

The Most Common Trees
at
Swift Creek



Walt Ruckel, developer of Swift Creek and avid outdoorsman, gives his youngest son, Philip, a lesson in tree identification.

The Most Common Trees
at
Swift Creek



Live Oak

Turkey Oak

Willow Oak

Laurel Oak

Southern Magnolia

Sweetbay Magnolia

Longleaf Pine

Sand Pine

American Sweetgum

Buckwheattree (Titi)

American Holly

Common Baldcypress

Westindies Juniper

Hammock Hickory

Grandsie-Graybeard

Sourwood

Jason's Trail

Swift Creek's Outstanding Nature Trail

Perhaps the best way to thoroughly enjoy the beauty of the trees which inhabit Swift Creek is to spend some time on Jason's Trail. This wonderful, well-marked route (3.7 miles when completed) meanders through some of the most beautiful woodlands to be found in Okaloosa County.

A personal project of Walt Ruckel, Swift Creek's developer, Jason's Trail is designed to give Swift Creek residents a special place to be outdoors, to be close to nature, and to experience the richness and wonder provided by this lovely piece of land they now call home.

The property on which Swift Creek sits has been in Walt's family since the early 1900's and has enjoyed years of stewardship beginning with his grandfather James Plew. That stewardship and genuine love of the land continues with Walt and is being passed on to his children and grandchildren.

Jason's Trail, named in honor of Walt's grandson who perished in a tragic mountain climbing accident in the French Alps, is the Ruckel's way of sharing the beauty and heritage of this parcel of woodlands that has been such a part of their lives for so many years.

The trail is an easy walk. A wood-chip path, complemented by several footbridges and boardwalks, leads the explorer up and down, around and through the woods of Swift Creek. Tree identification markers, exercise stations and rest stops add to the Jason Trail experience.

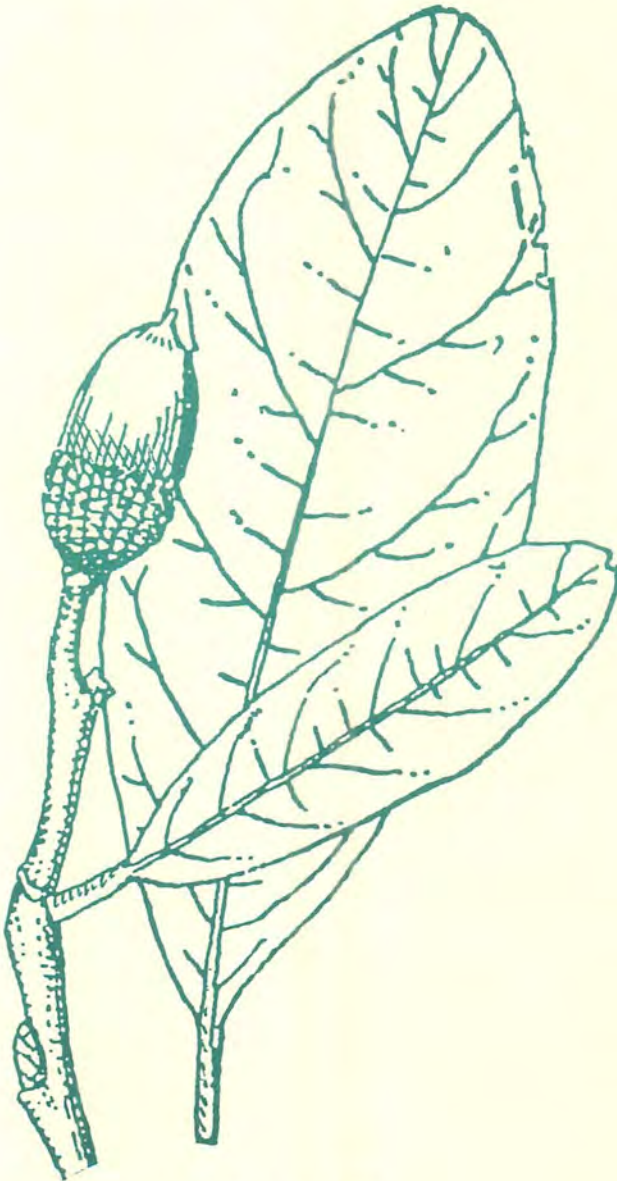
Map of Jason's Trail



LIVE OAK

(*Quercus virginiana*)

The live oak, a tree of striking character, is found from southeastern Virginia through the lower Atlantic and Gulf coastal regions into Texas and Mexico and grows in abundance in the woods of Swift Creek. This tree sometimes reaches more than 100 feet in its spread; with a short, stout trunk, three to four feet in diameter, dividing in several large limbs with nearly horizontal branches, forming a low, dense, round-topped head. It's height is commonly from 40 to 50 feet.



