

Backyard Discovery: Ethnobotany

Background

The Tallahassee area, including The Grove property, is the native homeland of the Apalachee, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee, and the Muscogee Creeks. Despite centuries of change brought on by the arrival of Europeans and Africans, as well as the forced removal of many tribes, Native Americans still have a strong presence in the Tallahassee area. Although some cultural traditions and practices have been lost, many have been retained and are in use today.

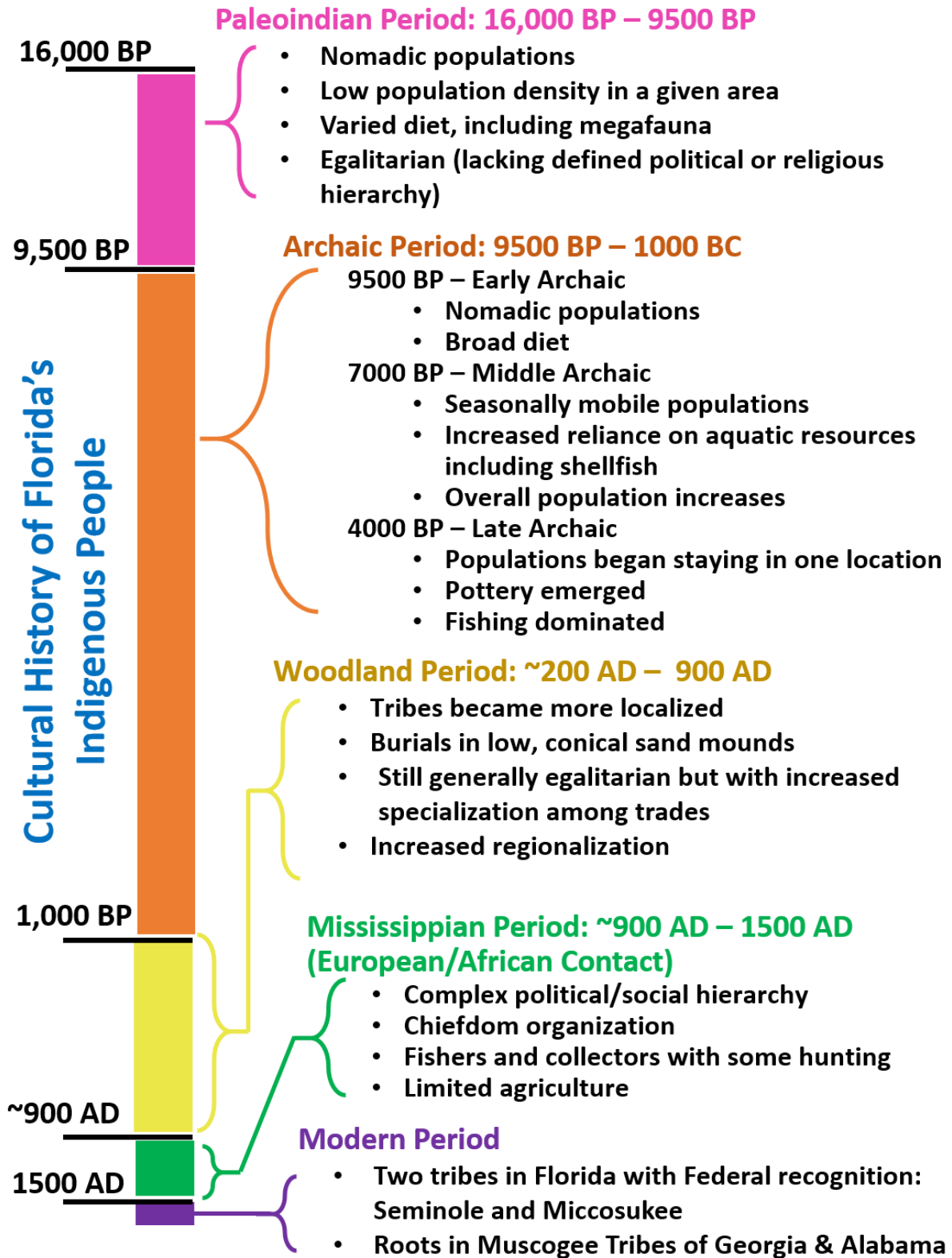


***Ethnobotany** is the study of how a group of people use commonly found plants for medical, religious, and daily uses.*



