



Good Citizen Guide to Natural Florida

Western Panhandle Region



Learn about where you live

Florida's Western Panhandle Region has a variety of natural areas to discover. Visit these areas to see the "real" Florida and to appreciate their diversity. Seeing native plants in their natural communities can help you learn about what to plant in your own landscape to make your yard more sustainable.

Discover some of the Region's native plant communities



Beach Dune

Beach dunes are sandy uplands that protect coastlines. In the front (coast) are dune-building, sand burial, and salt tolerant plants like sea oats. On the back (landward) are shrubs like Florida rosemary. Rare coastal dune lakes dot the coastline.

Where to visit Beach Dune

- Big Lagoon State Park (Escambia County)
- Fort Pickens (Escambia County)
- Grayton Beach State Park (Walton County)
- Gulf Islands National Seashore (Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties)
- St. Joseph Peninsula State Park (Gulf County)
- Topsail Hill Preserve State Park (Walton County)



Marsh and Wet Prairie

Marshes and wet prairies are wetland grasslands with little to no canopy. Marshes often have standing water and are important for fish and birds. Wet prairies are rich in biodiversity and host many carnivorous plants like pitcher plants and butterworts.

Where to visit Marsh and Wet Prairie

- Garcon Point Water Management Area (Santa Rosa County)
- Gulf Islands National Seashore (Okaloosa County)
- St. Andrews State Park (Bay County)
- Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve State Park (Santa Rosa County)



Flatwoods

Flatwoods are open savannas with a sparse pine canopy and continuous groundcover. The groundcover has high biodiversity and includes grasses and herbs like wiregrass and sunflowers. This ecosystem depends on frequent ground fires to keep the understory open and diverse.

Where to visit Flatwoods

- Garcon Point Water Management Area (Santa Rosa County)
- Panama City Beach Conservation Park (Bay County)
- St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve (Gulf County)
- Topsail Hill Preserve State Park (Walton County)



Coastal Scrub

Coastal scrubs are dry sandy uplands on relic dunes that are home to a dense midstory of scrub oaks with or without a sand pine canopy. Within coastal scrub are open patches with shrubs like false rosemary, reindeer lichens, and sparse herbs.

Where to visit Coastal Scrub

- Camp Helen State Park (Bay County)
- Naval Live Oaks Nature Preserve (Santa Rosa County)
- St. Andrews State Park (Bay County)
- St. Joseph Peninsula State Park (Gulf County)
- Topsail Hill Preserve State Park (Walton County)



Hardwood Forest

Hardwood forests are dominated by diverse hardwood trees and shrubs. They have a closed canopy and midstory with a sparse to dense groundcover. They occur in uplands and wetlands and are often formed on slopes and floodplains.

Where to visit Hardwood Forest

- Florida Caverns State Park (Jackson County)
- Oak Tree Nature Preserve (Okaloosa County)



Upland Pine and Sandhill

Upland pine and sandhills are open savannas with a sparse pine canopy and midstory of woody plants like oaks. They have a diverse groundcover composed of grasses and a wide variety of wildflowers. They depend on frequent ground fires to maintain biodiversity.

Where to visit Upland Pine and Sandhill

- Apalachee Wildlife Management Area (Jackson County)
- Blackwater River State Forest (Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties)



Riverine and Swamp

Riverine and swamps are aquatic to wetland ecosystems vital for healthy watersheds and are home to a diversity of plants and wildlife. They occur throughout our area and take many forms. They include many of our pristine springs.

Where to visit Riverine and Swamp

- Blackwater River State Park (Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties)
- Panama City Beach Conservation Park (Bay County)
- Pine Log State Forest (Washington County)
- Pitts and Sylvan Springs State Park (Bay County)
- University of West Florida Edward Ball Nature Trail (Escambia County)

Easy to grow native plants for home landscapes in the Western Panhandle Region



Bring the beauty of native plants home

Florida's Western Panhandle Region has many beautiful native plant communities. In addition to visiting them, you can bring a bit of natural Florida to your landscape by planting natives. Fortunately there are many options to choose from and many plants are adaptable to a wide range of conditions. Plant selection and planting advice is available from Florida Native Plant Society chapters as well as local extension agents and nurseries. Here are just a few suggestions for plants to consider for home gardens and landscapes.

Sunny moist pollinator garden



Vines: (1) *Lonicera sempervirens* (coral honeysuckle)

Shrubs: (2) *Viburnum obovatum* (Walter's viburnum)
Not pictured: *Hamelia patens* (firebush)

Low growing plants: (3) *Monarda punctata* (dotted horsemint); (4) *Stokesia laevis* (Stoke's aster); (5) *Silphium asteriscus* (starry rosinweed); (6) *Asclepias* species (native milkweeds).
Not pictured: *Salvia coccinea* (tropical sage); *Baptisia alba* (white wild indigo); *Rudbeckia laciniata* (cutleaf coneflower)

Dry coastal garden

Canopy Trees: (1) *Quercus geminata* (sand live oak)

Shrubs: (2) *Conradina canescens* (false rosemary); (3) *Ilex vomitoria* (yaupon). Not pictured: *Serenoa repens* (saw palmetto); *Yucca aloifolia* (Spanish bayonet)

Low growing plants: (4) *Solidago sempervirens* (seaside goldenrod); (5) *Helianthus debilis* (dune sunflower); (6) *Uniola paniculata* (sea oats). Not pictured: *Geobalanus oblongifolius* (gopher apple)



Part shade moist garden

Shrubs: (1) *Illicium floridanum* (Florida anise); (2) *Hydrangea quercifolia* (oak leaf hydrangea); (3) *Callicarpa americana* (American beautyberry);
Not pictured: *Chionanthus virginicus* (white fringe tree)

Low growing plants: (4) *Hypericum hypericoides* (St. Andrew's cross); (5) *Zamia integrifolia* (coontie); (6) *Vaccinium darrowii* (Darrow's blueberry). Not pictured: *Chasmanthium latifolium* (Indian woodoats); *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum* (cinnamon fern)



The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to preserve, conserve and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Florida Native Plant Society

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