Botanical Survey Report

Summary Version

Bird's Eye View Trail

Rock Sound, Eleuthera, Bahamas

Prepared for the One Eleuthera Foundation by Amber Wells on August 11, 2025

Adapted by One Eleuthera Foundation on December 10, 2025

BIRD'S EYE VIEW TRAIL - ECOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The Bird's Eye View Nature Trail winds through a representative stretch of Inland Limestone Coppice, also known as Dry Broadleaf Evergreen Forest (DBEF)—a signature Bahamian forest type shaped by limestone bedrock, shallow soils, and a mosaic of evergreen species. The surveyed trail corridor spans approximately 870 meters and features a canopy ranging from 3–5 meters in height, with understory density varying according to soil depth and historical disturbance.

Forest Character & Ecological Setting
Much of the forest along the trail is intact coppice, exhibiting the region's characteristic mix of small to medium-sized evergreen trees. The ground substrate transitions from organic-rich soils to rocky limestone exposures, and natural solution holes ("banana holes") create pockets of leaf litter and softer ground. These microhabitats support different plant communities and add to the diversity of the site.

Evidence of past human use—particularly former hospitality or tourism activity—appears at the forest edges. These zones show the highest presence of non-native or introduced species, while interior sections of the trail are dominated by native coppice vegetation with little sign of alteration.

Vegetation Communities
Several distinct assemblages appear along the trail, reflecting natural variation in coppice structure:

- Pigeon Plum – Gum Elemi – Poisonwood Alliance
  (Coccoloba diversifolia – Bursera simaruba – Metopium toxiferum):
  Common across intact coppice sections, forming much of the mid-canopy.

- White Stopper – Small-Leaved Blolly Association
  (Eugenia axillaris – Guapira discolor):
  Prominent in slightly shadier or less disturbed areas.

- Localized Dominant Patches:
  These include Willow Bustic *(Sideroxylon salicifolium)*, Butterbough *(Exothea paniculata)*, Wild Tamarind *(Lysiloma latisiliquum)*, and Cinnecord *(Vachellia choriophylla)*, reflecting differences in soil depth and moisture availability.

The understory includes ecologically important species such as Wild Coffee (Psychotria ligustrifolia), Strongback (Bourreria succulenta), Snake Root (Chiococca alba), and Spanish Stopper (Eugenia foetida). These shrubs contribute to wildlife habitat and support pollinator communities within the forest.

Ecological Zones Along the Trail
The survey identifies nine vegetation zones, each reflecting a blend of native coppice conditions and varying levels of past disturbance:

1. Entrance: Mixture of native and non-native shrubs and trees.
2. Transition Zone: Increasing presence of native DBEF species.
3. DBEF Interior: Intact coppice with native species dominating.

4. Casuarina Stand: A rectangular patch of Casuarina glauca surrounded by taller native forest.
5. Mature DBEF: Larger trees and a thriving understory.
6. Human-Altered Clearing: Rocky area with limited canopy cover.
7. Tall Coppice: Denser canopy and deep leaf-litter layer.
8. Transition to Exit: Non-native species begin to reappear at edges.
9. Exit: Open understory under tall, largely non-native trees.

Overall Ecological Importance
The Bird's Eye View Trail provides an accessible window into the ecology of Eleuthera's inland coppice forests. Visitors will encounter:

- A diversity of native evergreen tree species
- Distinct habitat transitions reflecting natural and historical influences
- Characteristic limestone geology shaping plant distribution
- Understory species with cultural, medicinal, and ecological value

This environment represents a resilient, biodiverse forest community typical of southern Eleuthera—one that contributes to regional habitat connectivity, supports wildlife, and offers rich opportunities for education and nature appreciation.

*A MESSAGE FROM ONE ELEUTHERA FOUNDATION:

SAFE USE OF INFORMATION ON MEDICINAL PLANTS:

The information contained in this report is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or another qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or before stopping any prescribed medical treatment or program. Always consult your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider for guidance before starting any herbal treatments. If you have a pre-existing medical condition, are pregnant, or are taking other medications, you should seek professional medical advice before taking any herbal treatments. Seeking professional medical advice can help avoid drug interactions, side effects, and improper dosing.

Poison Wood (*Metopium toxiferum*)

Toxicity & Human Health: Produces catechols in urushiols, compounds that cause severe skin irritation upon contact (similar to poison ivy). All plant parts are potentially reactive, especially leaves and sap.
Ecological Role: Despite its toxicity to humans, Poison Wood is ecologically important. Its fruit is a critical food source for several bird species, including the White-crowned Pigeon, and helps support avian populations in Caribbean dry forests.
Habitat & Abundance: One of the most common tree species within Dry Broadleaf Evergreen Forest (DBEF) and also present in other habitat types throughout the Bahamas and wider Caribbean. It contributes significantly to canopy structure and overall habitat composition.
Regional Notes: Also known locally as Coral Sumac in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Gammalamme (*Bursera simaruba*)

Traditional & Medicinal Uses: In The Bahamas, the bark and wood are used in teas believed to aid circulation, provide strengthening effects, and serve as an aphrodisiac.
Cultural & Functional Uses: Commonly planted ornamentally and functionally as a “living fencepost” because of its ability to sprout readily after being cut. This regenerative quality also makes it resilient in disturbed landscapes.
Woodworking Properties: Classified as a softwood with favorable qualities for carpentry and utility use. The wood is easy to polish, holds nails well, and has been used for furniture, general construction, and craft applications.
Ecological Role: Widely distributed throughout the Caribbean and tropical Americas, it is an important component of coastal and dry forests, often acting as a pioneer species in disturbed areas.

