



Jim & Sharon Truluck, Florida Master Naturalists

Naturalist Training: Things to Remember for Guided Boardwalk

Plant and Tree Identification:

- **Red Mangroves** (*Rhizophora mangle*) Have prop roots and drop roots; produce propagules. Excludes salt.
- **Black Mangroves** (*Avicennia germinas*) Have leaves that are lighter in color on the underside and may have salt crystals. Also Black Mangroves have pneumatophores. Excretes salt.
- **White Mangroves** (*Laguncularia racemosa*) Usually have spoon-shaped leaves often with a notch in the end. Sometimes they have pointed leaves. All leaves have two nectaries on the petiole (leafstalk) just below the leaf. Can exclude and/or excrete salt.
- **Sabal Palm** aka Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*) Florida's state tree. These palms have "boots". The Calusa referred to this as the "tree of life" because it furnished food, clothing, and shelter.
- **Strangler Fig** (*Ficus aurea*) Seed germination may take place on the ground or on host tree such as the Sabal Palm. The tree provides habitat, food and shelter for a host of wildlife. Natives used the milky sap (latex) as a chewing gum known as chicle (Chiclets); also used sap as paint.
- **Golden Polypody** aka rabbit's foot fern (*Phlebodium aureum*) An epiphytic fern sometimes referred to as cabbage palm fern, because it is often found growing in the boots of cabbage palms. Common name from tiny golden colored spores on the underside of the leaf.
- **Gumbo Limbo** (*Bursera simaruba*) It has tiny green flowers followed by a deep red fruit loved by many birds and other wildlife. Easily propagated by cuttings and pioneers created living fences by closely planting branches. Has reddish and peeling bark hence, the "Tourist Tree"
- **White Stopper** (*Eugenia axillaris*) In warmer weather, it has an organic, earthy, skunk-like smell. Sometimes referred to as the skunk tree, because of this odor. Tea from leaves used to relieve diarrhea.
- **Spanish Bayonet** (*Yucca aloifolia*) Watch out for the sharp tips. The fibrous leaves used in brooms, baskets, and weaving. During WWI, used to make burlap sacks. Extract from stem used as the foaming agent in root beer. Flowers and stalk are edible.
- **Wild Coffee** (*psychotria nervosa*) Tiny flowers in spring, followed by small red berries that attract wildlife—berries not recommended for human consumption.
- **Greenbrier** aka cats paw or catbrier (*smilax*) Climbing vine with scattered prickles has small white/green clustered flowers followed by berries that turn blue-black when ripe, providing food for birds and other animals. Young shoots can be eaten raw or cooked, said to taste like asparagus, and berries can be eaten both raw or cooked. Several species of Greenbrier are found within the preserve, including catsbrier, earleaf and bamboo vine.
- **Poison Ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*) Remember: Leaves of three quickly flee. Food source for much wildlife, including gopher tortoise.
- **Spanish Stopper** (*Eugenia foetida*) Has very fragrant flowers. Fruits ripen turning from red to black.
- **Ball Moss** (*Tillandsia recurvata*) An epiphyte (air plant) that lives on a host. It gets its nutrients from air and rain. It does not harm its host plant.
- **Snowberry or Waxberry** (*Chiococco alba*) Flowers and fruit usually found year-round. It is an important winter food for wild animals/birds. Indian shampoo made from fruit; poultice for eye irritation from leaves.
- **Sea Grape** (*Coccoloba uvifera*) Has large, round, leathery leaves. This tree helps to stabilize the soil in coastal areas. Has purplish fruit in large grape-like clusters, that ripen individually and not as a cluster. Fruits are attractive to raccoons, birds, and tortoises; also makes good jelly.
- **Myrsine** (*Rapanea guinensis*) The flowers and berries are clustered below the leaves for several inches along the stems. Seeds are useful to birds as a food source.
- **Periwinkle or Sailor's Button** (*catharanthus roseus*) Distributed from Madagascar by sailors into warm parts of the world by the end of 18th century, because they thought it had magical properties. It was a folk remedy for diabetes. Juice from the leaves used to treat wasp stings and other insect bites. Currently being researched as possible treatment for leukemia.