LIVE OAK

The bark on the trunk and large branches is dark brown tinged with red, and slightly furrowed. It grows to its largest size on low ridges near the coast and only a few feet above sea level. The live oak is one of the most desirable trees of the Coastal Plain for roadside and ornamental planting. It is of moderately slow growth but long-lived and handsome.

The leaves of the live oak are simple, evergreen, thick, leathery, oblong and smooth above and pale and silvery beneath with edges that are slightly rolled under. They are from two to four inches in length and one to two inches in breadth.

The fruit of the live oak is an acorn about an inch long and one-third inch wide, borne on a long stem or peduncle. It is oblong, dark brown and lustrous and set in a top-shaped, light reddish brown cup.

The wood of the live oak is very heavy, hard, strong and tough, light brown or yellow, with nearly white, thin sapwood. The wood was formerly largely used for ships' knees in building wooden ships.

TURKEY OAK

(SAND BLACKJACK)

(*Quercus laevis*)

This oak is one of the characteristic trees associated with the pines over all of northern Florida. It is abundant and reaches size on dry sandy ridges and sandy bluffs and hammocks in the coast region. It is usually 20 to 30 feet high, but rarely reaches a height of 60 feet, with a trunk a foot and a half to two feet in diameter. Its branches are stout, spreading and more or less contorted, forming an open irregular but generally round-topped crown.



TURKEY OAK

The leaves are deeply divided into three, or five, or rarely seven lobes, spreading and tapering from the base. They average about five inches long as well as wide. They are thick and rigid, heavily veined, bright yellow-green and lustrous above, paler and somewhat downy on the undersurface. They are very characteristic and should not be confused with those of any other tree.

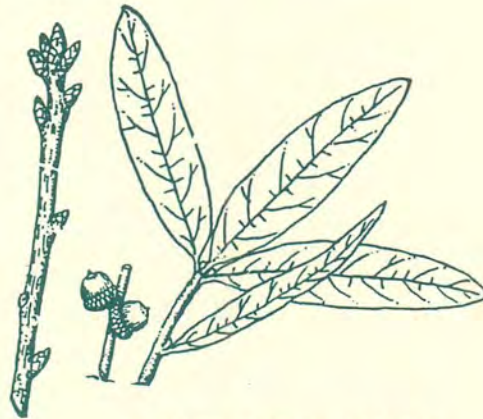
The acorn is short-stalked, dull, light brown in color, an inch long and three-fourths of an inch broad. It is oval in shape, full and rounded at both ends, and is enclosed for about a third of its length in a thin, light red-brown cup covered by rounded scales that extend above the rim of the cup and down over part of the inner surface.

The wood is heavy, hard, strong, rather close-grained and light brown in color, tinged with red. It is used largely for fuel, but is cut to some extent for lumber and used for general construction.

WILLOW OAK

(*Quercus phellos*)

The willow oak, often called water oak, occurs generally over northern Florida and somewhat southward. It is a tree of the lowlands and along the borders of rivers and swamps, but sometimes also on rich sandy uplands. It is a beautiful and long-lived tree, and desirable for roadsides, lawns and parks, for which it has been widely planted.



WILLOW OAK

The slender willow-like leaves, on a tree whose habit of growth is manifestly that of an oak, make the tree easy to identify in the forest. The leaves are two to four inches long and one-half to one inch wide, with smooth or slightly wavy margins, bristle-pointed, smooth, light-green and shiny above, but dull and usually smooth below. They alternate in arrangement on the twig and are borne on a short stout stem. The bark is generally smooth and of a reddish brown color: with age, the bark becomes slightly roughened and divided by narrow ridges.

The small acorns, closely set along the stem, mature at the end of the second year. The nut is a light brown hemisphere, about one-half an inch in diameter, its base scarcely enclosed in the shallow, reddish brown cup. The nuts are eaten as food by bluejays, grackles ("black birds"), and several other species of birds as well as by rodents.

The wood is not separated commercially from other species in the red oak group. It is heavy, strong, rather coarse-grained, light brown tinged with red, and not durable when exposed to weather. It is used locally for crosstics, bridge planks, barn sills, and general construction.

LAUREL OAK

(*Quercus laurifolia*)

The laurel oak is one of the more common and the most beautiful of all the oaks. It is generally distributed and found on the banks of streams and in or near swamps and rich hammocks over Florida except in the extreme southern portion.