Pigeon Plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*)

Traditional & Medicinal Uses: In The Bahamas, preparations of bark and leaves have been used to treat back pain, dental pain, gastrointestinal issues, and as stimulant or aphrodisiac teas.
Identification Notes: Sometimes confused with Poison Wood (*M. toxiferum*) because both may display mottled orange and grey/brown bark. Pigeon Plum is distinguished by its smooth bark that yields a black sap when cut and by its simple leaves (Poison Wood has compound leaves).
Ecological Role: Among the most common and characteristic species of Bahamian and Caribbean dry forests, particularly Dry Broadleaf Evergreen Forest (DBEF). It provides both shelter and fruit for fauna, including frugivorous species, and its flowers are visited by lepidopterans, supporting pollinator communities.

Silver Thatch (*Coccothrinax argentata*)

Cultural Uses: Historically central to Bahamian and wider Caribbean craft traditions. Its leaves were (and still are) plaited and woven into baskets, hats, mats, and other straw goods. The palm also features prominently in Junkanoo costumes and other cultural expressions.
Medicinal Uses: Reported topical applications include binding leaves for the treatment of headaches and consumption to counteract fish poisoning.
Ecological Role: A hardy, drought-tolerant native palm often found in coastal coppice and dry forest habitats. Its fruits provide food for birds and other wildlife, while its presence helps stabilize sandy or limestone soils.

Thatch Palm (*Leucothrinax morrisii*)

Traditional Uses: Historically important in The Bahamas for roofing material, where its durable fronds were widely used to thatch houses and other structures.
Medicinal Uses: Reported applications parallel those of Silver Thatch (*C. argentata*). Leaves were applied for headaches, and in cases of fish poisoning, the heart of the palm frond was consumed as a traditional antidote.
Ecological Role: A common understory palm in Dry Broadleaf Evergreen Forest (DBEF) and Pinelands, contributing to ground cover and providing fruits that support native bird population.

Buccaneer Palm (*Pseudophoenix sargentii*)

Growth & Habitat: A slow-growing native palm that prefers rocky limestone substrates, occurring in both coastal zones and interior Dry Broadleaf Evergreen Forest (DBEF).
Cultural & Conservation Context: Close relatives in the *Pseudophoenix* genus have been tapped for sap to make beverages and vinegars, sometimes leading to population declines from overharvesting. While this specific practice is not widely reported for *P. sargentii*, the species has faced conservation pressure from wild collection for the ornamental plant trade.
Ecological Role: Fruits are edible and support avian populations, while flowers attract insects, contributing to local pollinator networks. Fruits have also occasionally been used as feed for livestock

Sabal Palm (*Sabal palmetto*)

Ecological Indicator: In The Bahamas, Sabal palm is strongly associated with freshwater wetlands, especially ephemeral wetlands that hold water more consistently during the rainy season. Its presence is a useful indicator of seasonal freshwater availability.
Cultural & Craft Uses: Like Silver Thatch (*C. argentata*) and Buffalo Top Palm (*L. morrisii*), its fronds were widely used for plaiting, weaving, and thatching. These traditions linked the species to everyday material culture in Bahamian communities.
Food & Historical Uses: The heart of the palm frond ("heart of palm") and fruits were used in some indigenous and Native American groups (later influencing Caribbean practice) to produce flour and as a food source during times of scarcity.

Cancer Tree (*Jacaranda caerulea*)

Cultural & Horticultural Use: Widely planted in the horticultural industry for its striking purple flowers, which make it a popular ornamental tree in the Bahamas and wider Caribbean.
Medicinal Uses: In Bahamian traditional medicine, the leaves have been used to treat a variety of conditions, including dermatological issues, obstetric and gynecological concerns, as well as general ailments such as colds and fevers.
Ecological Role: A native tree that contributes seasonal bursts of color to coppice and disturbed habitats, also providing nectar for pollinators when in bloom

Five Finger (Tabebuia bahamensis)

Horticultural Use: Cultivated in the ornamental trade for its distinct, hand-shaped leaves and striking pink to white flowers, making it one of the more recognizable native trees.
Medicinal Significance: Considered one of the cornerstones of Bahamian bush medicine. Because of its prevalence near settlements across the archipelago, it has long been a staple ingredient in general healing teas. Its role in Bahamian medicine has been likened to "base" herbs in other cultures, where a small set of plants is consistently used in traditional remedies regardless of the ailment.
Cultural Importance: Five Finger's long-standing presence in bush medicine traditions reflects both its accessibility and its deep integration into Bahamian cultural identity and everyday healing practices.

Strongback (*Bourreria succulenta*)

Horticultural Use: A hardy understory shrub with small, white, fragrant flowers that has been adopted into the ornamental trade for its resilience in dry sites.
Ecological Role: Highly valuable for wildlife, its flowers provide nectar for pollinators, while fruits and foliage support a range of bird species. This makes Strongback an important resource in both coppice and disturbed habitats.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: Traditionally brewed as a general healing tea and regarded as an aphrodisiac for men, hence the name "Strongback." Its dense wood has also been used for carving and small craft applications.