Today at The Grove you will immerse yourself in the ethnobotany of Florida's historic and modern Native Americans. Through these activities, you will discover how plants were incorporated by Florida tribes in a variety of ways, and learn why these plants were used for specific purposes.

Parents and guardians document the plants that your child finds on the scavenger hunt by taking a picture on your camera or smartphone and sharing it with the museum staff. You can even use social media to connect to The Grove Museum online and share your discoveries on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @thegrovemuseum and #grovemuseum.





FIND: Let's Prepare Tolocano!

Tolocano is a drink that was used for refreshment and nourishment on journeys by the Apalachee Native Americans. This cure for hunger and fatigue was prepared from a mixture of water, **ground nuts, maize (corn), dried persimmons, and blueberries**. Use a paper bag to collect the ingredients pictured on your handout.



Persimmons



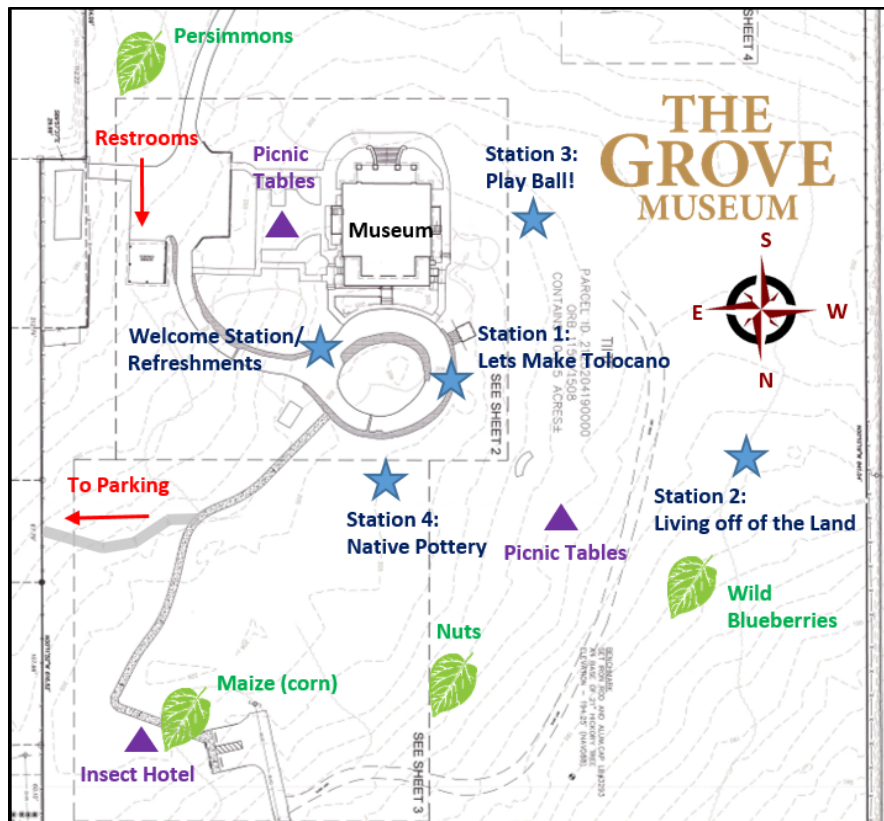
Maize (corn)



Nuts



Wild Blueberries



This map marks where you can find the plants used to make tolocano, many of which are native to the Tallahassee area.

