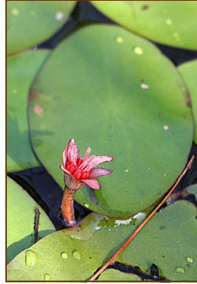




**Larger Bur Marigold**  
(*Bidens laevis*)  
Blooms July—Nov



**Blue Flag Iris** (*Iris virginica*)  
Blooms April— May



**Watershield**  
(*Brasenia schreberi*)  
Blooms May—Aug



**Fragrant Water-lily** (*Nymphaea odorata*)  
Blooms April—Sept



**Pickerelweed**  
(*Pontederia cordata*)  
Bloom May—Oct



**Bladderwort**  
(*Utricularia* sp.)  
Blooms June—Oct



**Water Primrose**  
(*Ludwigia hexapetala*)  
Blooms April—Sept

# *Cypress Gardens Boat Trail Guide*

Follow the white arrows on the trees through the swamp.

As you paddle, match the following numbers with the numbers on the trees for a self-guided tour of the swamp.

This is a **blackwater swamp**. The color of the water makes some people think the swamp water is dirty or very deep. The water is actually very clean, and shallow, about 3 to 6 feet deep. The dark color comes from **tannin**, a brown stain found in decomposing vegetation and tree roots. The oil-like film on the water's surface is not pollution; it is **resin** (sap) from the Bald Cypress trees and is released when the cones are broken open.

Cypress Gardens has about 80 acres of wetlands. Swamps are wetlands dominated by shrubs or trees. Wetlands provide many benefits, such as:

- Flood Control
- Water Pollution Filter
- Soil Erosion and Sediment Control
- Wildlife Habitat

**It is illegal to feed or harass alligators.**  
**Never approach an alligator.**



## 1 **Bald Cypress Tree** (*Taxodium distichum*)

Bald Cypress can live over a thousand years, growing to 80-120 feet tall. These trees form flared trunks, and the roots produce cone-shaped knees that project above the water or soil level, providing root aeration and tree support. These features allow them to grow in the soft swamp soil. Bald Cypress drop their needles each winter, giving them a "bald" appearance. Ball-shaped seed cones are produced in the fall, which float on the water's surface. Due to historic rice field management, the oldest Bald Cypress tree in our swamp is only 85-90 years old.



## 2 **Spanish Moss** (*Tillandsia usneoides*)

is not a true moss. It is a flowering plant in the pineapple (Bromeliaceae) family. These plants are not parasites on the trees. Since they have no roots, they use the trees as support, growing on horizontal limbs and bark with deep furrows. They absorb water and nutrients from the air through their leaves. The slender stems can hang to over 20 feet long.



## 3 **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (*Sphyrapicus varius*)

This woodpecker drills rows of small holes in tree trunks called "sap wells". They then eat the sap that drips from these wounds, as well as insects that are attracted to the sap. These sap wells are used by other bird species such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbird.



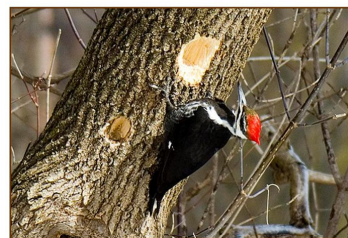
4 **Microhabitat** - a small, localized habitat within a larger one that has different environmental conditions that allow a unique range of animals or plants to live there. Look for microhabitats in the swamp on floating logs, at the base and knees of Bald Cypress trees, and in Spanish Moss.



5 **Water Tupelo** (*Nyssa aquatica*) is a common tree in the swamp. The broad leaves are 3 to 6 inches long, and turn bright red in the fall. The trunks of the trees flare for support. The purple fruit is eaten by several species of wildlife, including waterfowl, mammals, and migratory songbirds.



6 **Tree Cavities** often are formed by woodpeckers pecking out holes in the trees for nesting. They can also be formed by damage to the trees. These cavities are also used by other species of birds for nesting, including Wood Ducks, Prothonotary warblers, and Screech owls.



**Pileated Woodpecker**  
(*Dryocopus pileatus*)



**Prothonotary Warbler**  
(*Protonotaria citrea*)



**Wood Duck**  
(*Aix sponsa*)

Enjoy the rest of the boat trail  
and see what else you can find in the swamp!





**American Alligator** (*Alligator mississippiensis*)

Male alligators can grow to over 13 feet long and weigh over 600 pounds. Wild alligators live 25-50 years. Adult alligators are black in color which helps them blend in well with their surroundings; this is called camouflage. Look for their head, eyes, or snout sticking out of the water. Alligators are predators, hunting mainly at night. Young alligators are black with yellow cross bands. Breeding season is March—July. Female alligators build nests of plant debris on land and guard the nests until the eggs hatch in late summer. Alligators stop feeding during the winter and will hibernate in dens in the mud during spells of freezing weather. Alligators also wallow out “gator holes”, depressions that they clear of mud and vegetation. These “gator holes” will hold water during dry months, creating a vital oasis for many aquatic animals. Wild alligators are afraid of humans. If alligators are fed they lose this fear and become dangerous.

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**Never approach an alligator.**



**Yellow-belly Slider**  
(*Trachemys scripta*)



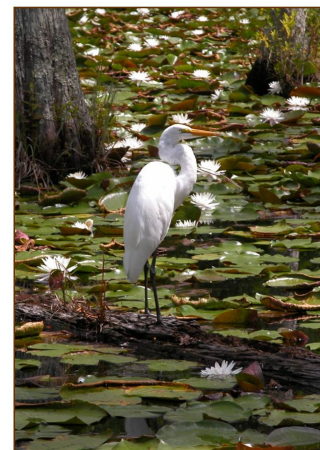
**Leopard Frog**  
(*Rana sphenoccephala*)



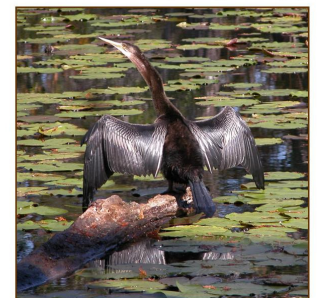
**Osprey**  
(*Pandion haliaetus*)



**Wood Duck**  
Female top, Male bottom  
(*Aix sponsa*)



**Great Egret**  
(*Ardea alba*)



**Anhinga**  
(*Anhinga anhinga*)