Cinnamon Bark (Canella winterana)

Medicinal Uses: In Bahamian bush medicine, Cinnamon Bark has been used for a range of ailments, including toothache, fish poisoning, and gastrointestinal complaints.
Cultural & Sensory Qualities: The leaves release a spicy, aromatic flavor when chewed, which underlies both its local name and its occasional commercial use as a spice.
Horticultural Value: With glossy leaves and attractive clusters of white to reddish flowers, Cinnamon Bark has also entered the horticultural trade as an ornamental tree, valued for both beauty and fragrance.

Big-leaved Blolly (*Guapira obtusata*)

Habitat & Abundance: A very common and often dominant species in both the understory and upper canopy of DBEF on limestone and sand substrates.
Identification: Easily recognized by its broad leaves with an opaque, distinctly white mid-vein, which makes it stand out among other coppice species.
Ecological Role: Produces particularly fleshy fruits that are an important food source for birds, supporting frugivorous species and contributing to seed dispersal within DBEF.

Small-leaved Blolly (*Guapira discolor*)

Ecological Role: Like its close relative *G. obtusata*, Small-leaved Blolly produces fruits that support bird and insect populations, making it an important component of coppice forest ecosystems.
Medicinal Use: Similarly to Big-leaved Blolly, there is no recorded history of medicinal use for this species in The Bahamas.
Identification: Distinguished by several features: A transparent midvein, especially visible when the leaf is held to the light, a distinct "snap" when the leaf is broken across the midvein, and a characteristic drooping growth habit, with branches often appearing weighed down by the leaves.

White Stopper (*Eugenia axillaris*)

Medicinal Uses: Traditionally brewed as a general medicine in The Bahamas and also used to address ailments such as stomach pain and respiratory issues.
Ecological Role: Produces abundant small fruits that are a valuable food source for birds and other wildlife, supporting seed dispersal and biodiversity in coppice habitats.
Cultural & Horticultural Use: Adopted into the ornamental trade for its prolific fruiting and wildlife value. The fruits are edible to humans as well, described as sweet when ripe.

Spanish Stopper (*Eugenia foetida*)

Medicinal Use: Unlike some other *Eugenia* species, Spanish Stopper has no recorded history of medicinal use in The Bahamas.
Ecological Role: Produces fruits that support bird populations, contributing to wildlife foraging resources and seed dispersal within coppice systems.
Horticultural Value: Widely used in landscaping due to its versatility. It can be grown as a shrub or tree, tolerates pruning, and is especially valued for its drought resistance in coastal and dry environments.

Iron Wood (*Krugiodendron ferreum*)

Medicinal Uses: Traditionally valued in Bahamian bush medicine for treating conditions such as anemia, helminthiasis (parasitic worms), and hypotension.
Cultural & Nutritional Value: Produces sweet, palatable fruits that are eaten locally and also serve as a food source for wildlife.
Wood Qualities: Highly prized for its exceptional timber. Ironwood is among the densest woods in the world, resistant to decay, pests, and weathering, making it valuable for durable construction, tools, and craftwork.

Darling Plum (*Reynosia septentrionalis*)

Medicinal Uses: Utilized in Bahamian bush medicine, especially for digestive complaints and as a tonic in general healing teas.
Cultural & Nutritional Value: Produces small, dark fruits that are edible and sweet, eaten locally and also consumed by birds, making the species ecologically important for seed dispersal.
Ecological Role: Common in coppice and coastal thickets, Darling Plum is a hardy tree that contributes to understory and edge habitat structure

Butterbough (*Exothea paniculata*)

Medicinal Uses: Though not as widely cited in Bahamian bush medicine, related species in the soapberry family (*Sapindaceae*) have been used traditionally in the Caribbean for remedies such as teas and washes.
Ecological Role: Produces small fruits that attract birds and insects, supporting local food webs. Its presence in DBEF contributes to mid-canopy diversity.
Wood & Cultural Uses: Wood is moderately dense and has been used regionally for small tools, posts, and fuelwood. The tree is also occasionally planted ornamentally for its glossy foliage and clusters of flowers.

Ram's Horn (*Pithecellobium keyense*)

Habitat & Growth: A hardy native shrub or small tree that thrives in coastal coppice and limestone scrub, often forming dense patches. Its twisted, spiraled seed pods resemble a ram's horn, which gives the species its common name.
Ecological Role: Ram's Horn is important for wildlife, producing seeds with fleshy arils that attract birds and small mammals. Its dense branching structure also provides protective cover for reptiles and nesting birds.
Cultural Notes: While not a staple in Bahamian bush medicine, the plant is well known for its distinct form and fruit, making it a recognizable and ecologically valuable member of coppice systems.

