



The grounds surrounding the Crooked River Lighthouse are home to a wide variety of native plant life, along with the wildlife that is found in the various habitats in the park.

In the natural areas, outside the city park grounds with the playground, pavilion, and lighthouse, two different “zones” are represented. On the south, adjacent to Highway 98, the land is low, a pine-wooded meadow lot sloping into a small wetland on the western side.

The lot adjacent to Cape Street on the eastern edge of the property is mainly higher and drier; home to live oaks, an American Holly, a few sand pines, and a bay magnolia tree. The ditch along the road could be referred to as a mini-wetland, considering the vegetation that thrives there.



While there is always something in bloom around the grounds, the show really gets going in the springtime. In March, the first noticeable color is from the aptly-named *Cirsium horridulum*, or common thistle, with its long, horrible spiny leaves protecting the pink powder-puff blooms.



Assorted *Coreopsis* start to sprinkle their golden bursts along the driveway, and scatter through the front meadow.

The warming April days usher in the real burst of springtime blooming, as dewberries, *Rubus trivialis*, send out their starry white flowers in promise of sweet treats to come,





*Oxalis* (sorrel) in variety, both *violacea* (pink) and *corniculata* (yellow) carpet the open areas, punctuated by the bold purple clumps of *Tradescantia ohiensis* (Spiderwort), and the more

delicate violet spikes of Lyre leaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*.) Nearby, toward the eastern boundary of the



higher zone, a low wall of ferns calls attention to itself by sending up long brown fiddleheads loaded with spores, Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*).



In the deep shade near the frog pond on the west side of the meadow, Long-leaf violets (*Viola lanceolata*) poke shyly up beneath

bunches of wild onion (*Allium canadense*) and native blackberries, (*Rubus argutus*.)



This is also the time when that most unwelcome herb makes its nasty appearance; the ubiquitous stinging nettle (*Cnidoscolus stimulosus*), which invades every area of the park.



The month of May brings more blooms, as blue sage (*Salvia azurea*) replaces April's *lyrata*, the beginnings of fruits, as dewberries form, and the wetland

areas sport a brief but elegant coat of lizard's tails (*Saururus cernuus*).



In June, a splendid specimen Pawpaw (*Asimina augustifolia*) located in a circlet of sand pines adjacent to the



**Cape Street walking path was noticed when the waxy, fragrant flowers appeared.**

**The slender forms of variegated milkweed (*Asclepius variegata*), pop up around the open areas of the yard and**

**playground, with their plump flower clusters promising the okra-shaped pods to follow. Drifts of golden-flowered puncture weed overflow the sidewalk edges and open spaces, inviting weed-whacking attention.**



**The hot days of July are the time for many small, ground-hugging specimens to make their brief showing.**

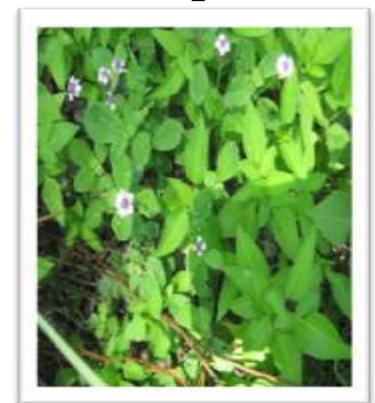
**Narrow-leaf ground cherries (*Physalis angustifolia*), bloom, their pale yellow flowers a dim foretaste of the bright orange balloon-like seed pods that develop. These low specimens are scattered about the museum yard, and at the base of the lighthouse.**



**Along the banks of the driveway, sturdy little capeweed (*Phyla nodiflora*) thrives in the dusty edges, while rough, odoriferous clumps of**



**lantana (*Lantana camara*) bloom defiantly in bright sunrise hues on the shoulder. Closer to the highway,**



**surprising shards of brilliant scarlet over-sprinkle the green mass of**

briars, Spanish needles, and blackberry vines, marking the emergence of painted leaf (*Pointsettia heterophylla*), a humble relative of the popular holiday cultivar.



The heat, and this year, rain, continues through August, which sees the first purples of beauty berries (*Callicarpa americana*) and the changing shades of the muscadine grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) on the vines that drape the untended brush along the drive. Though tempting and abundant, this year's grape crop was disappointing, slightly sweet, blandly juicy.



By September, the vibrant violet spikes of blazing star (*Liatris tenuifolia*) make stands around the museum and in the native plant garden.



All plants identified by reference: *Florida Wild Flowers and Roadside Plants*; C.Ritchie Bell, Bryan Taylor.



*Watch for the next edition:  
"Fungus Amongus"  
coming soon!- L.N.*



*....more of the plants  
mentioned in the text, as  
well as a few other life  
forms....*

**identified**

**Strange fungi, yet to be  
Blue sage (*Salvia azurea*)**

**Variegated milkweed (*Asclepius variegata*), in bloom and later, with seed pod.**

**Below, the ubiquitous Spanish**



**needles**



**Zebra Swallowtail, tiny bird, froglet**

