

# Plants and People

Archaeologists study plants to learn about the different ways they were used by people in the past. People have been learning about plants and their many uses for thousands of years! Florida's past peoples relied on plants not only for food but for medicine, tools and other uses. Each plant you see here was used by Native Americans in Florida; the symbols next to each one show how each plant was used.

**KEY**

-  Shelter
-  Transportation
-  Tools
-  Dyes & Paints
-  Storage
-  Medicine
-  Food

The **Slash Pine** and **Longleaf Pine** trees were used as lumber for buildings and dugout canoes.



The **Beauty Berry** bush berries, roots, and leaves can make a medicinal tea.

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The roots of the **Partridge Pea** plant were used for medicine and the leaves were used for tea.



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The **Cabbage Palm** is the state tree of Florida. The fronds were used for thatch houses, mats, and cordage.



Not only was the **Yaupon Holly** bush used in making tea for the "Black Drink" ceremony but the branches were also made into arrows!

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The **Saw Palmetto** shrub fronds provided fiber for baskets and ropes.

Wood from the **Live Oak** tree was used for fuel and in tool making. Dyes were made from the leaves, bark, and roots.



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The **Winged Sumac** shrub leaves and berries were used in making dyes.



The inner bark and roots of the **Hog Plum** or **Tallow Wood** were used for medicine.

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All parts of the **Prickly Pear** cactus (Tommy's favorite food!) were eaten. Its roots were boiled and applied as medicine on sores.

NEVER eat wild plants! They must be specially prepared for use as food and medicine.



**Coontie** is a poisonous plant but Native Americans figured out how to make the roots into a safe-to-eat soup called sofkee!



The bark, flowers, and berries of the **Elderberry** shrub were made into dye for clothing and other textiles. The berries make a beautiful purple dye!



**Spanish Moss** was used in the earliest pottery made in Florida to keep the clay together and stop the pot from cracking when it was fired.



The **Seminole Pumpkin** fruit and flowers were used to make bread and soup.

Not only was the **Strangler Fig** tree sap processed into chewing gum by Native Americans, but the wood was also used to make arrows!



Native Americans made the **Common Cattail** into medicine to treat cuts, scrapes, and burns.

The fruit of the **Muscadine Grape** was not only a yummy treat for early peoples but the Seminoles used the vines to make deer snares!



The knees (roots that stick up out of the ground) of the **Bald Cypress** tree were hollowed out and used for bowls, cups, and other containers.



When the wood from the **Red Mangrove** burns it creates a high temperature fire that is perfect for firing pottery and cooking!

Wax from the berries of the **Wax Myrtle** shrub was used to make smokeless candles by early settlers!



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The **Sawgrass** plant was used to make small woven baskets.