Cinnecord (*Vachellia choriophylla*)

Habitat & Growth: A small to medium-sized, spineless native tree found across a variety of Bahamian habitats, including DBEF, Pinelands, and coastal sand dunes.
Ecological Role: The species produces yellow "powderpuff" ball flowers characteristic of mimosoid legumes, which are highly attractive to butterflies, bees, and birds. As a legume, it also contributes to soil fertility through nitrogen fixation, supporting ecosystem health in nutrient-poor sites.
Cultural & Horticultural Value: While not traditionally used medicinally in The Bahamas, Cinnecord is valued in the horticultural trade for its drought and salt tolerance, ornamental appeal, and its role in attracting pollinators.

Jumbay (*Leucaena leucocephala*)

Origin & Status: Native to Central America, Jumbay was intentionally introduced across the Caribbean, including The Bahamas, for livestock fodder, firewood, and erosion control. Since then, it has become one of the region's most aggressive invasive species.
Ecological Impact: Jumbay spreads rapidly in disturbed areas, roadsides, and secondary coppice, where it forms dense thickets that outcompete native vegetation. Its prolific seed production and nitrogen-fixing ability allow it to alter soil chemistry, giving it a lasting advantage over native plants and making restoration of natural communities difficult.
Management Note: While sometimes still planted for utilitarian purposes, Jumbay is not suitable for natural areas or landscapes intended to reflect native ecology. Its removal is strongly recommended in conservation or restoration settings.

Rock Bush (*Phyllanthus epiphyllanthus*)

Medicinal Uses: A cornerstone of Bahamian bush medicine, Rock Bush is one of the most frequently used plants in traditional teas. It has been relied on for treating colds, fevers, headaches, stomach pain, vomiting, and even hemorrhaging. Its accessibility and effectiveness have made it a staple "general healer" across the islands

Habitat & Identification: Common in rocky limestone coppice and scrub, this hardy shrub thrives in shallow, exposed soils. It is recognizable by its flattened, paired phyllodia (leaf-like branches) with serrated edges, small clustered flowers, and three-lobed capsules.

Ecological Role: Beyond its cultural value, Rock Bush supports pollinators and seed dispersers, while its ability to establish in harsh limestone habitats helps stabilize fragile soils and maintain vegetation cover.

Alvaradoa (*Alvaradoa amorphoides*)

Habitat & Growth: A native small to medium-sized tree found in DBEF, coastal coppice, and rocky scrublands. Its airy branching and finely divided leaves give it a light, feathery appearance, making it stand out among denser coppice species.

Ecological Role: Alvaradoa provides nectar and fruit resources that support insect and bird populations, while also contributing to mid-canopy diversity in coppice systems. It often occurs as a secondary species that helps fill gaps in the forest structure.

Cultural Notes: Although not strongly tied to bush medicine traditions in The Bahamas, its distinctive appearance makes it an easily recognized part of native vegetation and a useful indicator of relatively intact coppice.

Golden Dew Drop (*Duranta erecta*)

Habitat & Growth: A native shrub or small tree found in coppice, scrublands, and open habitats throughout The Bahamas. It is easily recognized by its clusters of purple to blue flowers and bright golden-orange berries, which give the plant its common name.

Ecological Role: The flowers are a valuable nectar source for butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, while the fruits are eaten by birds, making it an important wildlife-supporting species. Its dense growth also provides cover for small animals.

Cultural & Horticultural Value: Golden Dew Drop is commonly grown ornamentally for its showy flowers and fruit, both in gardens and as hedging. While not widely used in Bahamian bush medicine, it is a native species that bridges ecology and landscaping.

Willow Bustic (*Sideroxylon salicifolia*)

Habitat & Growth: A native mid- to upper-story tree of DBEF, often forming part of the canopy in relatively intact coppice. Its narrow, willow-like leaves give it a distinctive appearance among broader-leaved associates.
Ecological Role: Produces fruit that is eaten by birds and other wildlife, contributing to seed dispersal and biodiversity within coppice systems. The dense wood provides structural stability to forests, and its presence is often associated with healthier, less disturbed stands.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While not cited in Bahamian bush medicine, Willow Bustic has historically been valued for its dense wood, used in small tools and fuel. More broadly, bustics are ecologically significant across the Caribbean, with several species playing roles as food plants for wildlife.

Mastic (*Sideroxylon foetidissimum*)

Habitat & Growth: A large native canopy tree of DBEF and other coppice systems, Mastic can reach impressive sizes and is a defining feature of intact Bahamian forests. Its broad leaves and dense crown provide significant shade and contribute to the overall forest structure.
Ecological Role: Produces fleshy fruits that are eaten by birds and other wildlife, aiding in seed dispersal. As one of the taller native species, it contributes to vertical forest complexity, offering habitat for a variety of animals.
Cultural & Practical Value: Historically prized for its extremely dense, durable wood, which was used in shipbuilding, cabinetry, and other long-lasting constructions. Its resinous properties also made it valuable for sealing and finishing work. Today, Mastic stands remind us of both Bahamian natural heritage and the overharvesting pressures that once heavily reduced its populations.

Satin Leaf (*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*)

Habitat & Growth: A native mid- to upper-canopy tree common in DBEF. It is most easily recognized by its distinctive leaves, dark green and glossy on top, with a coppery-brown underside that shimmers in the light, giving the species its name.
Ecological Role: Satin Leaf produces small purple-brown fruits that are eaten by birds and other wildlife, making it a valuable food source within the forest. Its dense crown provides shade and contributes to the layered structure of intact coppice.
Cultural & Practical Value: Known locally as “Tarpin,” “Starpin,” or “Sugar Bush,” Satin Leaf is an important part of Bahamian bush medicine. Teas made from the bark, leaves, or roots are used to treat hypertension and diabetes, making it an important medicinal trees in the archipelago.