Once you've found all of the ingredients, head back to **Station 1** to see the product of your gathering! Sample the tolocano and learn about its health benefits compared to modern-day energy drinks.



UNDERSTAND: Living off the Land

The clothing worn and the shelters constructed by Native Americans prior to European contact depended on what was easily found in their natural environments. The tribes who inhabited the Tallahassee area used natural materials to construct buildings and make clothing. On the chart below you will see a few plants local to the Tallahassee area. Do you recognize any of these plants from your yard or a nearby park? Observe the samples of the plants on the table and write in the table what these species would have been used for. Check your answers with the pictures on the table. Look out for these plants around The Grove property as well!

Longleaf Pine

Pinus palustris



The wood is often straight and has few defects, making it easy to work. Longleaf pine needles can be 8 to 18 inches long!



Can you guess how longleaf pine is used?

Spanish Moss

Tillandsia usneoides



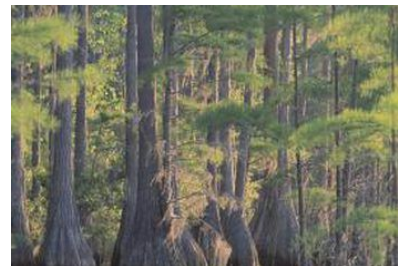
A single mass of Spanish moss can grow up to 25 feet long and can hold up to 50 pounds if woven.



Can you guess how spanish moss is used?

Pond Cypress

Taxodium ascendens



Natural resins, which make cypress wood feel greasy or waxy, also make it water resistant and help slow down rot and decay.



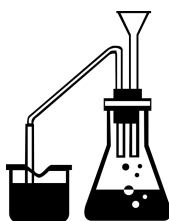
Can you guess how cypress is used?

Smilax

Smilax spp.



Smilax is versatile: almost every part of the plant can be used for something.



Crushed berries are blue or purple. Crushed rhizomes (roots) are red.



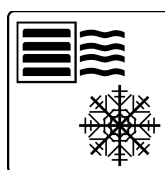
Can you guess how smilax is used?

Saw Palmetto

Serenoa repens



Saw palmetto is the most common palm in the United States. Very few animals eat palm fronds.



It is a natural insulator and is resistant to wind damage.

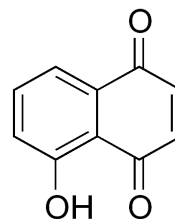
Can you guess how saw palmetto is used?

Black Walnut

Juglans nigra



Black walnut contains the **dark pigment**



juglone, which is an organic chemical that helps seed germination.



Can you guess how black walnuts are used?



ANALYZE: Native Pottery

Native Americans used pottery for **sacred** (spiritual) and **secular** (non-spiritual) practices. Cooking containers, bowls, effigies, and other pieces of pottery were decorated with instruments made from plants found in nature. Below are some examples of pottery decorated using

Spanish moss nets, cord-wrapped paddles, and maize (corn) cobs.

ARCHAEOLOGY WORKS: POTTERY



A. PLAIN



B. PUNCTATE



C. LINEAR PUNCTATE



D. SIMPLE STAMPED



E. LINEAR CHECK STAMPED



F. CHECK STAMPED



H. FABRIC IMPRESSED



I. RECTILINEAR C



L. BURNISHED



M. APPLIQUÉ



FLORIDA PUBLIC
ARCHAEOLOGY
NETWORK

A PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY of WEST FLORIDA

@thegrovemuseum



#thegrovemuseum

Alachua Cob Marked

Alachua Culture:
Late Woodland Southeast Period, 600 to 1700



© Florida Museum of Natural History

West Florida Cord Marked

Weeden Island Culture:
Late Woodland Southeast Period, 300 - 900



© Florida Museum of Natural History

Safety Harbor Incised

Safety Harbor Culture 300 to 1,100 years ago



Orange Incised

Orange Culture: 2,500 to 4,000 years ago



Paleoindians and Native Americans prior to European contact would start with a paste for ceramics (pottery) and would fire the pieces at low temperatures to create coarse earthenwares. After contact with the Europeans ceramics were sand tempered, or water was added to sand to make it workable, and fired in the open, giving the pottery a more gritty quality. Over time, the process of making ceramics changed. Ceramics were made more quickly, with shorter production times and decorated with fewer details.