It is a large tree, reaching a height of 100 feet and a diameter of three to four feet, with slender branches forming a broad, dense, round-topped, shapely crown. The bark of young trees is dark brown, more or less tinged with red, roughened by small close scales becoming on older trees nearly black and broken into broad flat ridges.



LAUREL OAK

The leaves are from two to six inches long and three-quarters to over an inch wide. They are thin and very shiny above, lighter green below and with less gloss. They fall during the early part of the spring and for a few weeks the trees are bare. The tree may be distinguished from the live oak, which it somewhat resembles, by the absence of gray down or fuzz on the under side of the leaves.

The flowers which appear early are distinctly red.

The acorn, which matures at the end of the second year, is dark brown in color and about half an inch long. It is enclosed for about a fourth of its length by a thin saucer-shaped cup covered by thin, light-brown scales. The wood is heavy, hard, and coarse-grained. It checks in drying and is used only for fuel.

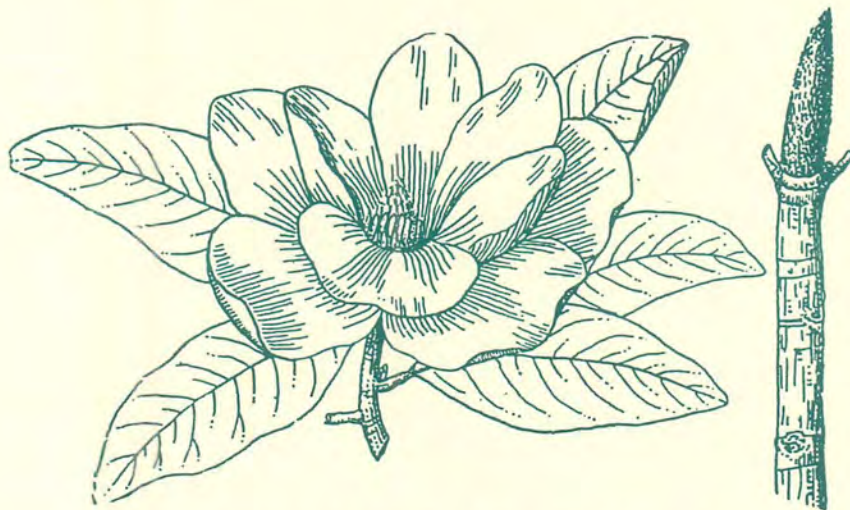
SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA

(EVERGREEN MAGNOLIA)

(Magnolia grandiflora)

The magnolia is one of the well-known trees in Florida. No other in our forest excels it in combined beauty of the leaves and the flowers. Occurring naturally in the rich hammock soils and on the border of river swamps and pine-barren ponds, it has been widely cultivated for its ornamental value. In its natural habitat, it attains heights generally of 60 to 80 feet and diameters of the trunk up to four feet. The dense, pyramidal head, or crown, is made up of numerous small spreading branches and branchlets.

The bark is gray to light-brown. The leaves are evergreen, thick, leathery, elliptical or oval, dark green and shiny above. They are rusty or silvery beneath, and mostly from five to eight inches long and two to three inches wide, with prominent midribs. The leaves remain on the tree for about two years.



SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA

The large handsome flowers appear at intervals during the summer. They are very attractive with their large pure white petals surrounding a splash of bright purple in the center and their pleasing fragrance. The "sweet magnolia" of the South well deserves the place given it in story and song. The fruit consists of a rounded or oval head from three to four inches long containing many seed, each enclosed in a sheath. These open and display the bright red "berries" dangling on slender threads.

The wood is moderately heavy and hard, and of a creamy color. It is used somewhat for ornamental purposes, and considerably for firewood.

SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA

(WHITE or SWEET BAY)
(*Magnolia virginiana*)

Sweet Bay, or white bay is a small slender tree with gray branches attaining heights of 15 to 30 feet depending upon the soil conditions. It is found on low, moist or wet lands, and on hammocks throughout nearly all of Florida.

The leaves are simple, oval, pale green above and white beneath, persisting on the branches till spring. The winter buds are thickly covered with fine hairs.



SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA

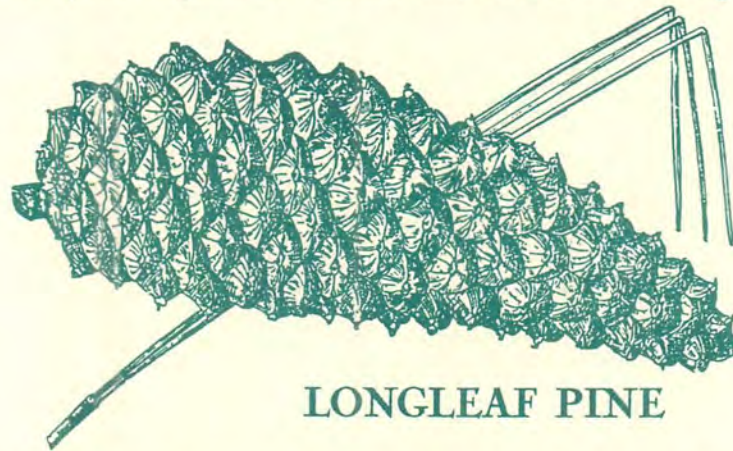
The fragrant flowers, with nine to 12 pure white petals on slender smooth stems, measure from two to three inches across. They continue to open during several weeks in the spring and early summer. The fruit cluster, or "cone," is oval in shape, dark red, smooth, about two inches long by one-half an inch broad, and contains scarlet seeds which are variably oval and much flattened, about one-quarter of an inch long.

The wood is soft, light brown tinged with red, with cream-white sapwood. The tree is usually too small for the wood to be of much commercial importance, although it is sometimes used along with gum for woodenware and for making paper pulp.

LONGLEAF PINE

(*Pinus palustris*)

The young longleaf pine forms one of the most striking features of southern forests. When five to 10 years of age, the single upright stem with its long, dark, shiny needles, forms a handsome plume of sparkling green; while in later youth the stalwart, sparingly branched sapling, with its heavy twigs and gray bark, attracts immediate attention. The older trees have tall, straight trunks, mostly one or two feet in diameter, and open, irregular crowns, one-third to one-half the length of the tree.



LONGLEAF PINE

Longleaf pine is found throughout Florida, except for the southern tip of the peninsula. Longleaf pine stands today reflect a history of extensive naval stores operations, logging, and burning following the logging. As a result many longleaf pine forests have been replaced by other species.

The leaves or needles are from 10 to 15 inches long, in clusters of three, and gathered towards the ends of the thick, scaly twigs. The flowers, appearing in early spring before the new needles, are a deep rose purple turning to silver-white. The male flowers grow in prominent, short, dense clusters, and the female flowers in inconspicuous groups of two to four.

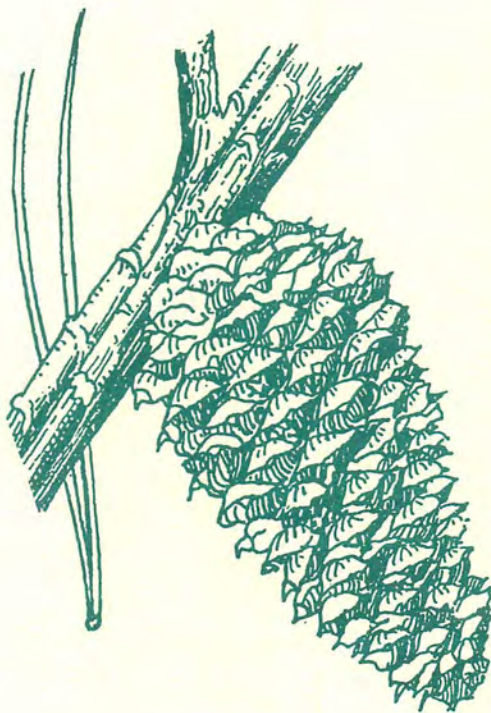
The cones, or burrs, are six to 10 inches long, slightly curved, the scales armed with small curved prickles. The cones usually fall soon after the seeds ripen, leaving their bases attached to the twigs.

The wood is heavy, hard, strong, tough, and durable. Known as yellow pine, pitch pine, and southern pine, it is used for all kinds of building and other construction. Naval stores, consisting of tar, pitch, rosin, and turpentine, are obtained from this tree and its close relative, the slash pine, by bleeding the trees for their gum.

SAND PINE

(*Pinus clausa*)

The sand pine grows in very sandy soils throughout Florida, except in the more southern portion. It comes in extensively following fires when weather conditions are favorable; the seed has special protective equipment and holds its vitality well. Its growth is rapid considering that it is confined to the poorer sandy soils. In several points this tree resembles the Virginia, or scrub pine, and the jack pine of the Great Lakes region.



SAND PINE

The bark is rough and dark colored over the lower part of the tree, but light reddish or ash gray on the young branches and twigs.

The wood is orange or yellowish, with thick, nearly white sapwood. It is light, soft, brittle, and not very strong. For a long time it was used principally for firewood but now is used for pulpwood.

