

THE FOOD IN OUR FORESTS

AN INTRODUCTION TO EDIBLE, NATIVE PLANTS OF LEE COUNTY

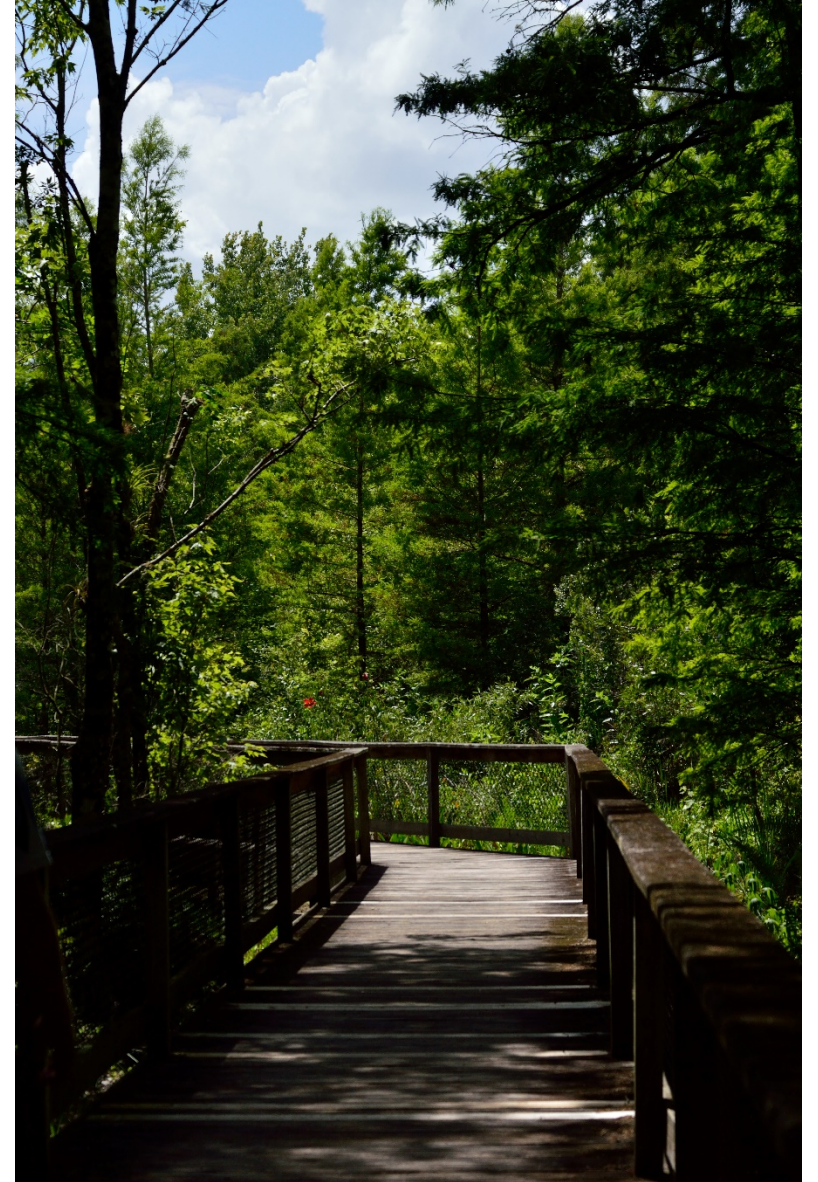
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Florida Native Plant Society: Coccoloba chapter

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Disclaimer

- Eat at your own risk
- Be confident with identification or consult an expert
- Do your own research
- Small amounts first



Foraging guidelines

- Not permitted on state/county lands
- Beware of contaminants: roadsides, bodies of water, fancy landscapes
- Wash and cook properly
- Don't eat endangered or rare species
- Consider wildlife resources
- Best advice: grow your own!



Criteria

- PLANTS
- Native to and found in Lee county
- Abundant/easy to find
- Easy to prepare
- Easy to identify
- Highly palatable



- Not included: endangered or rare species, species not found in Lee county.

Wetland edibles



Water lilies, *Nymphaea* spp.