- **Necklace Pod** (*Sophora tomentosa*) Shrub with yellow flowers that attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. After blooming, pea pods (legumes) start and there may be blooms as well as pods on the same spike at the same time. As the peas mature, the pods are compressed between the peas to resemble a beaded necklace, hence the common name necklace pod. Caution: The seeds (peas) are dangerous to eat.
- **Prickly Pear Cactus** (*Opuntia stricta*) Typically grow with flat, rounded edible pads that are armed with spines that easily penetrate skin. The showy yellow flower in late spring produces tasty pear-shaped, reddish fruit. Juice can be used as shampoo.
- **Beach Ambrosia or Coastal Ragweed** (*Ambrosia hispida*) Highly beneficial in stabilizing areas where they grow. Feather-like leaves are light green. In West Indies it is made into soap.
- **Century Plant** (*Agave americana*) originated in Mexico, but cultivated worldwide. Thrives in sandy soil found in coastal dunes. Plant dies after blooming. The fibers of the leaves have been used to make rope, matting, and coarse cloth. Flowers in 25 to 50 years, so “century” is a misnomer.
- **Golden Beach Creeper aka cough bush** (*Ernodea littoralis*) Its roots are great soil stabilizers and in small areas it serves as a windbreak and reduces wind movement of sand. Birds and small animals eat the fruit—including the gopher tortoise. A tea made from the leafy branch tips are used as folk remedy for coughs.
- **Lantana or Wild Sage** (*Lantana involucrate*) Herbaceous shrub with slender twigs and toothed rough-textured aromatic leaves. Small white flowers in clusters are produced year-round in response to rain. Small, round fruit is dark-blue to purple, borne in clusters on branch tips. The leaf tea has been used to treat fevers and as a bath to sooth itching. Perfume is made from the oil extracted from the leaves. The leaves have also been used as seasoning in cooking.
- **Beach Bean or Bay Bean** (*Canavalia maritima*) Trailing, twining vine. Early morning leaves lie open and flat, but fold as sun rises to conserve water. The vine may reach up to 50 feet from its origin. They are great dune stabilizers. Has a small pink-to-purple flower that looks much like a sweet pea. Produces brown marbled beans in pods. The mature, dried beans are edible.
- **Morning Glory** A trailing vine in the sweet potato family can grow up to 100 feet from. Flower usually lasts for a single morning and dies in the afternoon. Thick mats of this vine are very effective in erosion control. The plant seems to sense the high-tide mark and changes direction of growth before reaching it. *Note:* There are several varieties of Morning Glories found at BBP, with different shaped leaves and flower colors.
- **Groundsel or Salt Bush** (*Baccharis halimifolia*) In the Aster family. Flowers are small and fragrant, appearing in the early fall. The female flowers are like a fine paint brush and the seeds float on the wind. Brew made from roots used to treat consumption (tuberculosis).
- **Sea Oats** (*Uniola paniculata*) Excellent beach stabilizer, as the roots grow down to ground water. Plants spread by means of underground rhizomes. Each plant develops a showy inflorescence about 5 feet tall. The oat-like fruit persists on the plant, giving the plant a nice texture as the wind blows. This plant is protected and should not be harvested. Please inform visitors that this plant along with all plants in the preserve are protected and should not be picked.
- **Railroad Vine or Goats Foot** (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) A trailing vine in the sweet potato family, whose runners may reach over 30 feet in length. Taproots sometimes penetrating more than 3 feet into the sand. Flowers are similar to morning glory. The Carib Indians used railroad vine in ritual baths to alleviate evil spells. The juice from the succulent leaves has been used as a first aid to treat jellyfish stings.
- **Bay Cedar** (*Suriana maritima* L.) Endangered plant helps stabilize beaches and coastal dunes, and furnishes food and cover for wildlife. Herbalists employ extracts of the leaves and bark to treat rheumatism.
- **Groundcherry** (*Physalis angustifolia*) Small plant has a yellow flower that hangs downward like a lantern, followed by a small, edible fleshy fruit enclosed in its own 'paper bag' (botanically, the calyx) to protect it from pests and the elements. This calyx is toxic and should not be eaten. Found in open coastal soils.
- **Seven-year Apple** (*Casasia clusifolia*) This evergreen shrub or small tree is one of Florida's most exceptional native, salt-tolerant plants. It grows up to the first dune near the ocean. It has clusters of fragrant, white, pink-tipped flowers that emerge in the spring. The fruits are green when they first appear and ripen in about one year, so 7 years is a misnomer. The fruit is appealing birds and mammals.
- **Spanish Moss** (*Tillandsia usneoides*) Spanish moss is not a moss at all. It is actually an epiphyte or air plant related to bromeliads. It does not harm the plants it lives on and absorbs nutrients and water from the air and rainfall. At one time, Spanish moss was harvested and used to stuff mattresses for the U.S. Army. Spanish moss is also known to have been dried and the inner core of the plant woven to fabric by the native Americans.
- **Non-native (exotic) and invasive plants: Brazilian Pepper *Schinus terebenthiflia*; Australian Pine *Casuarina equisetifolia*; beach naupaka *Scaevola sericea***