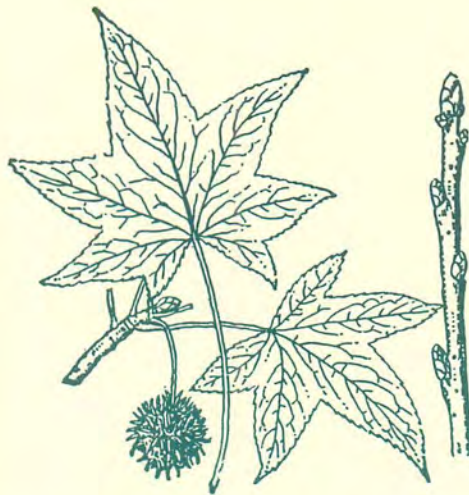
The tree most commonly grows to 20 to 30 feet in height, with a somewhat crooked trunk usually not over a foot in diameter and a much-branching head. The tree has a scrubby or inferior appearance from a timber standpoint.

The needles are two in a sheath, two to three inches long, slender and dark green. The fruit is a cone, or burr, about two to three inches long, and persists in the tree for a long time. Some of them open when mature, while others remain closed for two to four years, and still others remain closed and even become embedded in the wood. The seeds are small and winged and are widely dispersed by winds. The characteristics explain why an excellent young stand often follows a sweeping fire.

AMERICAN SWEETGUM

(RED or SWEET GUM)
(*Liquidambar styraciflua*)

The sweet gum is a large valuable forest tree. It occurs on hammocks, rich river bottoms, and in swamps subject to overflow, as well as on drier lands as far south as Cape Canaveral and Tampa Bay. The bark is a light gray, roughened by corky scales, later becoming deeply furrowed. After the second year the twigs often develop two to four corky projections of the bark, which give them a winged appearance.



AMERICAN SWEETGUM

The simple, alternate, star-shaped leaf, with its five to seven points or lobes, is five to seven inches across and very aromatic. In the fall its coloring is brilliant, ranging from pale yellow through orange and red to a deep bronze.

The flowers are of two kinds on the same tree, unfolding with the leaves. The fruit at first glance reminds one of the balls of the sycamore, but on closer inspection proves to be a head. It measures an inch or more in diameter and is made up of many capsules with projecting spines. It frequently hangs on a tree by its long swinging stem late into the winter.

The wood is heavy, moderately hard, close-grained, and not durable on exposure. The reddish brown heartwood, which suggests the name red gum is not present to any appreciable extent in logs under 16 inches in diameter. The wood is extensively used for flooring, interior finish, paper pulp and veneers for baskets of all kinds. Veneers of heartwood are largely used in furniture, sometimes as imitation mahogany or Circassian walnut. The tree is often planted for ornamental use.

BUCKWHEATTREE (Titi)

(Cliftonia monophylla)

Few people have been Florida long without seeing or hearing about titi swamps. The titi is a small tree peculiarly adapted to survive and thrive in shallow swamps, ponds and bays, and in the wet sandy peat soils long remaining submerged. In such places it often forms dense thickets, over the coastal region and somewhat inland over the pine barrens.

It occasionally reaches a height of 40 feet, but usually not to exceed 25 feet. The trunk is small, crooked, and divides at a height of 10 to 15 feet into numerous branches and slender branchlets of a reddish brown color.



BUCKWHEATTREE

The leaves vary from one and one-half to two inches long by one-half to one inch wide, bright green and shiny above, paler beneath, smooth on the margins, and broadest beyond the middle portion. They do not drop until autumn of the second year.

The flowers are fragrant, small, in elongated clusters, borne at the ends of the branchlets. They appear in February and March, and are white or rose-colored. The fruit has two to four thin membraneous wings, is one-quarter inch long, and usually divided into three (sometimes four) cells, each of which contains a round light-brown seed.

The wood is heavy and close-grained from the very narrow annual rings, but rather weak and brittle; and is reddish brown in color. It burns briskly with a yellow flame and is in demand as fuel.

AMERICAN HOLLY

(*Ilex opaca*)

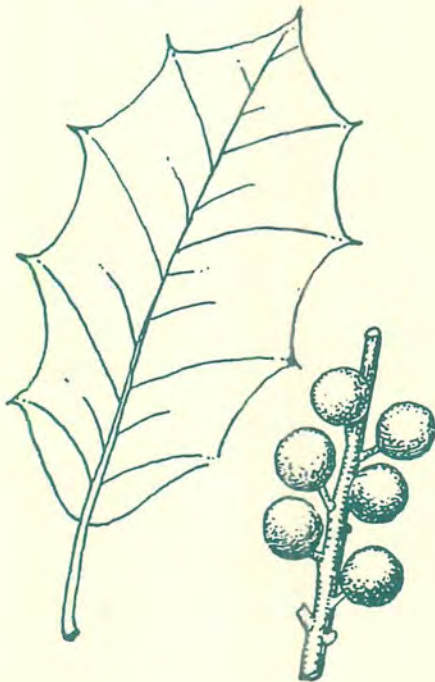
The holly occurs on hammocks and other rich damp soils over northern and upper middle Florida. It is much less abundant now than formerly, due to the large amount gathered and shipped to cities for Christmas decorations.