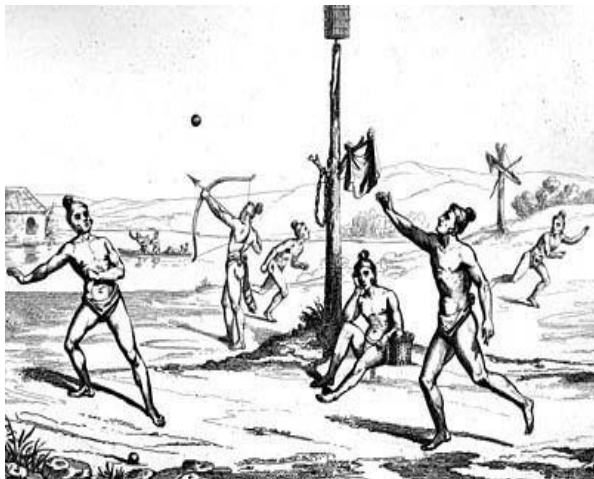
CHALLENGE QUESTION:

Native American ceramics went through major changes after European contact. The creation & decoration of pottery became more simplified. If many Native American tribes shared information orally, why do you think this happened?



EVALUATE: The Ball Game

The Apalachee and other tribes play a ball game which holds ceremonial and community significance. The night before the game, the male players would stay up all night and fast, with the exception of drinking **cassina**, a black tea brewed from yaupon holly. The next morning, a tall pole was set up with an eagle's nest at the top, decorated in palm fronds and other plants.



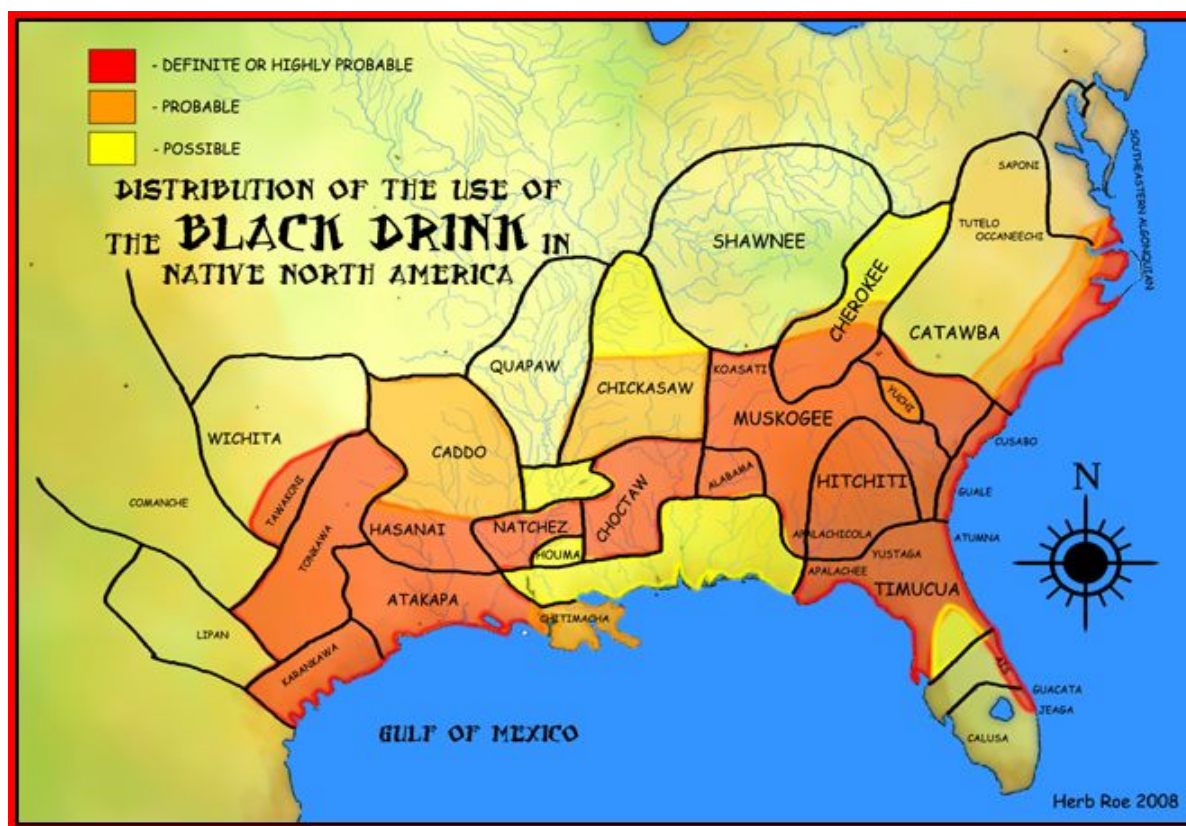
A historical drawing of the Apalachee ball game in play (left) and a modern recreation of the goalpost and nest (right).

