES

In herbal medicine, red clover is typically used to treat respiratory issues, skin disorders, arthritis, and women's health problems

Fun Fact: Dried red clover leaves can be used to make tea!



RED MULBERRY



RED MULBERRY

Morus rubra

Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) is a deciduous tree found throughout North and Central America. This plant features edible berries that ripen in late spring and summer.

Image from Garden Florida





history

Native Americans were the first to discover red mulberry and benefit from the plant. When Europeans arrived in North America, they found the red mulberry in Virginia, Georgia, and Florida. The bark soon became a traditional European treatment for tapeworm and digestive issues.



medicinal properties

The Native American tribe, Powhatan, discovered that mulberries are in fact edible. The milky sap can be used to treat ringworm and the roots can be used to brew tea that helps with weakness, lowering fevers, and excretory issues.

Image from Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



fun fact

There is a nursery rhyme that states: "Here we go 'round the mulberry bush," when in fact the mulberry is a tree, not a bush!

Spanish Needle



Spanish needle

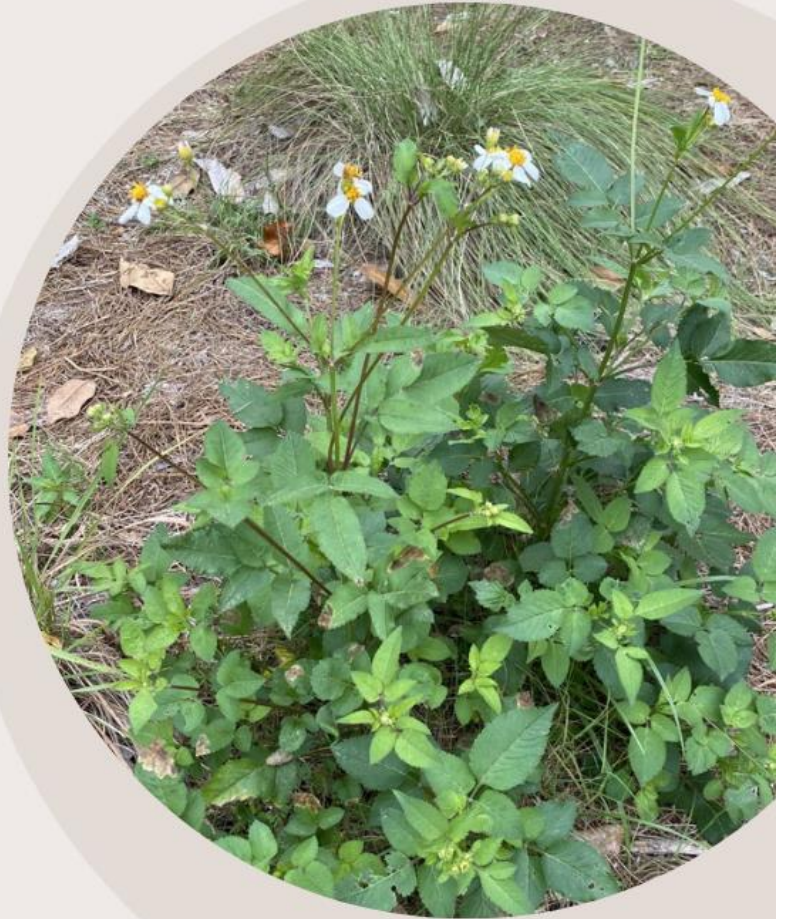
(*Bidens alba*)



A member of the aster family, Spanish needle (*Bidens alba*) is a widespread plant native to Florida. It produces small white flowers from April through October and is an important plant for many pollinators. Spanish needles spread quickly as a single plant can produce 3,000–6,000 seeds!

HISTORY

Native Americans have traditionally used this plant to treat headaches and the extract has been used in the past as a mouthwash due to its antiseptic properties.



MEDICINAL USES

The roots, leaves and seeds of the Spanish needle have been known to have anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiseptic, antimicrobial and antidiysenteric properties. This plant also has diuretic qualities and can be beneficial in treating joint discomfort, swelling, colic, stomach ailments and cold and flu. Sap from the leaves is used on fresh wounds to speed up clotting.