It is a small evergreen tree, seldom exceeding 30 feet in height and 12 inches in diameter. The bark is light gray and roughened by wart-like growths. The numerous short, slender branches form a dense, narrow, pyramidal head of striking dark green color effect, especially when well laden with the conspicuous red berries.

The leaves are simple alternate, oval, thick and leathery, two to four inches long, and armed with spiny teeth. The leaves persist on the branches for about three years, then drop off in the spring.

The flowers are small, whitish and inconspicuous. The male and female

flowers are usually borne on on separate trees.



The fruit, which ripens late in the fall and persists on the branches over the winter, is a dull red or sometimes yellow, nearly round berry, about one-quarter of an inch in diameter containing four to six ribbed nutlets.

The wood is light, tough, not strong, and nearly white. It is valued and much used for cabinet work and wood-turning. For this purpose many of the larger, finer trees have been cut and marketed.

Several other species of *Ilex* are present; one, the cessaena or yaupon, sometimes used as substitute for tea. Another, a shrub or small tree with erect branches, occurs on the "scrub" in middle Florida.

AMERICAN HOLLY

COMMON BALDCYPRESS

(Taxodium distichum)

The cypress, or bald cypress, is a tree found exclusively in deep swamps which are usually flooded for long periods of time, and on wet stream banks and bottomlands in the lower Atlantic Coastal Plain and westward. Its straight trunk with numerous ascending branches, and narrow conical outline makes the tree one of considerable beauty. In old age, the tree generally has a broad fluted or buttressed base, a smooth slowly tapering trunk and a broad, open, flat top of a few heavy branches and numerous small branchlets. The original-growth timber attained heights of 80 to 130 feet and diameters of five to 10 feet.



COMMON BALDCYPRESS

The bark is silvery to cinnamon-red and finely divided by numerous longitudinal fissures. The leaves are about one-half to three-fourths of an inch in length, arranged in feather-like fashion along two sides of small branchlets, which fall in the autumn with the leaves still attached or they are scale-like and much shorter, light green, and sometimes silvery below.

The fruit is a round cone, or "ball," about one inch in diameter, consisting of thick irregular scales.

The wood is light, soft, easily worked, varies in color from a light sapwood to dark brown heartwood, and is particularly durable in contact with the soil. Hence, it is in demand for exterior trim of buildings, greenhouses planking, boat and ship building, shingles, posts, poles and crossties.

WESTINDIES JUNIPER

(RED CEDAR)

(*Juniperus lucayana*)

A tree closely related and generally similar to the common northern red cedar, the Westindies Juniper is found over Florida except in the southern part of the peninsula, and most abundant in West Florida. Incidentally, this cedar is found in the Bahamas, Cuba and other islands.



WESTINDIES JUNIPER

There are two kinds of leaves, usually both kinds being found on the same tree. The commoner kind is dark green, minute and scale-like, clasping the stem in four ranks, so that the stems appear square. The other kind, usually appearing on young growth or vigorous shoots, is awl-shaped, quite sharp-pointed spreading and whitened. The two kinds of flowers are at the end of minute twigs on separate trees. Blooming in February or March, the male trees often assume a golden color from the small catkins, which, when shaken, shed clouds of yellow pollen. The fruit, which matures in one season, is pale blue, often with a white bloom, one-sixth of an inch in diameter, berry-like, enclosing one or two seeds in the sweet flesh. It is a favorite winter food for birds.

The bark is very thin, reddish brown, peeling off in long shred-like strips. The tree is extremely irregular in its growth, so that the trunk is usually more or less grooved.

The heart wood is distinctly red, and the sapwood white, this color combination making very striking effects when finished as cedar chests, closets and interior woodwork. The wood is aromatic, soft, strong and of even texture, and these qualities make it most desirable for lead pencils. It is very durable in contact with the soil, and on that account is in great demand for posts, poles and rustic work.