- 7 species total in Lee county (native and non-native)
 - *Nymphaea ampla* (Dotleaf waterlily), *Nymphaea elegans* (Tropical royalblue waterlily), *Nymphaea jamesoniana* (Jameson's waterlily), *Nymphaea lotus* (White egyptian lotus), *Nymphaea mexicana* (Yellow waterlily), *Nymphaea odorata* (American white waterlily), *Nymphaea x daubenyana*
- Cooked green, cooked vegetable, flour
- Young leaves, unopened flower buds
- Seeds
- Sample snack *Euryale ferox*



Nuphar advena, Spatterdock; yellow pondlily

- Roots: potato
- Seeds: popped like popcorn, ground into flour, creamed like corn



Pontederia cordata - Pickerelweed

- Young unfurled leaves raw in salad or cooked like spinach
- Fruit/seed eaten raw, dried and added to granola, ground into flour
- Highly nutritious



Arrowhead, *Sagittaria spp.*

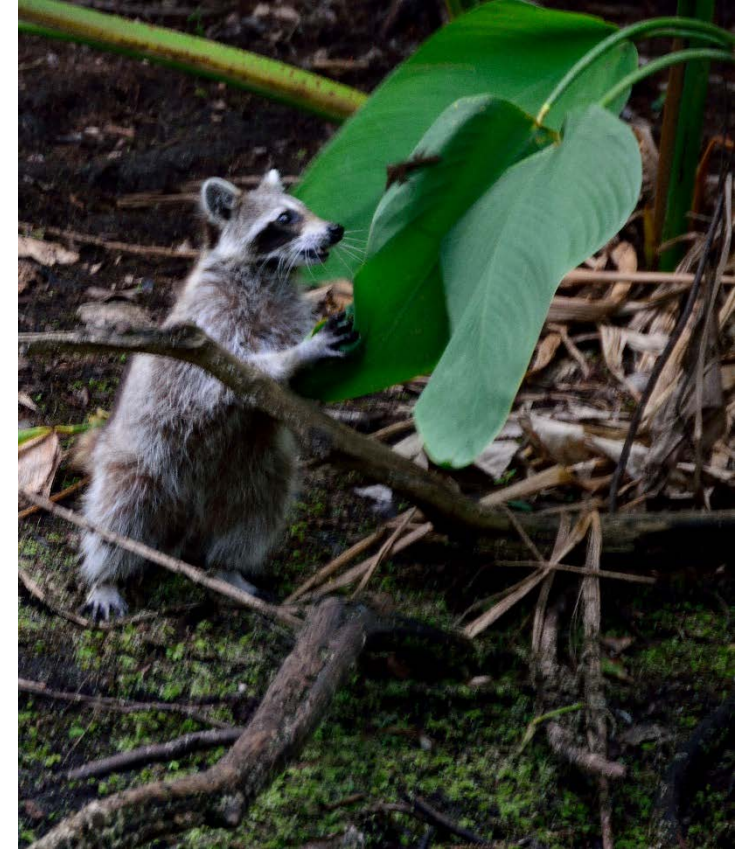
- 4 species in Lee county
 - *Sagittaria graminea* Michx. - Grassy arrowhead, *Sagittaria isoetiformis* J.G.Sm. - Quillwort arrowhead, *Sagittaria lancifolia* L. - Bulltongue arrowhead, *Sagittaria latifolia* Willd. - Broadleaf arrowhead; common arrowhead; duck potato
- Tubers- like a potato



Thalia geniculata - Alligatorflag; fireflag



- Seminoles ate roots, rhizomes, flowers, stem bases
- Leaves used to wrap food for cooking.



Sambucus nigra L. *subsp. canadensis* - American elder; elderberry

- Flowers- fritters
- Berries: jelly, dried and later reconstituted for juices, muffins, pies, tea, etc.



CAUTION!



Annona glabra - Pond apple

- Fruit: jelly
- Seeds not edible



Cattails, *Typha* spp.

