been so great that the original vegetation type cannot be ascertained, or, if it is known, is no longer suitable for the existing conditions. In these cases, the choice of plants must be made on the basis of the surrounding vegetation, architectural considerations, and site conditions.

Natural landscaping is the incorporation of natural plant communities in the landscape design. Typically, the larger trees and shrubs are arranged for long range visual effect, a scattering of understory shrubs and herbs is added, and the whole is left to grow as it will. The number of species to be planted depends somewhat on the distance from wild areas from which it can be colonized. Once established, occasional pruning of the edges and extirpation of exotic pest species is all the care needed. In some cases, natural landscaping begins with an existing natural area, which is selectively cleared and groomed to produce a visually pleasing setting for human activity.

In the urban environment, the best opportunities to employ natural landscaping are highway screens, where they provide wildlife habitat while abating noise and air pollution, and large park areas where screens are desired between recreation areas and roads or developed areas. They are also appropriate for camouflaging awkward landscape features, and can be instrumental in turning a swamp or poorly-drained swale into a choice wildlife habitat as well as a scenic attraction. When there are adjacent areas of natural or reconstructed woodland, selected species from that community should be used to landscape open areas and as hedges and shade for playing courts. This provides an additional food resource and attracts wildlife into the open where it can be enjoyed by the public. When the natural areas are large enough, nature trails and bicycle paths can run through them, turning them into an additional recreational resource. Fingers of such habitat, extending outward from the main area, can create meadows for picnicking or other activities, giving the illusion of seclusion as well as increased edge habitat (the border between woods and open areas, especially favored by wildlife, particularly birds).

Diversity
The number of species necessary to create an optimum wildlife habitat varies widely between community types. A reconstructed pine-palmetto habitat will have a lower diversity than a tropical hammock, reflecting the different diversities in virgin communities. The minimum number of species needed to establish a given habitat will vary with proximity to rich natural areas, from which it can be colonized. In low diversity communities, it is possible to have at least a few of each characteristic tree and shrub species. In recreating extremely diverse communities, this may not be practical, although every effort should be made to have maximum diversity in at least a portion of the restructured habitat. In general, wind-dispersed and rare species deserve preference, while those readily dispersed by bird droppings may be more likely to colonize spontaneously. Planting pairs of trees at an appropriate distance for cross-pollination is essential, especially for those species which are difficult to obtain as nursery stock.

To my knowledge, there have been no studies to establish desirable diversity indices for recreated natural landscapes.

Where park areas are created from existing woodland, the problems of natural landscaping become those of selection and enhancement. A careful survey of the area for elevation, drainage patterns, and areas of virgin woodland or rare

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A BACKYARD NOTEBOOK
by Doris Rosebraugh
BLACK IRONWOOD
(Krugiodendron ferreum)

Black ironwood, sometimes called leadwood, is the tree that caught my eye on the North Key Largo road almost 20 years ago and launched my quest for knowledge about natives. Therefore, I am dismayed that my most reliable source, West and Arnold, describes it as inconspicuous. I wanted them to rave about the rich green masses sandwiched in between fellow natives.

However, I have to admit that it is less than distinguished when it is competing for light. The crown opens and it stretches out. This tree excels when given full sunlight and good circulation. I have noticed that it also develops sooty mold when grown in commercial nurseries, and yet I have never seen it on wild specimens.

West and Arnold list the mature height at 30 feet, with 8 to 10-inch trunks. Gann's list specifies alkaline soil with organic matter. This bears up the evidence of two plantings of my own: one in Coconut Grove limestone, and the present one in marl. In less than five years the limestone ironwood reached 8 feet in height, from seed (although not rounded out), and the present one has managed only a few feet of growth from leierio size. To qualify that I must state that it is planted on a north corner and receives full sun only in the summer.

Ironwood, properly placed, will reward you with a dense, rounded crown of glistening leaves. They are simple, opposite — or nearly so — with smooth texture. With midrib indented and wavy margins on the ovate but slightly roundish-looking leaves, the light seems to intensify in the manner typical of so many native trees.

For landscaping purposes, ironwood would be ideal for townhouse gardens and small yards. It would also work well in a grouping with other small scale natives such as eugenias. Remember, it is not an aggressive competitor — but it is a beauty!

RANGE: Hardy along the east coastal areas to Melbourne.

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