Snake Root (*Chiococca alba*)

Habitat & Growth: A widespread native vine or scrambling shrub in DBEF. It is easily recognized by its climbing or trailing growth form, small white flowers, and translucent white berries that often appear in clusters.
Ecological Role: The flowers provide nectar for insects, while the berries are eaten by birds, making Snake Root an important food source in the understory. Its twining habit also allows it to fill gaps and add structure to the shrub and vine layer of coppice.
Medicinal & Cultural Uses: A well-known plant in Bahamian bush medicine, Snake Root is brewed into teas for colds, fevers, and respiratory conditions. Its accessibility and reliability have made it a common medicinal species in the archipelago.

Black Torch (*Erithalis fruticosa*)

Habitat & Growth: A native shrub common in coastal and inland limestone coppice, as well as rocky scrub. Its tough, leathery leaves and tolerance of wind and salt spray make it especially characteristic of drier coastal areas.
Ecological Role: Produces clusters of small white tubular flowers that attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Its dark berries are eaten by birds, contributing to seed dispersal. Dense growth provides cover for small wildlife and helps stabilize sandy or rocky soils.
Cultural & Practical Uses: In Bahamian bush medicine, Black Torch has been used in teas to prevent/stop bleeding. The dense wood was also historically valued as a slow-burning torch material, which is reflected in its common name.

Wild Coffee (*Psychotria ligustrifolia*)

Habitat & Growth: A common native shrub of DBEF, Wild Coffee grows in the understory, often forming dense patches. Its glossy green leaves, small white flowers, and red to black berry-like fruits give it a noticeable appearance.
Ecological Role: The flowers attract pollinators, while the fruits are an important food source for birds and other wildlife. As an abundant understory species, it provides shelter for small animals and contributes to the layered forest structure.
Cultural & Practical Uses: Despite the name, its berries are not used as true coffee. In Bahamian bush medicine, Wild Coffee is brewed as a general health tea and sometimes used for toothaches. Its attractive form has also made it a candidate for use in native landscaping.

Wild Tamarind (*Lysiloma latisiliquum*)

Habitat & Growth: A native mid- to upper-story tree found in human altered areas, rocky coppice, and sometimes Pinelands. It is easily identified by its finely divided leaflets and peely, flattened seed pods. The tree can reach notable heights and often forms part of the canopy.
Ecological Role: Provides food and shelter for a variety of wildlife. Its flowers attract pollinators, while the pods support seed-eating animals. As a nitrogen-fixing legume, Wild Tamarind also enriches soils and plays an important role in forest regeneration.
Cultural & Practical Uses: In The Bahamas and wider Caribbean, the dense, durable wood of Wild Tamarind has been used in furniture, cabinetry, and construction. It is also valued in landscaping for its shade and resilience in dry, rocky soils.

Devil's Pumpkin (*Passiflora cupraea*)

Habitat & Growth: A native vine in the passionflower family, found climbing through scrublands, DBEF, and human altered environments. It produces small, pumpkin-like fruits that give rise to its striking local name.
Ecological Role: Like other passionflowers, Devil's Pumpkin is especially important as a host plant for butterflies, including species of longwing and fritillary butterflies whose caterpillars feed on its leaves. Its flowers attract pollinators, while the fruits support birds and small animals.
Cultural Notes: While not widely known for medicinal or culinary use in The Bahamas, this species is ecologically significant and visually distinctive, offering a striking example of native plant diversity within the trail system.

Bahamian Buttercup (*Turnera ulmifolia*)

Habitat & Growth: A native wildflower of the Bahamas, commonly found in open coppice, roadsides, and disturbed areas. It is easily identified by its bright yellow, buttercup-like flowers and low, bushy growth form.
Ecological Role: The flowers attract a variety of pollinators, especially butterflies and bees, making it an important nectar source in natural and altered habitats. Its ability to thrive in disturbed soils also helps stabilize ground cover.
Medicinal & Cultural Uses: In Bahamian bush medicine, Bahamian Buttercup has been used in teas for colds, fevers, and general health. Beyond its medicinal value, its showy flowers have made it popular in ornamental plantings.

Clustered Wild Pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*)

Habitat & Growth: A striking native epiphyte of DBEF. It attaches to trees without harming them, using its roots only for anchorage while absorbing water and nutrients from the air and rain through specialized leaf scales.
Ecological Role: Wild Pine provides habitat and water reservoirs for insects, frogs, and other small organisms within its leaf bases. Its bright red flowering bracts attract hummingbirds, bees, and other pollinators, contributing to forest biodiversity.
Cultural & Practical Notes: Though not widely used in bush medicine, Wild Pine is admired for its ornamental value and is sometimes collected (legally or illegally) for landscaping. In intact DBEF, its presence is often considered an indicator of relatively undisturbed forest health.