- 2 species in Lee county
 - *Typha domingensis* (Southern cattail), *Typha latifolia* (Broadleaf cattail)
 - Young shoots and stalks like asparagus
 - Immature flowers like corn on the cob
 - Pollen as protein-rich flour
 - Sprouts from the rootstock in salad
 - Rootstock starch as flour



Acer rubrum, Red maple

- Sugar, syrup, water



Persea palustris, Swamp bay

- Leaves as seasoning



Uplands- mesic



Ficus aurea, Strangler fig

- Raw fruit



Morus rubra, RED MULBERRY

- Fruits, RIPE



Oaks, *Quercus* spp.

- Acorns roasted, candied, or turned into protein-rich flour
- 8 species in Lee county



Morella cerifera, Southern bayberry; wax myrtle

- Leaves as seasoning
- Berries as pepper



Less-mesic uplands



Greenbriar, *Smilax* spp.

- 4 species in Lee county
 - *Smilax tamnoides* (Bristly greenbrier; hogbrier), *Smilax laurifolia* (Laurel greenbrier; bamboo vine), *Smilax bona-nox* (Saw greenbrier), *Smilax auriculata* (Earleaf greenbrier)
- Shoots cooked like asparagus
- Young shoots, leaves, tendrils in salad
- Rootstock as a gelatin substitute



Grapes, *Vitis spp.*

- 4 species in Lee county
 - *Vitis aestivalis* (summer grape), *Vitis cinerea* (Florida grape), *Vitis rotundifolia* (muscadine), *Vitis shuttleworthii* (Calloose grape).
 - Young leaves boiled
 - Fresh fruit, jelly, cold drink.



Serenoa repens, saw palmetto

- Terminal bud, salad or cooked vegetable
- *Sabal palmetto* also



Blueberries, *Vaccinium* spp.

- 4 species in Lee county
 - *Vaccinium stamineum* (Deerberry), *Vaccinium arboreum* (Sparkleberry; farkleberry), *Vaccinium darrowii* (Darrow's blueberry), *Vaccinium myrsinites* (Shiny blueberry).
- Fruit: fresh, cooked, dry



Diospyros virginiana, Common persimmon

- Fruit: fresh, pudding, nut bread, jam
- Leaves: tea



Pines, *Pinus spp.*

- 2 species in Lee county
 - *Pinus palustris, elliotii*, longleaf and slash pines.
- Pine nuts
- Tea from the needles, high in A+C



Hollies, *Ilex spp.*

- 4 species in Lee County
 - *Ilex ambigua* (Carolina holly; sand holly), *Ilex cassine* (Dahoon), *Ilex glabra* (Inkberry; gallberry), *Ilex opaca* (American holly).
- Leaves as tea
 - DRIED FIRST
 - DO NOT EAT BERRIES