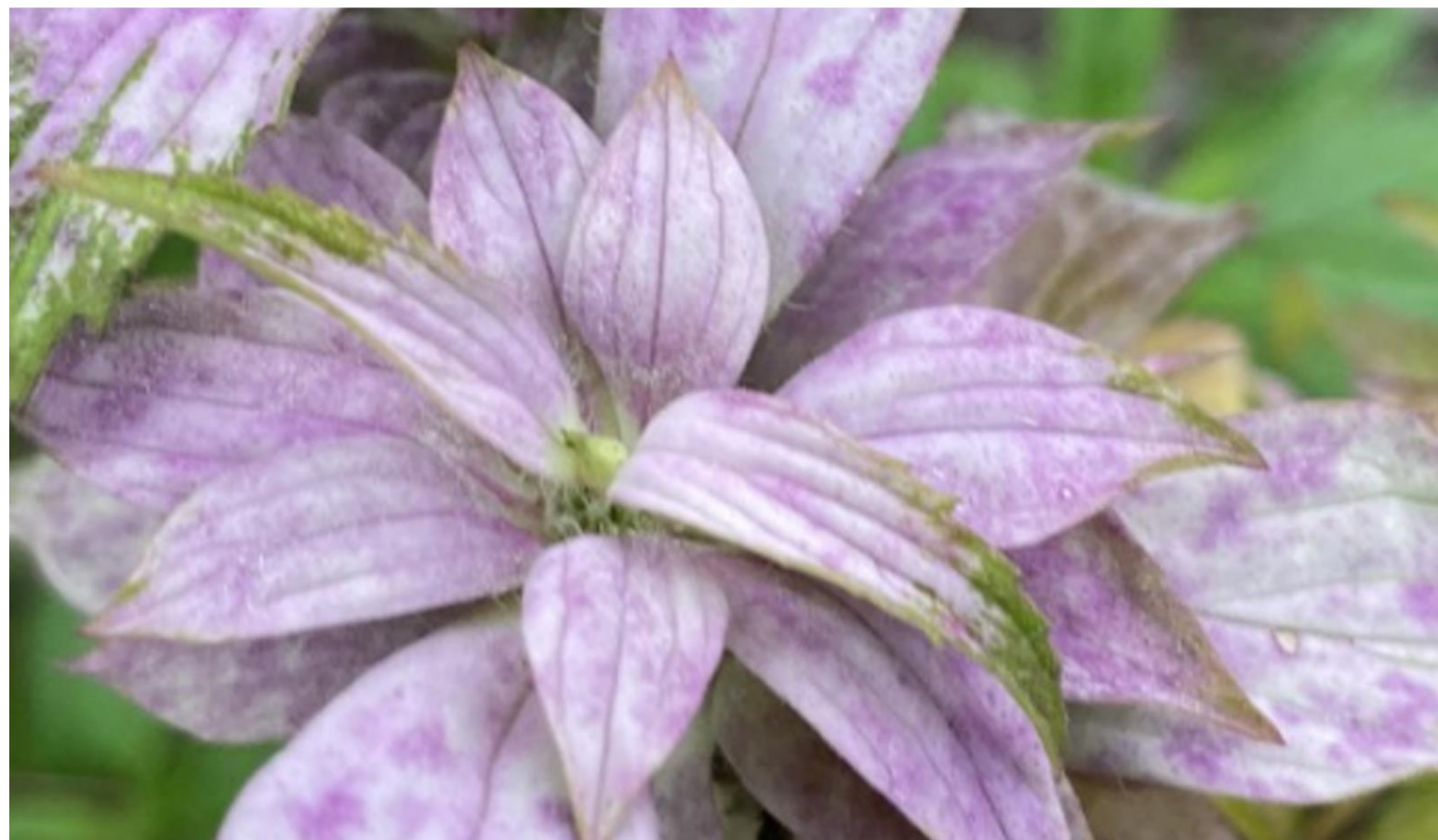


FUN FACT

Spanish needles have been found to have antimalarial properties and have thus been used in malaria treatments!



SPOTTED BEEBALM



MONARDA PUNCTATA

SPOTTED BEEBALM

Spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*) is an herbaceous perennial native to the Eastern United States. This plant likes dry soil and attracts bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. The flowers, which are most prominent spring through fall, sport purple spots.



HISTORY

This plant is high in thymol oil which has antimicrobial, antifungal, and antiseptic properties. Historically, this oil has been used to treat ringworm and hookworm infections!