Cough Vine (*Triopterys jamaicensis*)

Habitat & Growth: A native climbing vine found in DBEF, often twining through shrubs and trees. It is recognized by its slender stems, opposite leaves, and small clusters of purplish flowers.
Medicinal Uses: True to its common name, Cough Vine has been used in Bahamian bush medicine as a remedy for coughs and other respiratory ailments. Preparations of the leaves or stems are brewed into teas for soothing the throat and easing congestion.
Ecological Role: By climbing into the forest canopy, Cough Vine contributes to structural diversity. Its presence illustrates the importance of vines in maintaining the layered character of Bahamian forests.

Treebine (*Cissus intermedia*)

Habitat & Growth: A native climbing vine in the grape family, common in DBEF, mangroves, and human altered environments. It climbs by tendrils and often sprawls over shrubs and trees, adding to the layered, tangled appearance of Bahamian forests.
Ecological Role: Like its relatives, Treebine produces small flowers that are attractive to insects. Its dense growth provides cover and contributes to structural diversity in the understory and canopy.
Notes of Interest: Though not widely noted for cultural or medicinal use in The Bahamas, Treebine is an important native vine that demonstrates the ecological role of climbers in healthy forests, contrasting with invasive vines that can overtake native vegetation.

Box Briar (*Randia aculeata*)

Habitat & Growth: A native mid- to upper-story tree found in human altered areas, rocky coppice, and sometimes Pinelands. It is easily identified by its finely divided leaflets and peely, flattened seed pods. The tree can reach notable heights and often forms part of the canopy.
Ecological Role: The berries provide food for a variety of bird species and its dense, thorny structure creates protective cover for wildlife.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While known as a general health tea in the Lucayan Archipelago, elsewhere in the Caribbean the fruits and sap have been used to treat diarrhea, fever, and hemorrhaging. The wood has been crafted into cooking instruments and fishing rods, while the berries have been used for dyes and inks. Fruits are edible but not especially palatable.

Wild Lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*)

Habitat & Growth: A small, spiny tree or shrub common in disturbed and undisturbed coppice. It is easily identified by its sharp thorns, aromatic leaves, and clusters of small fruits.
Ecological Role: The dense, thorny growth provides excellent cover and protection for small wildlife. The leaves and fruits are aromatic, attracting insects and contributing to the biodiversity of coppice and shrubland habitats.
Cultural & Practical Notes: In Bahamian bush medicine, Wild Lime has been used for treating obstetric issues, jellyfish stings, and general maladies. The wood, though small in size, is very dense and has been used for tool handles and other small implements.

Chaney Briar (*Smilax havanensis*)

Habitat & Growth: A native semi-woody vine common in coppice, Pinelands, and along forest edges throughout The Bahamas. It is distinguished by its tough, climbing stems armed with prickles, and broad usually spiny leaves.
Medicinal & Cultural Uses: Locally, Chaney Briar has a history in bush medicine, where it is brewed into strengthening teas.
Edible Uses & Ethnobotany: The plant's young shoot tips are edible and likened to asparagus, while roots, particularly in South Florida, have been cooked in traditional food preparations by Indigenous groups and settlers.
Ecological Role: Beyond cultural importance, Chaney Briar offers crucial ecological services: its thorny structure provides protective cover for small wildlife, nourishing seed-dispersers with its fruit and contributing to structural complexity within the forest understory.

Red Sage Brush (*Lantana camara*)

Origin & Status: Lantana camara is a non-native ornamental shrub introduced to the Caribbean for its colorful flowers. It has since become invasive in The Bahamas, spreading into coppice and disturbed habitats.
Ecological Impacts: The plant competes and hybridizes with native vegetation, altering natural succession patterns, and suppressing regeneration of native trees. Its leaves and unripe berries are toxic to livestock and some wildlife, creating additional management challenges.
Cultural & Horticultural Context: Although widely planted in gardens for its ornamental value, the species is discouraged in natural or restoration areas due to its invasiveness. Best practice in natural areas is complete removal, as cutting alone allows rapid regrowth. Roots must be dug out or treated appropriately to prevent persistence.

Wild Sage Brush (*Lantana x bahamensis*)

Habitat & Growth: A medium-sized, native shrub native to The Bahamas and parts of Cuba, Wild Sage is distinguished from the invasive *L. camara* by its ecological value and smaller stature. It is found in both limestone and sand DBEF, as well as disturbed areas such as old fields and roadsides.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: Traditionally, its leaves have been boiled for strengthening and aphrodisiac teas, and sometimes added to bath water to treat skin ailments like dermatitis.
Ecological & Practical Value: The plant provides nectar for pollinators and small fruits for wildlife, while its bright flowers and fragrant foliage have made it a favored ornamental in the horticultural trade.

White Sage Brush (*Lantana involucrata*)

Habitat & Growth: A small to medium-sized native shrub reaching up to 3 m in height, White Sage grows in both human-altered environments and natural habitats, including coastal sand and coppice. It is easily recognized by its aromatic leaves and clusters of white to pinkish flowers with yellow centers.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: Traditionally used in Bahamian bush medicine, the leaves are boiled to treat skin conditions such as itching and chicken pox, and teas are prepared for lung congestion and high blood pressure. Its pleasant fragrance has also made it a valued ornamental plant.
Ecological & Practical Value: The shrub is drought tolerant and attracts butterflies, bees, and birds with its flowers and fruits, contributing to biodiversity. It is also planted in horticulture for its resilience in dry conditions and striking floral display.

Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*)

Habitat & Growth: A tall, non-native palm introduced widely across the Caribbean, Coconut thrives in sandy coastal areas and disturbed habitats. It is highly salt-tolerant and often establishes stands along shorelines.
Cultural & Practical Uses: The species has long been cultivated for its fruit, providing food, drink, oil, fiber, and building materials. In The Bahamas, coconuts hold cultural and economic importance, but this primarily reflects human use rather than ecological integration.
Ecological & Management Notes: While iconic and economically valuable, Coconut is not native and can displace coastal vegetation, reducing habitat diversity for native plants. In natural or restoration settings, its spread should be controlled to maintain ecological balance.

Gray She-Oak (*Casuarina glauca*)

Habitat & Growth: She-Oak is a large, non-native tree introduced to The Bahamas, originally from Australia. It thrives in human-altered environments such as roadsides, yards, and cleared fields, where it can quickly dominate due to its rhizome growth and dense canopy.
Ecological Impacts: She-Oak is considered a highly invasive species. Its thick litter layer suppresses native seed germination, while its extensive root systems alter soil chemistry and hydrology. It outcompetes native vegetation in coastal and coppice habitats, reducing biodiversity and impacting shoreline stability.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While not used medicinally in The Bahamas, the tree is appreciated for shade or firewood. In natural or restoration contexts, however, it is a management concern, with best practice being active removal to prevent spread and displacement of native species.

Australian Pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*)

Habitat & Growth: Australian Pine is a tall, fast-growing tree introduced from Australia, reaching up to 25 meters in height. It thrives in human-altered areas such as roadsides, cleared fields, and coastal habitats including dunes, rocky shores, and palm woodlands.
Ecological Impacts: This species is considered a highly aggressive invasive in The Bahamas. Its dense canopy suppresses native plant regeneration, while its needle-like litter alters soil conditions. Along shorelines, it destabilizes coastal systems, accelerating erosion.
Cultural & Practical Notes: Though occasionally used in bush medicine for treating pain, circulatory issues, and as a strengthening or aphrodisiac tea, its severe ecological impacts outweigh cultural uses. Best management practice is complete removal and control to restore native coastal and coppice ecosystems.

Umbrella Tree (*Heptapleurum actinophyllum*)

Habitat & Growth: Umbrella Tree is a non-native ornamental that can reach up to 13 m in height, with large, glossy, compound leaves that radiate like an umbrella. It is commonly found in human-altered environments such as yards, roadsides, and abandoned fields in the northern islands of The Bahamas.
Ecological Impacts: Though visually striking, this species is invasive outside its native range of Australia and New Guinea. It spreads aggressively through seeds and suckering, forming dense stands that displace native plants. Its berries are readily eaten by birds, aiding rapid dispersal and establishment in disturbed areas.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While widely cultivated as an ornamental for its lush foliage, it has no documented use in Bahamian bush medicine. Because of its invasive tendencies, best practice is removal to prevent further spread into natural habitats.

Silk Cotton Tree (*Ceiba pentandra*)

Habitat & Growth: Native to Central and South America, the Silk Cotton Tree is a non-native but naturalized species in The Bahamas. It is one of the largest tropical trees, reaching over 60 m, with buttressed roots and a broad crown. Though not considered invasive, it establishes readily in disturbed areas and open coppice.
Cultural & Historical Importance: Despite its foreign origin, the Silk Cotton Tree has become deeply woven into Bahamian culture and history. In the 19th and 20th centuries, they served as landmarks and gathering places, remembered for hosting public announcements, debates, and community justice, known locally as “silk cotton justice.” In folklore, they are often regarded as sacred and associated with spirits or “duppies,” which made people reluctant to cut them down.
Ecological & Practical Value: The tree produces abundant seed floss historically used for pillows, boat caulking, and light craft. Its immense size provides shade and habitat, but its massive roots make it unsuitable for cultivation near settlements.
Management Recommendations: Existing trees can be maintained, but avoid new plantings and saplings in natural areas.

Poor Man’s Orchid (*Bauhinia variegata*)

Habitat & Growth: A small to medium tree, reaching up to 10 m in height, with broad, bilobed leaves that are distinctive for their notched apex. It is common in gardens, yards, and disturbed sites, but may also spread to edges of pine woodlands and coppice.
Ecological Role & Impacts: Though showy and attractive, *B. variegata* is a non-native invasive that can escape cultivation, competing with native understory and edge species. To reduce spread, it should not be planted near natural areas, and established individuals are best removed before they naturalize.
Cultural & Practical Notes: Widely cultivated as an ornamental for its striking pink to purple flowers, but it has no known traditional or medicinal use in the Lucayan Archipelago.

Azores Jasmine (*Jasminum fluminense*)

Habitat & Growth: A vigorous woody vine that can reach up to 15 m in length, climbing over trees and structures. It thrives in disturbed sites such as abandoned fields, roadsides, and other human-altered environments.
Ecological Role & Impacts: Introduced as an ornamental, *J. fluminense* has escaped cultivation and become a highly invasive species in The Bahamas and wider Caribbean. It smothers native vegetation by climbing and shading out host trees and shrubs, severely altering understory light conditions. Management requires physical removal of vines and prevention of fruiting, as its berries enable rapid spread by birds.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While valued elsewhere for its fragrant flowers, the species has no known medicinal or cultural use in the Lucayan Archipelago. Its horticultural use is strongly discouraged due to its invasiveness.