Piloblephis rigida, Wild Pennyroyal

- Minty tea



Ximenia americana, Tallow wood/ Hog plum

- Fresh fruit



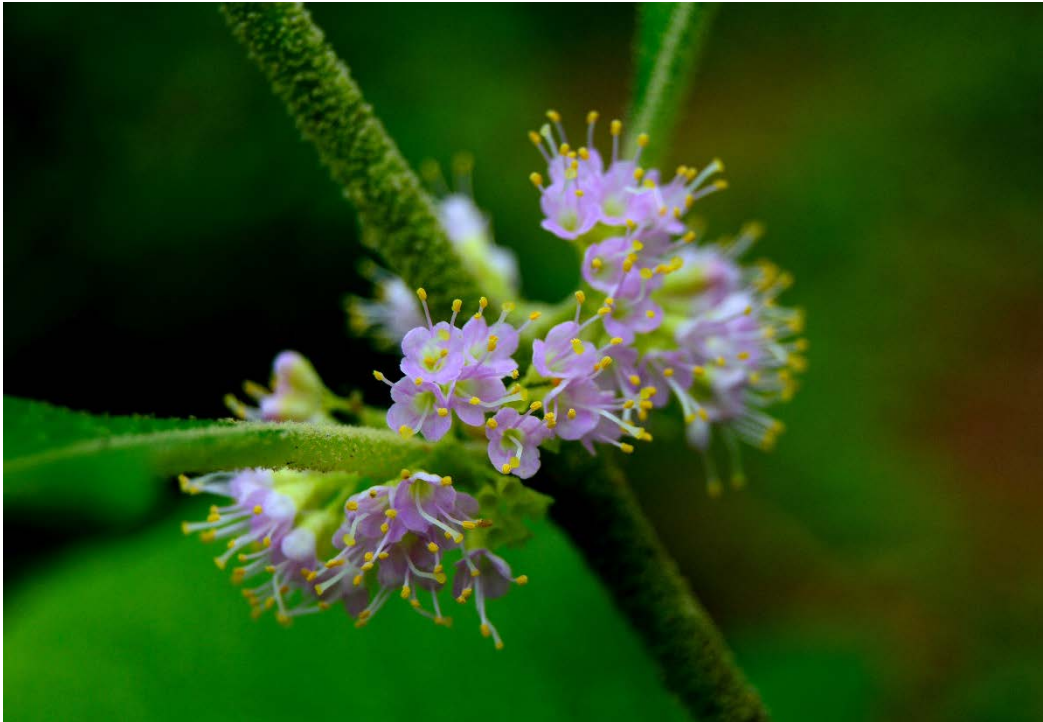
Asimina reticulata, netted pawpaw

- Creamy fruit



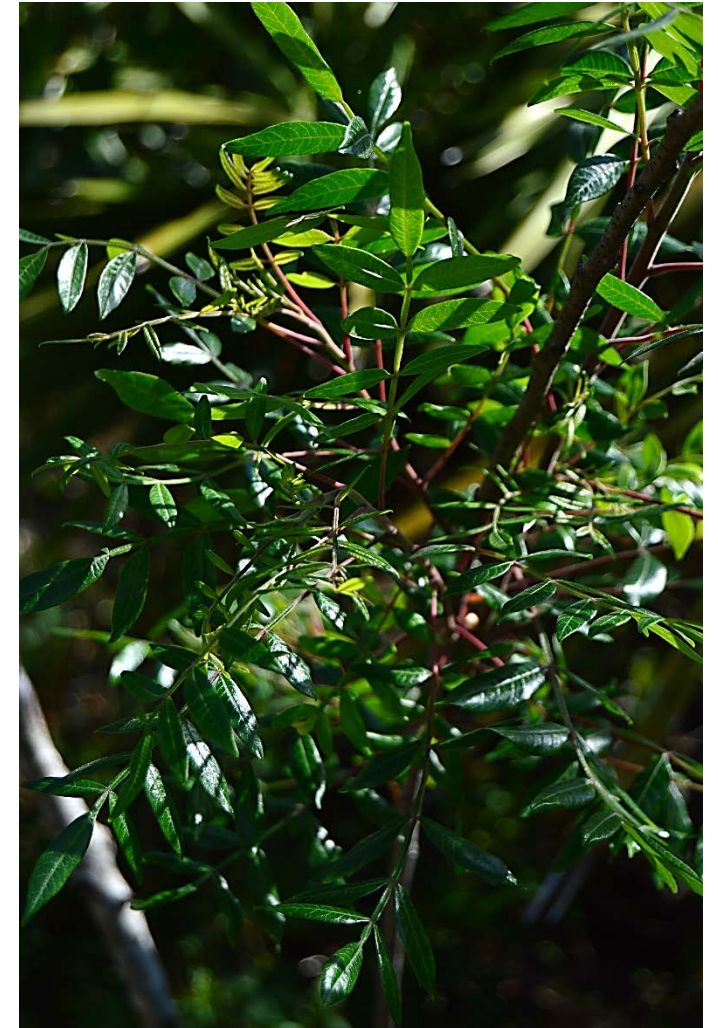
Callicarpa americana, American beautyberry

