



1) Cabbage Palm - *Sabal palmetto* - This is a characteristic tree found in hydric hammock ecosystems. Hammocks are forested wetlands that are dominated by hardwood trees and cabbage/sabal palms. The word *hammock* is a derivative of an early Native American word that means "shady place". Tens of thousands of years ago, these hammocks were actually offshore barrier reefs. They emerged during the last ice age when sea levels dropped several hundred feet. Sitting on dissolving coral limestone reefs, the resulting enriched soil supports large trees and varied plant life, thus in turn providing a haven for animal and human inhabitants. Areas surrounding hammocks were inundated and were part of the northern Allapattah flats, a marsh extending eastward to the Loxahatchee River. Early Indians and later Seminoles poled cypress canoes from these islands out to barrier sea islands, staying for weeks at a time to hunt for sea turtles, large fish, and bears. The name "Paleo" hammock refers to the antiquity of the site.



Artifacts have been found on this site and surrounding areas which signify the presence of very early settlement. Sites such as Paleo Hammock are significant in South FL because little is known about these "interior" native peoples. This area may have been a crossroads, with Allapattah Flats to the south, St. Johns marsh to the north, Cypress Creek and Lake Okeechobee to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

2) Live Oak - *Quercus virginicus* - Another hammock canopy tree, the Live Oak produces acorns that are not only desired food for wildlife, but were also consumed by early peoples. Oaks also support a variety of epiphytic plants including ferns that also provided sources of food and medicine.

3) Wild Lime - *Zanthoxylum fagara* - Many native peoples used the wood from this plant for bows and arrows, food, medicines and dyes. In fact, the genus *Zanthoxylum* translates to "yellow wood", and was coined by Catesby, an early English naturalist in Florida, in the 1730's. Be on the lookout for the Giant Swallowtail, a butterfly of which this plant is a host for. (*The trail continues across the road.*)



4) Firebush - *Hamelia patens* - Paleo Hammock and surrounding areas are the only places where this plant species is found in its native habitat. The bright orange, tubular flowers provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds, and the berries it produces provides food for fruit-eating birds.

Ethnobotanical uses have included using extracts of the leaves and stems to treat different types of skin ailments, treatment for menstrual cramps, headache, rheumatism, fever, and dysentery. (*The trail continues to the right.*)

5) The Paleo Period/Tower Overlook – The Germany Canal Mound (8SL70) present near the southern half of this property was discovered in the 1980's when the land was cleared for citrus. Some artifacts that were found include projectile points, drilled sharks teeth thought to be used for both jewelry and tools, St. Johns check stamped pottery, animal bone tools, glass beads and a Mastodon rib thought to be used as a club. These artifacts were dated to the Archaic (7500-750 BC), Malabar II (AD 1000-1750), and possibly Malabar I (750 BC-AD 1000) periods. However, some archaeologists believe that this area in fact dates back to the Paleo period (12,000-8,000 before present), the earliest period of human inhabitation in Florida. Specific "paleo" projectile points are required to positively identify a site as dating back this early period. Being difficult to locate as most of them are still buried within the ocean floor, many of them only turn up after extensive construction has taken place. Paleoindians were mostly migratory hunter/gatherers that moved into the Florida peninsula looking for food sources, and often hunted big game such as mastodons, giant armadillos, and saber-toothed cats. They only settled for brief periods when resources such as nuts or fruits were temporarily plentiful. At this time of the last Ice Age, Florida was twice the size it is today. The vegetation of peninsular Florida was very similar to an African savannah. The hammock areas supported a suite of animal and plant life that exceeded what would have been available in dry forests alone. (*The trail continues to the left.*)



6) Large Native American Mound- You are now entering one of two identified mounds (8SL 1139) on this site. This large, crescent shaped mound is about 637 yards long and 91 yards wide. Artifacts such as bone, shell, and pottery were found in this vicinity.

7) Devil's Claw - *Pisonia aculeata* - Other names for this plant include "pullback" and "blaspheme vine" due to its sharp, curved thorns. The most interesting name is "bird-catching tree"; it was noted by a botanist in the 1920's that "the fruits endanger birds by sticking to their feathers so much that they cannot fly". One wonders if early people utilized the properties of this plant to their advantage in order to help capture their food. (*The trail continues straight ahead.*)

8) The Archaic Period - The Paleo period evolved into the Archaic period, where widespread melting of ice sheets caused the sea level to rise steadily, becoming closer to that of present day level. The climate was arid during the Early and Middle Archaic periods, but evolved into current conditions during the Late Archaic. Lake Okeechobee was formed by the end of the Middle Archaic and stimulated the formation of the Everglades. The once nomadic people from the Paleo period became less so and established the first permanent settlements, mostly on the coast. They did not hunt big game, but instead subsisted on shellfish and plant gathering. (*The trail continues to the right.*)



