

# ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

December 2022



Now that we are out of hurricane season, we are opting to highlight a plant that had the time of its life over the past 5 months. Starrush Whitetop is part of the *Cyperaceae* or Sedge family that rely mostly on wind pollination. Therefore, while our afternoons have certainly felt blustery, this plant was thriving in the environment it loves best. Along with our windswept afternoons, we have all felt the deluge of water pouring down from the skies. While we may not always enjoy the extra wind and rain this is a lovely atmosphere for the Starrush Whitetop plant. But what makes the Starrush Whitetop different from its other family members? It doesn't solely rely on wind pollination ([Texas University at Austin, Wildflower.org](https://www.texaswildflower.org/)). This plant, with its bracts (leaves with bright colors) acts as a homing beacon for insects that carry pollen ([Andee Naccarato, 2015](#)).

The bracts are long and white and eventually become green in color as they come to a point. The flowering part of the plant sits in the middle of bracts on top of a spike, making the plant look like a star. Depending on the Starrush Whitehop plant you are viewing, the plant can have anywhere from five to seven bracts, or leaves, attached to it ([Wild South Florida](#)).

Starrush Whitehop can survive in areas with good or no drainage making it the perfect plant to thrive in the swamps as well as commonly viewed areas such as roadside ditches. Often found in water gardens because it can spread using underground stems, the plant usually appears in clusters and patches, rather than solo ([Gardenia.com](#)). It enjoys full sun but can flourish in partial shade as well. While it sounds like the perfect plant to appear year round in Florida, Starrush Whitehop only "fruits" from June to October. So as the next hurricane season rolls around, keep an eye out for the white stars among the many landscapes of Florida ([NC State Extension Gardener](#)).



That wraps up the Artifact of the Month series for 2022. If you want to view previous years you can find them on the THPO website: [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com).

Check back in January for the kick-off of the 2023 series. Who knows what will be found by the THPO archaeology team or what will be featured next! Will it be an unknown animal bone, an interesting bottle, maybe a piece of pottery? Don't miss it.

