

Help save our beautiful, native cypress by using the right kinds of mulch!

Spread the word & spread the right kinds of mulch!

(1) National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary has the world's largest remaining old-growth Bald Cypress forest. In N. Florida you can see some very large old cypress trees in Pine Log State Forest.

(2) Several Florida counties ban cypress mulch through local codes and regulations due to environmental harm. For example, Dade County prohibits it to protect wetlands, and the Florida Department of Transportation explicitly disallows its use in construction.

(3) According to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service's March 1994 Fact Sheet ENH 103, cypress does not make good mulch because its high water-holding capacity prevents moisture from reaching plant roots.



For more educational resources, check out our website.



www.suncoast.fnpschapters.org

Produced by the Suncoast Native Plant Society, Inc., a chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.

This brochure was written by Barbara Waddell and the Pepper Patrol of Ruskin, Florida.

Illustrations by Susan Johnston.
Graphic Design by Mariella Johns Smith.

Reformatted and updated by Nalini Lazarus and Melissa Fernandez-de Cespedes.

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Mulch Guide



Why kill a tree to grow a flower?

Cypress forests are a vital part of Florida's ecosystem—they filter pollutants, store water, and help protect groundwater quality and quantity. They also provide essential habitat for wildlife such as woodpeckers, wood storks, limpkins, owls, opossums, bobcats, and wood ducks. Yet despite their ecological importance, cypress trees are often harvested to produce the mulch commonly sold in garden supply stores.

Cypress trees are not a readily renewable resource.

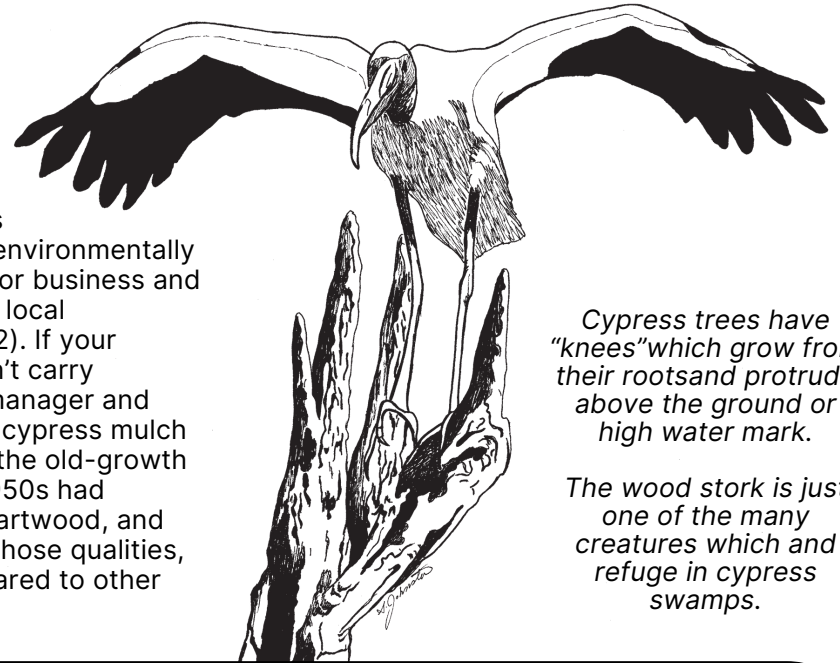
Almost all of Florida's old-growth cypress forests were clear-cut for lumber decades ago, leaving behind mostly younger stands. In a few nature preserves, you may still find rare giants — cypress trees that can live up to 1,500 years and grow 150 feet tall and 25 feet around (1).

Thousands of acres of cypress are logged every year simply to produce mulch.

Cypress trees, once used for lumber, are now primarily being ground into mulch due to increasing consumer demand. Instead of using by-products, entire cypress trees and forests — often from native wetlands — are being clear-cut for mulch production. Replanting efforts are rare and difficult due to the unique hydrological conditions that cypress seeds need to germinate. Once a cypress area is clear-cut, it's vulnerable to invasive species like Brazilian pepper. Its former habitat may be converted to pine plantations or developed, permanently destroying the native wetland ecosystem and wildlife habitat.

What you can do...

You can help protect Florida's cypress forests by choosing environmentally friendly mulch for your home or business and encouraging your friends and local government to do the same (2). If your landscape supply store doesn't carry alternatives, speak with the manager and request them. The belief that cypress mulch is superior is outdated—only the old-growth trees harvested before the 1950s had decay- and pest-resistant heartwood, and today's young cypress lacks those qualities, making a worse choice compared to other mulches (3).



Cypress trees have "knees" which grow from their roots and protrude above the ground or high water mark.

The wood stork is just one of the many creatures which and refuge in cypress swamps.

ALTERNATIVE MULCHES

Recycled Yard Waste

Mulch made from recycled urban plant debris by your city or county is cheap or even free. Check with your Solid Waste Department or county Extension Service to find a local source.

Pine Bark

Pine bark, a by-product of the timber industry, is an excellent mulch with long-lasting color. It's also highly effective at controlling weeds and seedlings.

Eucalyptus Mulch

Produced from plantation grown trees, this mulch is naturally insect repellent, with a rich, long lasting color.

Fallen Leaves

Yard waste like raked leaves—especially oak—is free, abundant, and makes excellent mulch. Don't throw it away; put it to use.

Melaleuca Mulch

Melaleuca is an invasive tree that has overtaken 500,000 acres of the Florida Everglades, and turning it into mulch helps eliminate this pest. It's also long-lasting and termite-resistant.

Pine Straw

Pine straw is sold by the bale or free if raked yourself. Though pricier per cubic foot than pine bark, it covers more area and allows more moisture to reach the soil than chunkier mulches.

Chip Drop

Chip Drop is a free service that connects you with local arborists who deliver wood chips from tree work right to your driveway. It's an easy, eco-friendly way to get a large amount of mulch while supporting urban tree recycling.