

The Greeks held the first Olympic Games in the year 776 BC. They only had one event. A short run that was called the "stade". The race was run by men who were completely in the nude. A wreath of olive branches was placed on the winner's head. In the Greek language, the wreath was called a kotinos. The olive tree was the sacred tree of Athens in Greece.

Spanish moss, *Tillandsia usneoides*, is a relative of the pineapple. These plants can grow to masses of about 25 ft. long. Native Americans called the moss "tree hair." The fragrance of Spanish moss is most noticeable in the months from April to July. It plays its role in the world as a shelter for wildlife such as chiggers, rat snakes, and some species of bats. The moss was used as a good kindle for fires.

The Wild Grape, *Muscadinia rotundifolia*, can be found on stream banks, pond edges, roadsides, and in open woods. In woods, the vine is probably very large and has grown up with the tree. Wild grape uses tendrils, like above-ground roots, to grab onto the branches or barks of larger plants. The blue bird, gray catbird, the wood duck, and common crow eat the wild grape fruit. White-tailed deers eat the leaves and stems.

*Passiflora incarnata*, the passion flower has many of medical uses. One example is it is used to help cure sleeping disorders. It was discovered in 1569 by Spanish explorers in Peru. They believed that it was symbolic of the passion of Christ, and that their discovery was a sign of Christ's approval of there efforts.

In conclusion the Olympic wreath has a very interesting history. It has evolved along with the development of the rest of the world. In many ways the wreath is a symbol of strength and victory. It's a forever evolving tradition that will probably stay around for a very long time. There are many ways that people can put there own creative twist on there wreaths. In they end the all are symbolic of a winner.

Spanish Moss - *Tillandsia usneoides*

Slash Pine - *Pinus elliottii*

Passion Flower - *Passiflora incarnata*

Wild Grape - *Muscadinia rotundifolia*

Conservation Message:

We need to protect the Wild Grape because many animals eat the plant and its loss would cause a void in the food chain.