

# Tropical hardwood hammocks

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A hammock is an upland area where the ground elevation is high enough to prevent seasonal flooding. A brief discussion of their composition is included here because of their proximity to the marine environment, their important habitat value, and the fact that many acres have been lost or fragmented by coastal development. Hammocks in south Florida, from about Miami southward, are dominated by tropical trees of West Indian origin intermixed with a few temperate species. This plant community was established

in south Florida about 6000 years ago during postglacial warming. Tropical hardwood hammocks occur in Everglades National Park, the southern portion of Big Cypress National Preserve, and the Florida Keys as well as along the Atlantic coastline to about Pompano Beach. Only a short distance north, the majority of tropical species, such as Jamaican dogwood (*Piscidia piscipula*), blackbead (*Pithecellobium guadalupense*), gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*), and pigeon plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*) do not thrive, or are cold-pruned to short stature.



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Blackbead (left) and pigeon plum (right) are common tropical hardwood hammock species.