Plants Overview

Canaveral National Seashore (CANA) is a utopia for botanists. Over 1,000 species of plants have been recorded in the park and surrounding area. Because of its location along the "frost line", CANA contains a unique combination of temperate and subtropical plants. Several temperate species extend no farther south than Canaveral National Seashore, while a number of subtropical species occur no farther north. Signs of this unusual mixture include the hammocks, which contain an overstory dominated by temperate species and an understory comprised of subtropical plants. Another sign is the significant shift in vegetation along the edge of the lagoon from salt marsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora),* which predominates in coastal areas north of the park, to mangrove species which predominant to the south.

Primary plant communities include **coastal dune** featuring sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), beach grass (*Panicum amarum*), railroad vine (*Ipomea pes-caprae*) and other herbs; **coastal strand** lying behind the dune, dominated by a dense growth of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), myrsine (*Myrsine guianensis*) and a variety of other shrubs; **oak scrub** including several live oak species (*Quercus myrtifolia, Q. chapmanii, Q. geminata*), fetterbush (*Lyonia* spp) and blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*); **slash pine flatwoods** with a slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) overstory and live oak, saw palmetto and fetterbush understory; **hardwood and palm hammocks**, dominated by live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) or cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) overstory with other woody species such as nakedwood (*Myrcianthes fragrans*), red bay (*Persea borbonia*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) scattered throughout, **mangrove swamps** featuring white (*Lagunicularia racemosa*), black (*Avicennia germinans*), and red (*Rhizophora mangle*) mangroves plus buttonwood (*Conocarpus erecta*) and **salt marsh** dominated by glasswort (*Salicornia* spp), saltwort (*Batis maritima*), saltgrass (*Disticilus spicata*) and black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*).

In the early 1970's a botanical survey of Turtle Mound, an archeological site located in the north end of the park, revealed that the mound was the northernmost location for eight species of subtropical plants. These included torchwood (*Amyris elemifera*), marine vine/sorrel vine (*Cissus trifoliata*), night blooming cereus (*Cereus eriophorus*), inkwood (*Exothea paniculata*), scorpion-tail (*Heliotropum angiospermum*), mastic (*Mastichodendron foetidissimum*), lancewood (*Nectandra coriacea*) and (*Schoepfia chrysophylliodes*). A follow up study twenty years later showed that several of these species vanished due to multiple freezes in the 1980's.

More on individual species is found under Wildflowers and Trees and Shrubs. Additional information on various plant communities is contained under Natural Features.