

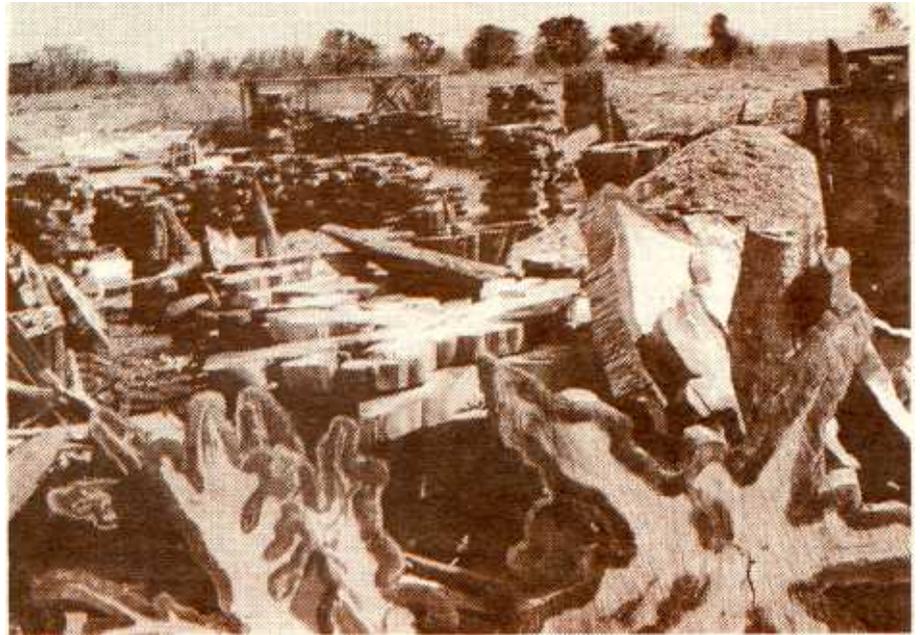
## PLANT MORE CYPRESS!

by Paul and Sherry Cummings

At the recent Florida Native Plant Society Conference, Dr. Dave Wilson's talk on "turning your town on" to native plants was particularly enlightening. When he suggested planting more cypress, it stimulated a discussion and set us to thinking about our emphasis on the planting of oak, pine, and — in the southern part of the state — mahogany, while completely ignoring (well, almost) the use of cypress in home landscapes.

The cypress, so much a part of the Florida landscape, provides shade in the summer, allows sunlight to penetrate in the winter, and will grow in several soil conditions. The new green of cypress in spring is exquisite; the grays of the bare trees in winter have a special beauty to those of us who love cypress. The trees often harbor air plants and orchids, and provide homes for many little creatures. It has an extremely long life.

And the cypress is under siege, albeit a quiet and stealthy one. The desire of folks these days to have "natural" houses includes using cypress in home building, furniture, and other ways — cypress tables coated with polyurethane, cypress knees for decoration, cypress paneling, cypress mulch, cypress



William Partington

Roadside stands of cut-up cypress are everywhere.

lamps, and the incredibly ubiquitous cypress clocks. We've all heard about the cypress thieves who go into an area still populated with trees and cut them down in order to have material for some of the above-mentioned items.

(Although some differences exist in the leaf formation and tree size of the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and the pond cypress (*T. ascendens* or *T. distichum nutans*), the wood of both is considered equally valuable.)

Doesn't it give you the feeling that we are rapidly eliminating the cypress tree? If something isn't done to ensure a continuing stock of cypress, before you know it this beautiful tree will be another thing of the past. Many native plant nurseries (and a few others) now sell cypress trees. Help prevent a shortage of this valuable Florida asset. Plant more cypress. When you do you will be leaving something of value for the enjoyment of generations that follow.