

# Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

## Hemlock palustrine forest

These are wetland forests dominated or co-dominated by *Tsuga canadensis* (eastern hemlock). The canopy may also contain a mixture of other conifers, e.g. *Picea rubens* (red spruce), *Larix laricina* (tamarack), and *Pinus strobus* (eastern white pine). Hardwoods may contribute up to 25% of the tree stratum; common species include *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Betula alleghaniensis* (yellow birch), and *Fraxinus nigra* (black ash). There is generally a pronounced mound and pool microtopography. This community type may occur as a zone around a wetter community type of a more northern affinity. It may also occur in basins or on slopes fed by groundwater seepage. *Rhododendron maximum* (rosebay) is often present, sometimes quite dense. *Viburnum cassinoides* (witherod), *Rhododendron viscosum* (swamp azalea), *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry), and *Vaccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry) are also commonly associated with this type. Herbs include *Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern), *Symplocarpus foetidus* (skunk-cabbage), *Onoclea sensibilis* (sensitive fern), *Mitchella repens* (partridge-berry), *Maianthemum canadense* (Canada mayflower), *Coptis trifolia* (goldthread), *Viola* spp. (violets), *Dalibarda repens* (false-violet), *Trientalis borealis* (star-flower), and various grasses and sedges. There may be a strong bryophyte component, usually dominated by sphagnum.

**Related types:** Where total conifer cover is less than 75% of the canopy, this type becomes the "Hemlock - mixed hardwood palustrine forest."

**Range:** Great Lakes Region, Glaciated NE, Glaciated NW, Pittsburgh Plateau, Pocono Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Unglaciated Allegheny Plateau.

**Selected references:** PNDI field surveys, Sneddon, Anderson, and Metzler 1996.

**[Crosswalk:** Smith's "Northern Conifer Swamp," TNC's *Tsuga canadensis* (eastern hemlock) Wetland Forest Alliance, SAF's Eastern hemlock (23).]