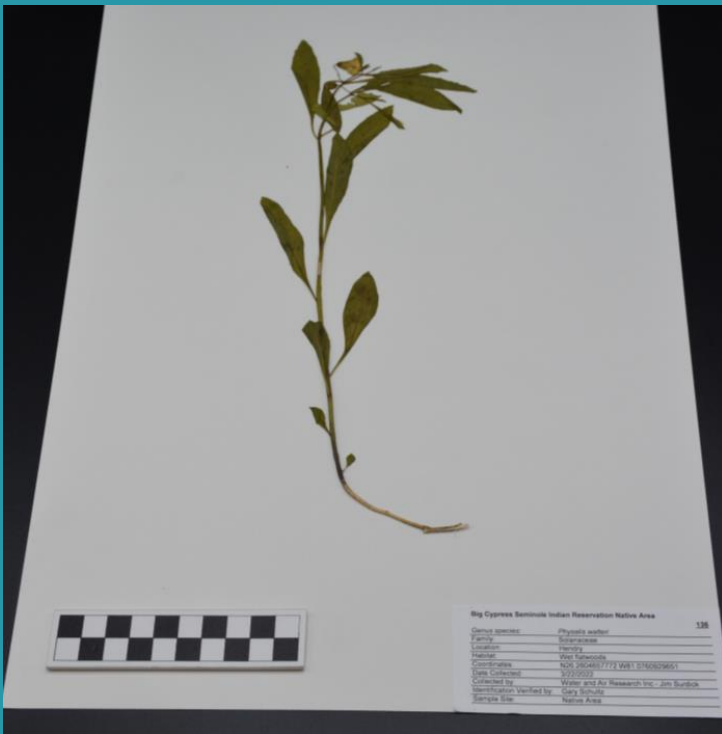


ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

January 2024

Foraging, the oldest method of human subsistence, is still practiced today by many peoples all over the world. For foragers, it is extremely important to know which plants, fungi, and other natural materials are safe for human consumption. That is why foraging should only be practiced strictly under the guidance of seasoned experts. When foraging in Florida, one might come across *Physalis walteri*, more commonly known as Walter's Ground Cherry.

The leaves of this plant are elliptical, oval-shaped, and the stems are pubescent, which means that they are covered in fine hairs (Ward, 2008:204). They produce yellow, trumpet-shaped flowers. The ripened fruit is a golden yellow, encased in a pale, papery husk (Offbeet-Gardener.com).



THPO



The Spruce, 2023

Physalis walteri is a perennial plant, meaning that these plants live for multiple years. They thrive in the warmer climate of the southeastern United States, and can be found all throughout Florida and as far north as Virginia (United States Department of Agriculture).

Walter's Ground Cherry is one of nine ground-cherry species native to Florida. As a member of the Solanaceae family, *Physalis walteri* is related to many commonly eaten fruits, such as tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers (Offbeet-Gardener.com). Species in the Solanaceae family are also known as nightshades, and many of these species can be very toxic. This applies to *Physalis walteri*, along with the rest of the ground cherries; thus, caution should be exercised when foraging for them. Only the ripe fruit is safe to eat, while the outer husk and unripened fruit are toxic and inedible (Wild South Florida). They have also been found to be good sources of vitamin C (Shenstone et al., 2020).

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stoffpo.com.

- Works Cited**
- "How to Grow Ground Cherries in Florida." 2021. Offbeet-gardener.com. Retrieved November 30, 2023 (<https://offbeet-gardener.com/2021/09/grow-ground-cherries-in-florida.html>)
 - "Physalis walteri Nutt." N.d. United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved November 30, 2023 (<https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/home/plantProfile?symbol=PHWA4>)
 - Shenstone, Esperanza, Zach Lippman, and Joyce Van Eck. "A review of nutritional properties and health benefits of Physalis species." *Plant Foods for Human Nutrition* 75 (2020): 316-325. (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11130-020-00821-3>)
 - "Walter's Groundcherry". N.d. Wild South Florida. Retrieved November 17, 2023 (<https://wildsouthflorida.com/alters.groundcherry.html>)
 - Ward, Daniel B. "Keys to the flora of Florida: 19, *Physalis* (Solanaceae)." *Phytologia* 90.2 (2008): 198-207.

