

# HOOP POLE CREEK NATURE TRAIL GUIDE

## MARITIME FORESTS

The globally imperiled maritime forests of Hoop Pole Creek are home to a unique plant community. Trees and shrubs in the forest are specially adapted for survival in sandy soil, dune swale topography (dunes and the low, wet depressions between them) and strong sea breezes loaded with salt spray and sand. Well-developed root systems anchor them in the soft soil and tap deep for ground water. Support against the wind is provided by strong trunks with twisting branches. Broad-leaf evergreen leaves or needles are extra-thick to retain moisture and able to absorb sunlight year round.

### 1 REDBAY (*avocado relative*)

- ◆ Leaves have bluish color on their underside and reddish veins.
- ◆ Leaves, when crushed, have an aromatic odor and can be used for cooking.

### 2 HERCULES-CLUB

- ◆ Glands containing aromatic oil are found in the bark, fruit and leaves.
- ◆ Folk medicines prescribed chewing the bark to relieve toothaches. Thus its nickname – the toothache tree.
- ◆ Non-tropical member of the citrus family, prickly ash.

### 3 PENNYWORT

- ◆ Small, round, nasturtium-like leaf, with the petiole (or stem) attached to the center of the leaf.
- ◆ Bears small, white flowers with five petals in compound umbels.
- ◆ This carrot relative thrives in dune swales and along the edges of salt marshes.

### 4 SPANISH BAYONET-YUCCA

- ◆ Leaves are evergreen in color, thick, leathery, and have a sharp-pointed shape.
- ◆ Bears white bell-shaped flowers on tall flowering stems. Also, bears purple berries which can be eaten if the pulp of the fruit is baked.
- ◆ Flowers June-July and fruits Oct-Dec.
- ◆ Also known as beargrass, it is part of the lily family.



### 5 WAX MYRTLE

- ◆ Flowers April-June and fruits May-Oct.
- ◆ In colonial times, wax from the berries was used for making candles, and leaves were used to repel insects.

### 6 YAUPON HOLLY

- ◆ This shrub ranges from 3-10 feet in size with leaves that are glossy on top and dull underneath.
- ◆ Bears greenish flowers and red or orange fruit known as drupes. Flowers June-Aug and fruits Sept-Nov.
- ◆ Used by Native Americans for making a purgative (vomit-inducing drink) known as the "black drink," and by early Spanish, French and British colonists to make cassina tea.

### 7 AMERICAN HOLLY (*also known as the "Christmas Holly"*)

- ◆ Evergreen shrub with spiked, toothed leaves, which can live for 150-200 years.
- ◆ Lumber resembles ivory and was used to make piano keys.

### 8 RED CEDAR (*also known as the "salt-marsh evergreen"*)

- ◆ When young, the tree has a shrubby appearance and sharp, overlapping scales.
- ◆ Yields moth-repellant oil and produces a fragrance that repels insects.
- ◆ Lumber is used in construction and furniture. Berries are used to flavor gin.

### 9 AMERICAN OLIVE or DEVILWOOD

- ◆ Identified by its evergreen, smooth, opposite leaves that taper to a point at each end. Leaves are approximately 5 cm. in length and 2.5 times as long as they are wide. Bark of tree is pale in color.
- ◆ Devilwood gets its name from its extremely tough wood which was used to make tool handles and other items that require extreme durability.

### 10 RED MULBERRY

- ◆ Leaves have three different shapes: oval, mitten-shaped or 3-lobed.
- ◆ Used by Native Americans to weave cloth. Also used for "tree nails" (wooden pins) and other items in shipbuilding.

### 11 LIVE OAK

- ◆ Broad-leaved evergreen trees that rarely grow to be 50 feet tall. Canopy can spread to 150 feet wide.
- ◆ The often-sculpted shape results from onshore winds and salt spray.

### 12 SMALL-FLOWERED BUCKTHORN

- ◆ Small-flowered Buckthorn is a very odd shrub. Acting more like a vine, it leans on other shrubs and trees for support and can reach heights of 25 feet.
- ◆ Thorn-tipped branches give way to small-toothed, opposite or sub-opposite leaves.
- ◆ One of the rarest shrubs in North Carolina, it is found growing in shell middens and hammocks.

### 13 SALT SHRUBS

- ◆ Collection of small trees and shrubs that grow near the edges of the forest and in the higher areas of marshes where less affected by tidal flooding.
- ◆ Serves as a wind-break to block salt air and protect the maritime forest from the salt's damaging effects.