HAMMOCK HICKORY

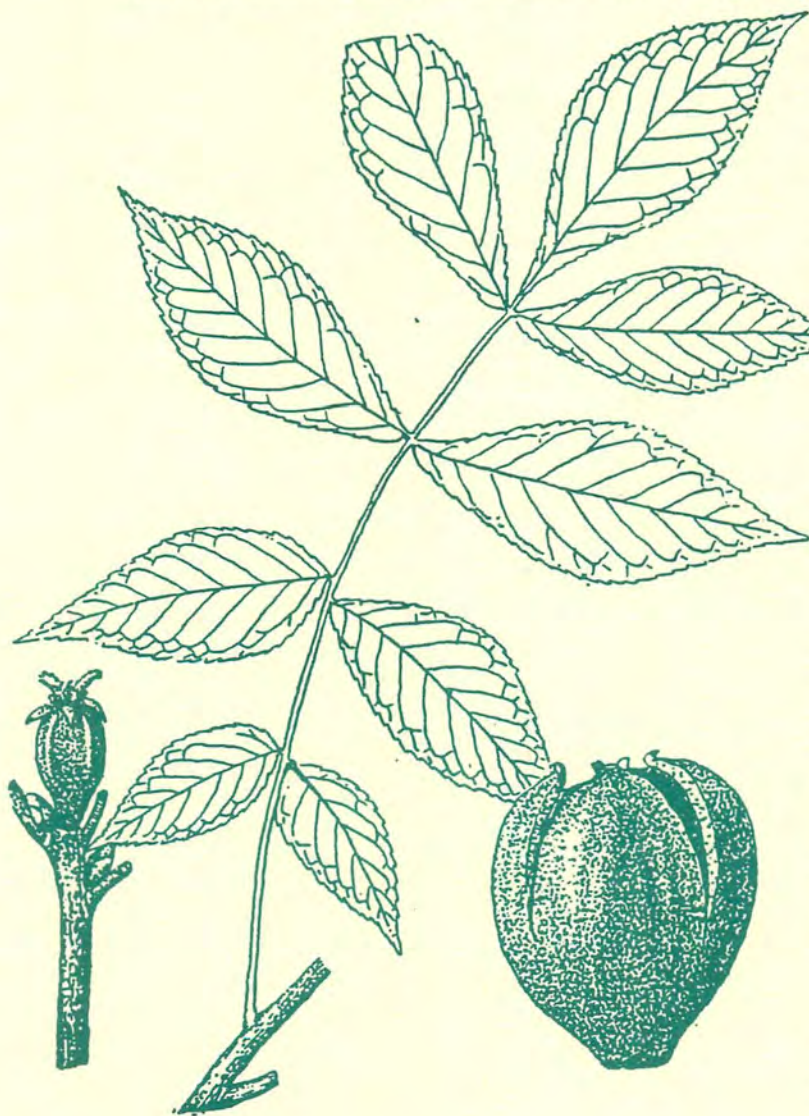
(FLORIDA PIGNUT)
(*Carya ashei*)

This is the common hickory on the hammocks of Florida north of the Everglades. The tree usually reaches heights from 40 to 80 feet, with a trunk one to two feet in diameter, covered with medium gray and comparatively thick bark, close and tight to the tree, and broken into shallow furrows and small ridges. The branchlets are bright reddish brown and smooth, which is one of the guiding points for identifying this tree. The compound leaves are smooth, as are the leaf-stems, and they vary widely in length. The lowest and

most vigorous leaves are often from 14 to 16 inches long, of seven to nine leaflets, while those near the ends of the branchlets are often only four to six inches and of three, or sometimes five, leaflets.

The flowers appear in April and, as in all hickories, are of two kinds on the same tree. The pear-shaped fruit has a rather thin, tightly clinging husk over a dark brown nut, and it splits open slowly and only near the upper end. Both the husk and the nut are noticeably four-angled, or ribbed. The fruit, nearly circular in cross-section, is often much narrowed toward the base, from one and one-half to two inches in length. The kernel, though small, is sweet and edible.

The wood is hard, heavy, strong, and comparatively elastic. It has many uses on the market.



