

Common Vines

In the fall, cypress, maple, and other trees drop their needles and leaves, so more light beams in revealing things previously hidden. Vines proliferate and are easily sighted during this time. Here are some of the more common vines that might be seen from the boardwalk.

Climbing Aster (*Aster carolinianus*) is in bloom with numerous showy lavender ray flowers that are about 1.5 cm in length. The leaves of this vine are alternate and simple, elliptical to lanceolate 2-6 cm in length and 1.5 cm wide. It can be seen throughout the Sanctuary, especially in the wet prairie area.

Hempweed (*Mikania scandens*) is a member of the Aster family. This vine has heads of four flowers which are white to pinkish florets. Flowering occurs throughout the year. Leaves are somewhat triangular. The best place to observe this vine is the observation platform where the Hempweed has interwoven with the willows.

White Vine (*Sarcostemma clausa*) bears flower clusters on stems that are twice as long as the 6-7 cm long ovate leaves. Petals appear more thick or “fleshy” than other flower petals. The best place to view this vine is from Ed Greene’s Owl Watch out to the observation platform where it occurs with Hempweed tangled in the willows. When the vine is cut, it oozes a thick white sap which has the appearance and consistency of Elmer’s Glue.

Moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*) is found throughout the Sanctuary and blankets many shrubs and trees. It’s most noticeable around the two lettuce lakes. The leaves are heart-shaped and smooth. It can flower any time during the year, but it does more so in late summer and early autumn. Flowers are large, showy white or pink orbs with five lobes.

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is often confused with poison oak and poison ivy, but it can be distinguished because it has five leaflets rather than three. The leaves are alternate, palmately compound, typically with five leaflets but sometimes with three or four. It turns a dark red in the fall and winter. It is present throughout the Sanctuary. Some books refer to it as “woodbine.”

Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) is a trailing to somewhat erect vine. Leaves are alternate and occur as three leaflets. The leaves are shiny and usually a deep green, turning to a burnt red-orange color in late fall/early winter in Florida. Flowers are tiny and white, and the berries are a whitish color. This is a poisonous plant as the common name indicates. The active poison in urushiol, a derivative of catechol, which is a derivative of benzene. It occurs throughout the Sanctuary.

Muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) is a high climbing vine with unbranched tendrils. As the Latin name denotes, it is a member of the Grape family. Leaves are alternate and simple, generally heart-shaped in overall outline, about as wide as long. The margins of the leaves are predominately dentate. The fruiting body is a purplish berry (when ripe) and is used for making jam and wine. The vine proliferates near the boardwalk in the pine to the edge of the wet prairie. It is also referred to as “bullace” and “wild grape.”

Members of the Smilax family...

Catbrier (*Smilax bonanox*) has numerous sharp brownish spikes and the vine is quite thick with a diameter of 1-2 cm. Clusters of shiny black berries can be seen hanging from a few vines. The leaf is heart-shaped. Catbrier has conspicuous tendrils, as do all 10 woody species of *Smilax* in Florida. This vine can be spotted in the pine area of the entrance trail, around the CLASS spur, and in the north lettuce lake region. It’s also called “greenbrier.”

Wild Bamboo (*Smilax auriculata*) has a visible groove along the leaf margins and slightly raised veins on the lower surfaces of the leaves. The lower stems have a pinkish color which helps distinguish this species from other *Smilax* species. It is along the boardwalk between the Gator Hole and Bunting house and is also called “greenbrier.”

Bamboo Vine (*Smilax laurifolia*) has alternate, simple oblong leaves 5-15 cm in length and raised midveins with obscure lateral veins on the lower surfaces. These characteristics help distinguish it from other *Smilax*. It is found going into the Pond Cypress from the Wet Prairie, after the Plume Hunter Shelter. It is also called “blaspheme vine” and in some books “catbrier.”

Wild Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glauca*) has a distinctly grayish-white cast to the undersurfaces of the leaves. It also has slender prickles with an ovate, simple leaf. It can be found in the north lettuce lake region as well as between Bunting House and the Guest Cabin/Residence area.