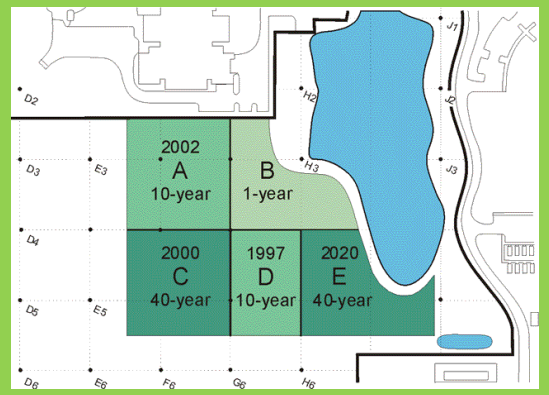

Five plots are designated to illustrate the varied stages of old-field succession. There are two plots tilled every 10 years, two plots that are tilled every 40 years, and the remaining plot is tilled every year on a rotation. Initial starting years are shown on this map.

Oldfield Plot Succession

Ecological succession is the process of change in the species structure of an ecological community over time.

Secondary succession, such as the fields here, occur on sites that previously supported vegetation but were removed due to a disturbance (natural or manmade).

Agriculture is Florida's second largest industry after tourism. There are over 47,740 farms in Florida with an economic impact of $7.7 billion dollars a year.

Old fields may be abandoned for many reasons including disease, development, profit loss, exhausted soils, and the advance of more economic growing methods.

All pictures and information taken from the UF/IFAS website.

Stages of Succession

Stage 1: A newly double disked field. If needed, trees and other woody vegetation were bush hogged and cut prior to disking.

Stage 2: Annual weeds and grasses invade. These are the first invaders onto the nearly cleared area and are called pioneer species.

Stage 3: Five years after a field is abandoned, blackberries and other native shrubs dominate. Thick growth begins to attract rodents, birds, insects, reptiles and pollinators.

Stage 4: At 15 years, loblolly pines began to invade. The closed canopy they create will pave the way for shade tolerant hardwood trees to grow.

Stage 5: At 40 years, a understory of fast-growing hardwoods appear beneath the pines. Left alone, this area will turn into a hardwood dominant hammock or the climax community.