

Fire in the Native Landscape



The plants and animals that live here are adapted to fire and survive using various age-old techniques. The palmetto has large leaves that burn slowly, protecting its growing tip. Longleaf pines have tall, unbranched trunks, well away from fire's influence.

Central Florida evolved in concert with natural wildfires. During the long growing season, leaf litter and dead plant material build-up (called duff) provides fuel for lightning fires. These fires nourish the earth and literally clean the houses where wildlife live.

Even the gopher tortoise plays an important role by burrowing deep into the ground. Many different animals take shelter in a tortoise burrow during a fire, including rabbits, rattlesnakes, mice and lizards.

Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*)



This pine has many adaptations to life in a fire-dependant landscape.

Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)



As many as 100 different animals take shelter in a gopher burrow during a fire.

Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*)



The dry, old blades of this native upland grass keep a cool fire moving along the forest floor.