9) Water Hickory - *Carya aquatica* - The genus *Carya* is from a Greek word meaning "walnut tree", and the common name of hickory probably comes from an English corruption of the Indian word "pocohicora", a type of oily beverage concocted by native Americans by grinding up hickory nuts in water. The 4-angled bitter tasting nut has been reported to have been eaten by various native tribes around the country. Native peoples used wood from *Carya* to make baskets, bows and arrows, blow gun darts, and tool handles. (*The trail continues to the left.*)



10) Small Mound- You are now about to step up and enter a smaller mound (8SL1140) which is approximately 91 yards by 45.5 yards wide. Before you step up, however, look to the left and notice the evidence of the limestone reef on which these hydric hammock ecosystems sit. The shape and elevation of this mound suggest planning in original construction; it is thought that it may lie on a platform base, which may explain the small shallow ponds that surround it. This mound has been dated back to the Malabar 1 period. The Malabar Period (3000 BP—AD 1565) evolved from the Orange ceramic culture which existed at the end of the Late Archaic and last until the arrival of the Spanish in 1565 AD. This culture was the first to be defined in 1951 as a unique one, becoming somewhat transitional between the Glades culture to the south and the St. Johns culture to the north. It established villages or sites that formed a nucleus for many small, specialized single use areas. This culture experienced increased population growth, and, as a result, greater exploitation of coastal resources. Burial mounds were constructed, new ceramic styles were introduced and wetlands became more widespread. Many of the same artifacts have been found here as in 8SL1139. (*The trail continues to the left.*)



11) Strangler Fig - *Ficus aurea* - This tree usually starts out as an epiphyte growing on another tree, like this cabbage palm. The fruits are very attractive to birds which spread the sticky seeds in their droppings. Once the seeds germinate, the fast-growing fig sends down aerial roots which reach the ground and eventually engulf the host tree. As the roots enlarge, the fig becomes self-supporting. The host tree eventually is killed by shading from the profuse branches and leaves. Ultimately, the strangler fig becomes a tree itself as the host tree decomposes within the embrace of the strangler's roots. A mature strangler fig can reach more than 60' tall and have multiple trunks. Some early peoples ate the fruits produced by this tree, fashioned arrows from the stems, and used the roots to make bowstrings and fishing lines, and also used them for lashing house parts and stringing meat. As extracts from the sap are antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic, early peoples also used it for treating wounds and chewed the latex like gum. As you continue, look for evidence of this tree taking over other native hapless victims.



12) American Elm - *Ulmus americana* - Fossil data indicates that the Ulmaceae family has ancient origins. Studies on fossilized pollen show that elms were present as far back as Miocene times (25 million years ago). It has also been indicated that many Elm species may have existed prior to the continental drift that separated the Americas from the Eurasian mainland. A fast growing and long-lived tree, the American Elm has been used extensively for its hard and durable wood. Early native peoples made canoes from it; early settlers used it for making boats, wheel hubs, barrel hoops, and veneer for baskets and crates. Dutch Elm Disease, a fungus caused by a bark beetle that was introduced into North America prior to 1930, has, however, decimated large populations of this tree.



13) Tropical Sage - *Salvia coccinea* - This short-lived plant grows to 1-2 ft. tall all year in our area. It has aromatic foliage and brilliant red flowers that are irresistible to butterflies and hummingbirds.

14) Sour/Seville Orange - *Citrus aurantium* - Citrus, not native to Florida, was introduced by the Spanish. Hammocks in this area were planted by pioneers who found the fertile soil produced by dissolving limestone ideal for citrus. The citrus of this area, along with that along Ten Mile Creek, were among the only to survive the great freeze of 1894-95. Seedling stock from this area rekindled the citrus industry in FL, and a few of these original trees survive today from the 19th Century plantings on this site.



Paleo Hammock Natural Area contains 80 acres of hydric hammock, wet prairie, slough and depression marsh ecosystems.

An approximate 1.5 mile long trail will take you through some of these ecosystems, and will send you back in time as you walk in the footsteps of early Native Americans

The parking area is located across from Teague Hammock Natural Area, 4 miles south of SR 70 on the Westside of Carlton Road, Fort Pierce.

Guidelines and Safety Information:

- Be cautious of uneven trail surfaces.
- Please remain on the trails.
- Carry adequate drinking water.
- In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
- In case of emergency, call 911.
- While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous to this area. Please observe from a safe distance.
- Leave all plant life intact.
- Please leave site cleaner than you found it. "Pack it in, pack it out."
- Use at own risk.

To learn more about St. Lucie County's natural heritage, there are more than 20 self-guiding interpretive trails located within the Natural Areas/Preserves. Each trail describes the most common plants, as well as significant geographical and historical features of the site.

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Paleo Hammock



Interpretive Trail



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Gates Open: Sunrise to Sunset