ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Florida is home to a vast variety of plant species; the warm and humid climate makes it an excellent environment for encouraging biodiversity. There are a number of *Celtis* species that thrive here in Florida. *Celtis* is a genus of plants in the family *Cannabaceae* commonly referred to as hackberries and are found all throughout the northern hemisphere (Touhtouh et al., 2025). There are about 73 species that make up the genus, and of these at least a handful such as *C. iguanaea*, *C. laevigata*, and *C. tenuifolia* can be found in Florida (POWO, 2026).

While *Celtis* species can vary in appearance, there are some shared characteristics that one can use to distinguish them. These tree or shrub-like species are all monoecious, meaning that they possess male and female reproductive structures. The leaves are typically leathery in texture and are asymmetrical at their base.

***C. australis* (Global Biodiversity Information Facility)**

Celtis plants are drupes, a type of fruit made up of three layers (the exocarp, mesocarp, and endocarp) surrounding the seed (Touhtouh et al., 2025). The seeds, featured as this month's artifact, are small and have a reticulate, or net-like, appearance (CSIRO, 2020).

***Celtis* seeds (THPO)**

Celtis plants are widespread, and different cultures have historically utilized these plants for various purposes. *C. australis* has been used as a remedy for a myriad of ailments, from relieving gastrointestinal issues to reducing menstrual bleeding (Touhtouh et al., 2025; Chevallier, 1996). *C. africana* is known to have been used as a treatment for conditions such as dyspepsia, edema, ocular infections, fevers, and as an analgesic (pain reliever) (Touhtouh et al., 2025). As a food source, the fruits of *C. laevigata* and *C. occidentalis* have been enjoyed by Native peoples across the United States (Benfer, n.d.). These are just a few examples that illustrate the importance of *Celtis* plants to populations around the world.

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

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