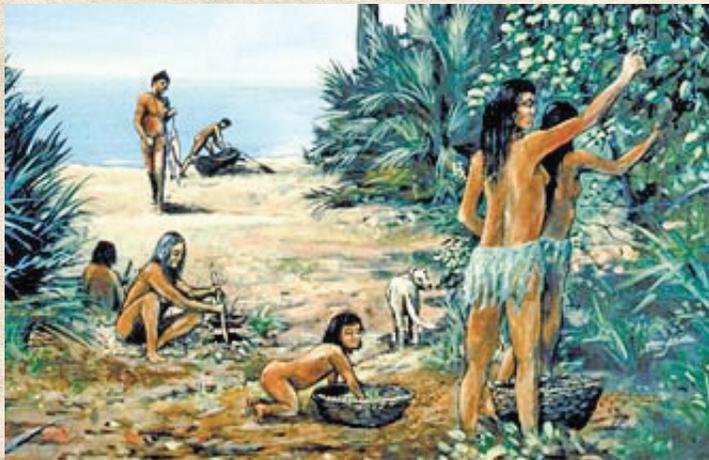


# ECOQUEST

January 2021

## DIGGING DEEPER: Indigenous Plants & People of Florida



For this month's EcoQuest, **Digging Deeper**, we are exploring the connection between Florida's indigenous people and plants. Much of the ethnobotanical knowledge of American Indians is passed down through generations, as is the case with the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes. We know they relied upon plants for food and shelter, made dugout canoes of pine and cypress, and used plant fibers for textiles, crafting dolls and basket-making. Some of these traditions still exist today. However, Florida's original inhabitants at the time of European arrival were decimated through introduced diseases, conflicts, and enslavement. Since the oral history of these cultures was also lost, we must rely upon records of European historical writings and archeology to piece together clues about Florida's early native people and plants.

### WHAT IS AN ECOQUEST?

EcoQuests, part of the [Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Project](#), challenge Floridians to become engaged citizens in the observation, study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and fauna of Florida, and understand the impacts to it by exotic species.

### HOW DO I GET STARTED?

1. Download the easy-to-use iNaturalist app on your mobile device, or visit [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) on your computer.
2. Set up a user account or sign in to join projects and submit observations.
3. Visit the [Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Digging Deeper](#) project and click "join" on the upper right.
4. Photograph plants anywhere in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Take multiple photos to show important features for identification (overall plant, leaves, flowers, fruit, stem).
5. Post your observations to iNaturalist.
6. Check out [your ranking](#) on this month's challenge online!

### WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Help us document as many of our featured indigenous plants as possible this January. Remember that any observation still contributes to the Sarasota-Manatee EcoFlora Project, even if it's not featured in our monthly challenge.

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## DIGGING DEEPER: Indigenous Plants & People of Florida

Archaeobotanists work to study the plant remains from archaeological sites. The shell mounds and middens built by Native Americans provide a glimpse into daily life over time. The species below have been found in the middens of our area and will be featured in this month's EcoQuest, **Digging Deeper**.

**TREES:** black mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*), white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*), red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*), slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), mastic (*Sideroxylon foetidissima*), buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*), white stopper (*Eugenia axillaris*), Spanish stopper (*Eugenia foetida*), yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)

**PALMS:** cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*)

**SHRUBS AND VINES:** wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*), beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*), blueberry (*Vaccinium spp.*), snowberry (*Chiococca alba*), muscadine grape (*Vitis rotundifolia*)

**SUCCULENTS:** prickly pear (*Opuntia austrina*, *Opuntia mesacantha ssp. lata*), false sisal (*Agave decipiens*), wild century plant (*Agave neglecta*)

### A CONNECTION TO THE RAINFOREST MASKS OF COSTA RICA

On display at Selby Gardens' downtown Sarasota campus from January 9 - 31, 2021, is the 18th annual [Rainforest Masks of Costa Rica Exhibition & Sale](#). Depicted in elaborate and colorful hand carved and painted masks made from Balsa wood are the native plants and animals of Costa Rica. To this day, the native flora and fauna are of critical importance to this tribe of Costa Rican natives.

### A CONNECTION TO HISTORIC SPANISH POINT

The Historic Spanish Point campus protects and interprets the largest existing Native American village site between Charlotte Harbor and Crystal River. Over 4,500 years ago, the first Floridians settled around a fresh water spring and harvested tremendous quantities of shellfish from the adjacent shallow waterways. Stacking the shells of scallops, clams, oysters, whelks, and conches, these early people adapted the landscape while creating massive mounds upon which they could live and prosper. An archaeological exhibition at HSP, "Window to the Past," is located inside a prehistoric shell midden and features an audiovisual program about Historic Spanish Point's first inhabitants, a diorama that depicts a prehistoric dwelling, exhibits, and interactive displays. Be sure to visit Historic Spanish Point to see it for yourself. While you're there, document some of the indigenous plants found on the property for our January EcoQuest, **Digging Deeper!**