The goal of the game was to get a small ball made of buckskin and clay into the eagle's nest. Men were not allowed to use their hands, but anything else was fair game! Since this had the potential to become violent, women and children played a "safer" version of the game using rackets. Thus, the Apalachee ball game (and others like it) evolved into to the modern-day game of lacrosse.



In lacrosse (pictured right) players carry, pass, catch, and shoot the ball using special sticks, just like the women and children's version of the Apalachee ball game, however they also use helmets and protective equipment.

A Grove Museum volunteer will help you start your own ball game! Find out how easy or difficult it is to get the ball into the nest without using your hands. Be sure to taste the cacina as well.

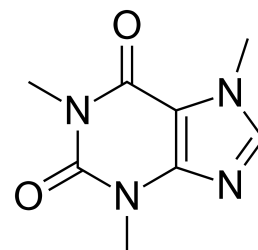


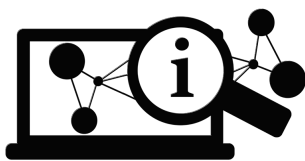
Below are some questions about the ways in which the ball game was played and the traditions held by the Apalachee. Use your experiences playing the game to answer them!

Q1: Why might the Apalachee chose to use cane rackets for the women's and children's versions of the ball game, as opposed to other wood such as oak or pine found in the area?

Q2: Cacina, the yaupon holly tea, has extremely high levels of caffeine, like modern sodas and coffee. What effect might this have had on the players fasting before the ball game?

The image to the right shows the molecular structure for caffeine. Caffeine can be classified as an alkaloid, a term used for substances produced when certain plants metabolize nitrogen.





CONNECT:

Ready to learn more? Check out these awesome books and resources for more information about Native American ethnobotany and today's activities!

- The Crafts of Florida's First People by Robin C. Brown. 1934. Available at the Leon County Public Library.
- Healing plants: Medicine of the Florida Seminole Indians by Alice Micco Snow and Susan Enns Stans. 1922. Available at the Leon County Public Library.
- Apalachee: The Land between the Rivers by John H. Hann. University Presses of Florida. 1988.
- Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park

Parents and guardians, expand your child's knowledge by helping them access these websites safely online.

- Seminole Tribe of Florida: <https://www.semtribe.com/>
- Native American Ethnobotany Database: <http://naeb.brit.org>
- The Florida Museum's Ceramic Technology Laboratory. Pottery Type Collection: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/sflarch/collections/pottery-types/>