MEDICINAL USES

Spotted beebalm was traditionally harvested by Native Americans to treat nausea and vomiting. Applied to skin, bee balm was also used to treat swellings and rheumatic pains by increasing blood flow to the area, effectively flushing out toxins. Native Americans also made "sweating tea" from the leaves to treat colds. The tea from the leaves is quite weak as thymol, the major oil in the plant, can be fatal in large quantities. Today, this plant is mainly used to treat digestive and upper respiratory tract issues.

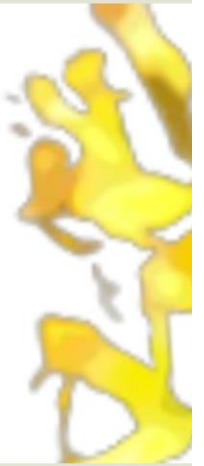


FUN FACT

Spotted beebalm used to be cultivated commercially for its essential oil but now, this oil is produced synthetically.



SWEET GOLDENROD



SWEET GOLDENROD

Solidago odora



Sweet goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) is a herbaceous perennial native to the eastern United States. It can often be found growing in dry sandy soils including in sandhill habitats and sports yellow blooms from August to September. This plant can also be identified by smell as its leaves, when crushed, give off the smell of anise.





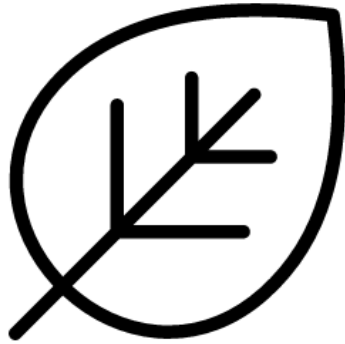
Traditional Cultural History

The Cherokee, whose traditional homelands lie in the southeastern US, commonly utilized sweet goldenrod for its medicinal properties. In the mid-western US, the Ojibwe people, have historically used sweet goldenrod in teas to relieve chest pain.



Medicinal Uses

Solidago odora, or Sweet Goldenrod has been utilized as a treatment for a variety of ailments including colds, coughs, and oral issues. It has also been used traditionally by the Cherokee as a remedy for tuberculosis, measles, and neuralgia.



Herbal Uses

This plant also has been traditionally used in teas as the foliage has a flavor similar to licorice or anise. Sweet goldenrod was even used as a substitute for imported tea during the American Revolution!

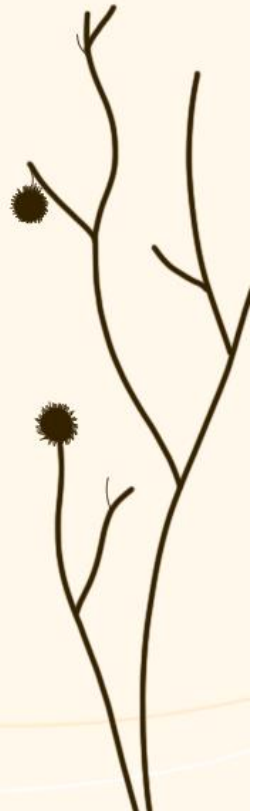
Sweetgum



Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua

Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is a deciduous tree native to Florida as well as other parts of the United States and Central America. It flourishes in temperate climates, and can be identified by its hard, spiky fruits and star-shaped leaves.



Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua

Indigenous American People, specifically the Cherokee, Ojibwa, Iroquios, Rappahannock and Mohegan, used the leaves of fruits to flavor certain meats. It's also used for many different medicinal purposes such as tea or infusions. During the Revolutionary War, the fruit was also used as a substitute for allspice.



Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua

Sweetgum sap, Storax, has been used to treat coughs, ulcers, skin problems, and is a strong antimicrobial agent, even against multidrug resistant bacteria! The leaves, bark, and seeds possess shikimic acid, which is used for treating influenza. Its extracts have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and chemopreventative agents.



Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua

Sweetgum extracts have anticonvulsant effects, which may be effective for treating epilepsy!





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Links to Other Resources

The Gillespie Museum
Educational Resources webpage:
<https://www.Stetson.edu/other/gillespie-museum/educational-resources.php>





www.stetson.edu/gillespie

234 E. Michigan Ave.
DeLand, FL 32723
(386) 822-7330

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