- Berries- jelly, syrup
- Leaves- mosquito repellant



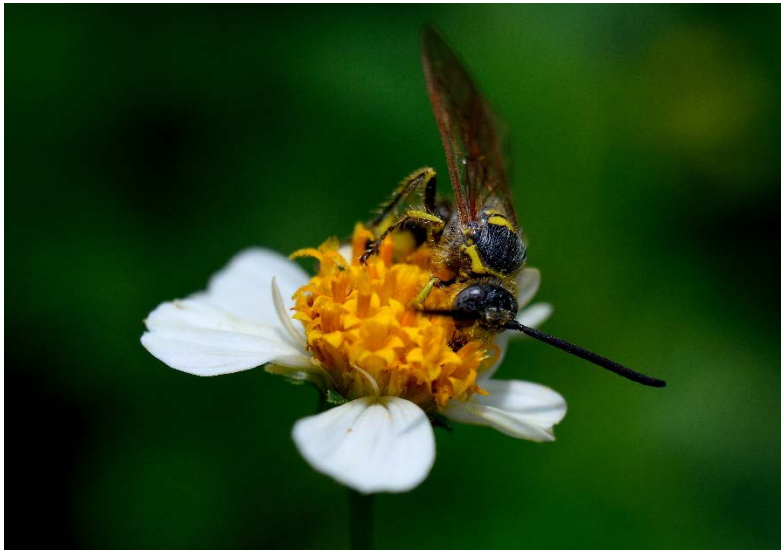
Rhus copallinum, winged sumac

- Berries, lemonade-like drink, syrup, jelly



Bidens alba

- Cooked green
- Raw in salad



Groundcherries, *Physalis spp.*

- 5 species in Lee county
 - *Physalis pubescens* (Husk tomato), *Physalis arenicola* (cypresshead groundcherry), *Physalis angustifolia* (coastal groundcherry), *Physalis angulate* (cutleaf groundcherry), *Physalis walteri* (Walter's groundcherry)
- Fruit- fresh, cooked, jams, pies, syrups, salsas etc
- Unripe fruit and leaves poisonous



Blackberries, *Rubus spp.*

- 2 species in lee county
 - *Rubus cuneifolius* (sand blackberry), *Rubus trivialis* (Southern dewberry)
- Fruits fresh, jams, syrups, muffins, pies, wines, etc
- Leaves in tea



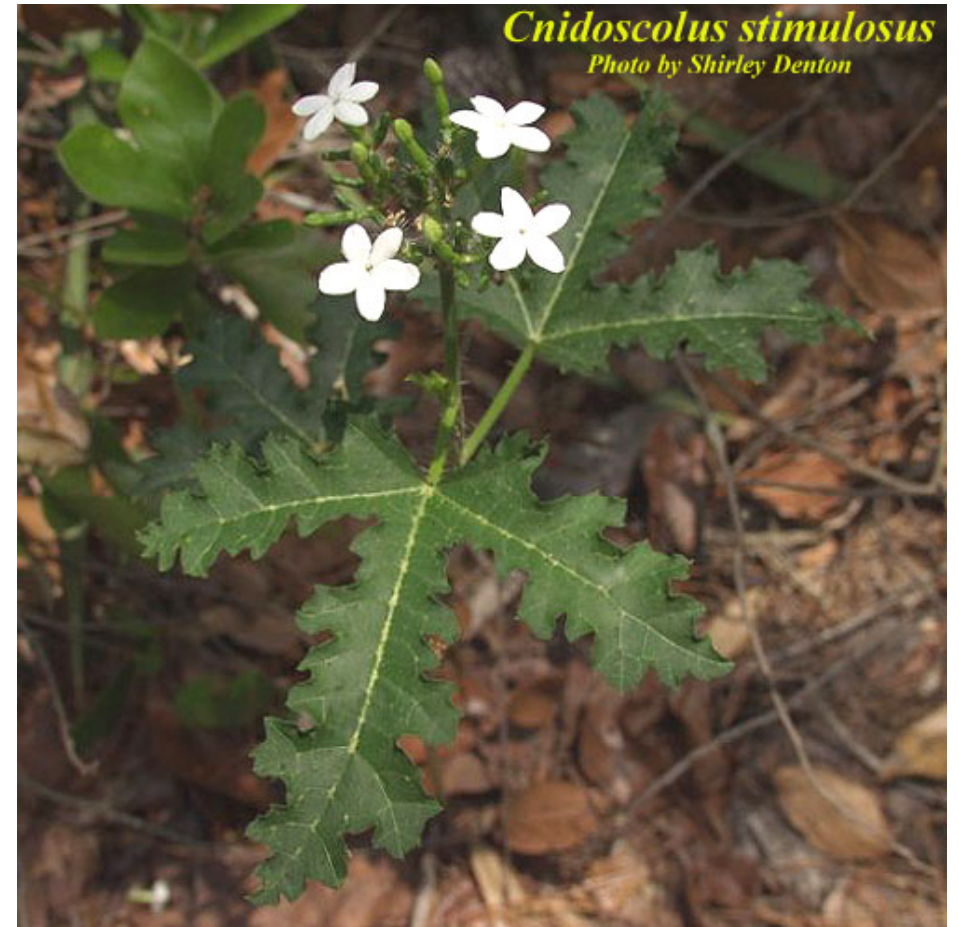
Lepidium virginicum, Virginia pepperweed