HAMMOCK HICKORY

GRANDSIE-GRAYBEARD

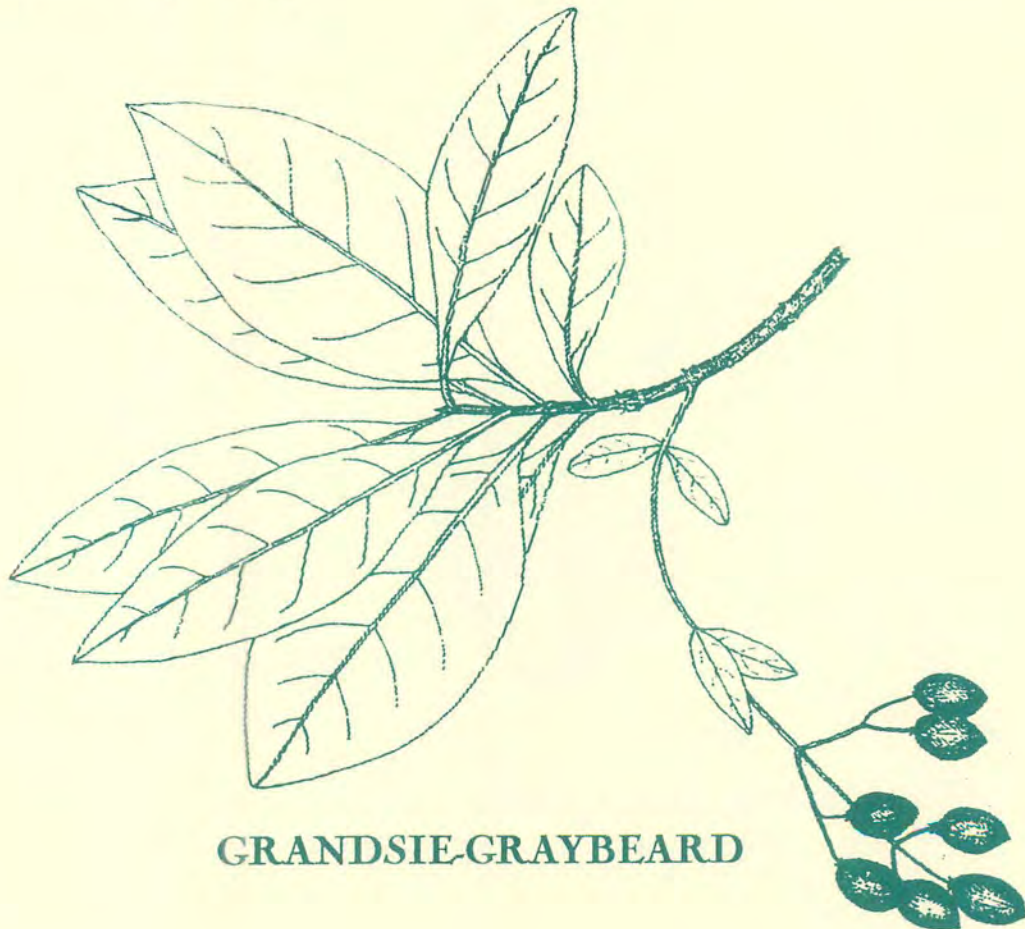
(FRINGE-TREE or OLD MAN'S BEARD)

(*Chionanthus virginicus*)

The grandsie-graybeard is a shrub or small tree that grows in diverse habitats; upland hardwood or pine forests, pine-oak scrub, rock outcrops, savannas, pine flatwoods, and shrub bogs. It can be found from north Florida to New Jersey.

The tree can grow to a maximum height of about 10 m. It blooms in the spring before or as the leaves unfold with abundant, dangling, loose, showy panicles of white or creamy-white flowers. Leafy twigs are reddish brown and older twigs are gray, with numerous, minute, dark dots and widely scattered, oval to circular, slightly raised, tan lenticels. Leaves are opposite, simple, deciduous and tapered to short narrowly winged petioles, purplish red in color. The leaves are oblong or oval and vary in size, up to 20 cm long and 10 cm broad. Their upper surfaces are dark green, the lower surfaces are paler.

The fruit is an oval-ellipsoid drupe and dark blue in color at maturity. Its size ranges from 1 to 1.7 cm long.



GRANDSIE-GRAYBEARD

SOURWOOD

(*Oxydendrum arboreum*)

The sourwood is a medium tall, slender, deciduous tree with sour or acid-tasting sap, commonly flowering/fruitletting when of low shrub-like stature. Young twigs are green or reddish green, eventually with relatively conspicuous, vertically lenticular lenticels. The bark of the trunk is gray tinged with red and longitudinally furrowed between scaly ridges.

Leaves alternate, are simple and slenderly petioled. Petioles are usually reddish-green, mostly 1.5 to 2 cm long. Blades are pinnately veined and are variable in length to about 15 to 18 cm long and 2.5 to 7.5 cm broad. Margins are often reddish and irregularly doubly serrate with upper surfaces bright medium green in color. Lower surface is dull green. Leaf blades in the autumn turn orange-yellow, then scarlet or crimson, notably contributing to autumn coloration.

Flowers are white in color and individually small, shortly stalked, and vertically declining from the lower side of the raceme axes.



SOURWOOD

Swift Creek



A DAVID JENSEN ASSOCIATES SIGNATURE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPED BY RUCKEL PROPERTIES, INC.

In Niceville at North Partin Drive and College Boulevard / Telephone 678-1900