Arabian Jasmine (*Jasminum sambac*)

Habitat & Growth: *J. sambac* is an evergreen shrub or climbing vine, typically reaching 1–3 m in height, with glossy, opposite leaves and intensely fragrant white flowers. It thrives in warm, humid climates, often in gardens, fences, and disturbed sites.
Ecological Role & Impacts: Native to South and Southeast Asia, Arabian Jasmine has been introduced widely as an ornamental. While not as aggressively invasive as *J. fluminense*, it can naturalize in disturbed habitats and outcompete native vegetation if unmanaged. Control measures should include monitoring for spread and preventing unchecked seeding or vegetative growth.
Cultural & Practical Notes: Highly valued worldwide for its fragrant flowers, which are used in teas, perfumes, and ceremonial garlands. In the Lucayan Archipelago, it is grown as an ornamental plant but has no recorded role in bush medicine. Cultivation is best limited to contained gardens to reduce the risk of escape.

Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*)

Habitat & Growth: *S. terebinthifolia* is a large shrub or small tree, reaching up to 8 m in height, with pinnately compound leaves and peeling, scaly bark. It thrives in human-altered sites and is highly adaptable, readily invading wetlands, roadsides, and disturbed ground.
Ecological Impacts: Native to South America, this species is one of the most aggressive woody invasives in The Bahamas and wider Caribbean. It forms dense thickets that crowd out native vegetation, alters hydrology, and disrupts wetland ecosystems. Its fruits, dispersed by birds, enable rapid spread, making control particularly difficult.
Cultural & Practical Notes: While occasionally used as an ornamental for its red berries, Brazilian Pepper, being closely related to *M. toxiferum*, can be irritating/toxic through contact or ingestion. Because of its severe ecological impacts, it should be actively removed wherever encountered, with roots and resprouts carefully managed to prevent regrowth.

Guava Tree (*Psidium guajava*)

Habitat & Growth: *P. guajava* is a small tree or shrub, usually 2–5 m in height, identifiable by its 4-angled young stems and opposite, aromatic leaves with pellucid dots. It is common in yards, abandoned fields, and disturbed sites, where it readily naturalizes.
Ecological Impacts: Though widely cultivated for its edible fruits, Guava is non-native to The Bahamas. It has shown invasive tendencies in parts of the Caribbean and elsewhere, spreading into disturbed habitats and competing with native vegetation. Its fruits are readily dispersed by birds aiding its spread.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: In The Bahamas, Guava is valued both as a food crop and for its use in bush medicine, particularly for treating gastrointestinal issues. Despite its utility, management in natural areas is recommended to prevent it from becoming ecologically disruptive.

Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)

Habitat & Growth: *P. granatum* is a small tree or shrub growing up to 5 m tall, commonly planted in yards and gardens. It has smooth, glossy green leaves and produces bright orange-red flowers that develop into the well-known round fruits with a crown of sepals on top.
Ecological Notes: This species is not native to The Bahamas and does not typically naturalize in wild habitats. It originates from Persia and the Middle East but is now widely cultivated across tropical and subtropical regions for its edible fruit.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: In The Bahamas, Pomegranate has been used in bush medicine for treating gastrointestinal ailments and as an ingredient in strengthening teas. Its fruits are prized for their sweet-tart seeds, eaten fresh or made into juice.

West Indian Almond (*Terminalia catappa*)

Habitat & Growth: *T. catappa* is a tall tree that can reach up to 25 m, often planted along roadsides, yards, and coastal areas. Its large leaves, which turn red before falling, are clustered at the ends of branches, giving the tree a layered form.
Ecological Notes: The species' exact origin is uncertain due to its long history of cultivation for food. It is now widely distributed across the tropics. In The Bahamas, it often grows in human-altered areas but can also spread into natural habitats, including wetlands, where it sometimes forms monocultures.
Cultural & Medicinal Uses: In Bahamian bush medicine, preparations from the tree have been used to treat ocular issues and hypertension. The almond-like seeds are edible and valued as a food source.

Pitch Apple/Autograph Tree (*Clusia rosea*)

Habitat & Growth: *C. rosea* is a medium to large tree reaching up to 15 m, often found around sinkholes, wetlands, and in DBEF. It can establish in the canopy of other trees, where it behaves as a "strangler," similar to figs, sometimes killing its host. The stiff leaves exude yellow latex when damaged.
Ecological Notes: The species is widespread across The Bahamas, the Caribbean, Central, and South America. Its ability to grow epiphytically and develop prop roots allows it to colonize varied environments, including disturbed sites.
Cultural & Practical Uses: While not known for medicinal use in The Bahamas, Clusia rosea has been valued historically for sealing boats with its latex. Its distinctive flowers and long-lasting leaves have also made it popular in horticulture. The leaves are commonly used as "autograph leaves," since scratches made on them remain visible until the leaf drops.

7.0 SOURCES

This inventory was informed by a combination of field observations, academic literature, and regional ecological resources. Key references include:

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