

1. Rough leaved agave

(*Agave scabra*)



This species is heavily armed with strong spines along the edges and a single spine at the tip of the leaf. The Western Apache Native Americans designed handles for tools and lance shaft weapons from

the tall flowering stalks. This is an important larval food plant for the Giant yucca skipper (*Agathymus*) complex of butterflies.

2. Scarlet pea

(*Indigofera miniata*)

This plant has beautiful salmon-rose to light red flower petals and curved pea pods. This species is beneficial as the larval food plant for the Grey hairstreak, Southern dogface, and Reakirt's blue butterflies. It is also a popular species in wildflower gardens as a ground cover due to its mat-like growth pattern. Deer and livestock also commonly consume this plant as a food source.



3. Texas prickly pear cactus

(*Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri*)

The long, sharp spines of cacti are actually modified leaves that harden as they age. The ripened fruits were a popular food source for many Native American tribes who would rub the fruits on the ground to remove the spines and eat the fruits raw. The fruits were also used as a source of red dye, fermented to make a beverage, used as a syrup, and dried and ground to be mixed with cornmeal to make a mush for winter food use.



4. Padre Island mistflower

(*Conoclinium betonicifolium*)

Mistflower is one of the most important nectar sources for butterflies and moths on the island. This is the larval food plant for the Rounded metalmark butterfly and several species of moths. Because of this importance, this is a very popular plant in most butterfly gardens. In the park, it is common near ephemeral ponds and marshes, roadsides, open grasslands, and disturbed areas. Native Americans used this plant externally and internally for just about every malady known, including drinking a tea from the roots to treat alcoholism.



5. Partridge pea

(*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)

This species is the most common legume encountered in the park. It is also the larval food plant for the Cloudless sulfur, Orange sulfur, Sleepy orange, and Little yellow butterflies. The seed is one of the major food items of the Northern bobwhite quail because it remains available throughout the winter and early spring.



6. Elegant liatris (*Liatris elegans*)

This is one of the island's most attractive and showy species. It also provides an important nectar source for butterflies and day flying moths. It was used by Native Americans internally and externally for the treatment of rheumatism. Confederate surgeons utilized other *Liatris* species in the treatments of sore throats, pain, coughs, colds, colic, and even snake bites. These other *Liatris* species were referred to as Button snakeroot and Rattlesnake's master during the 19th century.



7. Wax myrtle (*Morela cerifera*)

This densely branching shrub was used by Native American tribes to treat fever, throat aches, stomach aches, and headaches. The wax of the fruit was historically used to make candles while the leaves were used as a tobacco substitute. In winter, the seeds are important food sources for the Carolina wren and other songbirds. This shrub also provides significant habitat for a variety of bird species.



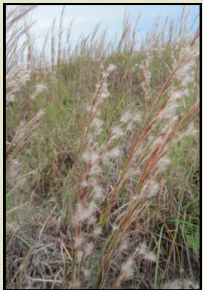
8. Buckley's yucca (*Yucca constricta*)

This plant has leaves shaped like swords with a piercing spike at the tip and beautiful creamy white flowers. It has been frequently misidentified as Spanish dagger (*Yucca treculeana*). Buckley's yucca is a sand growing species most commonly found on the island while Spanish dagger is more common in clay soils and in the Rio Grande valley. Yuccas have a very specialized pollination system where yucca moths purposely transfer pollen from one plant to another. During pollination, they lay an egg in the flower. The moth larva then feeds on some of the developing seeds, yet always leaves enough seed to perpetuate the species.



9. Seacoast bluestem

(*Schizachyrium scoparium littorale*)



This is the most abundant grass on the island. It is an attractive grass forming upright clumps of slender green leaves which have a tinge of blue at the base. It has striking clusters of fluffy, silvery-white seed heads which often persist into winter. The most outstanding feature of this grass may be the bronze-orange fall foliage color. It

provides forage and cover for wildlife.

10. Sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*)

The large seed heads of this plant that turn golden brown in late summer give the plant its common name. Its tall leaves trap wind-blown sand and promote dune growth, while its deep roots and extensive rhizomes act to stabilize them. This plant is vital in the protection of beaches from damage due to high winds, storm surges, and tides. It also provides food and habitat for birds, small mammals, and insects.



11. Plains Wild Indigo

(*Baptisia bracteata leuchophaea*)

This species has beautiful creamy yellow colored flowers which form long horizontal clusters. In late summer, the entire upper portion of the plant loses its green color. It becomes dry, turns dark grey to black, and breaks off at the ground to become tumbleweeds. This process aids in seed dispersal. It was used medicinally by Americans and Confederate surgeons typically as an astringent and antiseptic to prevent gangrene and treat burns. The Army of Virginia would frequently attach the fresh plant to their horses to act as an insect repellent.



Grassland Nature Trail Botanical Guide