- Young leaves in salad
- Fruit/seeds for spice



Cnidoscolus stimulosus, Tread-softly/ Finger-rot

- Tubers like potato
- DO NOT TOUCH ABOVEGROUND PARTS!



Melothria pendula, Creeping cucumber

- Green fruits fresh
- Some controversy



Passiflora incarnata, purple passionflower

- Fruits- fresh, cold drink, jelly



Carica papaya (?!) Papaya

- Fruits ripe or green
- Seeds as pepper
- Other parts (see eattheweeds.com)



Phytolacca americana, American pokeweed

- Young shoots and leafy tips cooked like asparagus, pickled.
- **WARNING: POISONOUS** if not cooked properly or if the wrong plant parts are consumed.



Purslane, *Portulaca* spp.

- 4 species in Lee county
 - *Portulaca amilis* (Paraguayan purslane), *Portulaca oleracea* (Little hogweed), *Portulaca pilosa* (Pink purslane; kiss-me-quick), *Portulaca rubricaulis* (Redstem purslane)
- Leaves and stems raw in salads. Soups, omelets.
- Stems pickled.
- Seeds as flour or added to salads, baked goods
- Omega 3s!



Pricklypear, *Opuntia* spp.

- 2 native species to Lee county
 - *Opuntia humifusa* (Pricklypear), *Opuntia stricta* (Erect pricklypear; shell-mound pricklypear)
- Pads cooked, eaten hot or chilled
- Fruit as a drink, jam, syrup, candy
- Seeds as flour or soup thickener



Coastal areas



Coccoloba diversifolia, Tietongue/ pigeon plum

- Fresh fruit, dried fruit, jam, wine



Coccoloba diversifolia
Photo by T. Ann Williams

Coccoloba uvifera, Seagrape

- Ripe fruit, jelly, wine



Chrysobalanus icaco, Coco plum

- Fruit raw, jelly, syrup
- Seed raw or cooked



Chrysobalanus icaco
Photo by T. Ann Williams

Lycium carolinianum, Christmasberry/Carolina desert-thorn

- Berries fresh or dried.



Seapurslane, *Sesuvium* spp.

- 2 species in Lee county
 - *Sesuvium portulacastrum* (Shoreline seapurslane), *Sesuvium maritimum* (Slender seapurslane)
- Leaves and stems raw or pickled, cooked.



Suaeda linearis, Sea blite/Annual seepweed

- Leaves and stems boiled in 1-2 changes of water (reduce saltiness)



Salicornia bigelovii

Annual glasswort/dwarf glasswort

- Young leaves and stems raw, cooked, or pickled



Resources

- Edible wild plants: <http://www.eattheweeds.com>
- Florida's Edible Wild Plants: A Guide to Collecting and Cooking Paperback – June 3, 2014
by Peggy Sias Lantz (Author)
- Florida's Incredible Wild Edibles Paperback – January, 1993
by Richard J. Deuerling (Author), Peggy S. Lantz (Author)
- A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants: Eastern and central North America (Peterson Field Guides) Paperback – September 1, 1999
by Lee Allen Peterson (Author, Photographer), Roger Tory Peterson (Editor, Illustrator)
- **Atlas of Florida Plants:** <http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>