

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Sweet gum - oak coastal plain forest

This type is restricted to the level, sandy soils of the Coastal Plain the adjacent Piedmont; characteristic species include, *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet-gum)—usually a dominant, *Quercus falcata*^S (southern red oak), *Q. phellos*^S (willow oak), *Q. alba* (white oak), *Fagus grandifolia* (American beech), *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Smilax rotundifolia* (greenbrier), *Leucothoe racemosa*^S (fetter-bush), *Lyonia mariana*^S (stagger-bush), *Clethra alnifolia* (sweet pepperbush), *Kalmia latifolia* (mountain laurel), and sometimes *Ilex opaca*^S (American holly). Not much of this type remains in Pennsylvania, and what there is tends to be badly degraded.

Related types: The predominance of *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet gum), *Quercus phellos*^S (willow oak), *Lyonia mariana*^S (stagger-bush), and other coastal plain species makes this community type easily distinguishable from other terrestrial forest types in Pennsylvania. The "Red maple - magnolia Coastal Plain palustrine forest" is a palustrine forest type also characteristic of Pennsylvania's Coastal Plain. The difference in hydrology and associated species clearly differentiates the two.

Range: Coastal Plain, Piedmont.

Selected references: Heckscher 1994, Smith 1991.

[**Crosswalk:** Smith's "Coastal plain forest" (in part), TNC's *Quercus - Fagus grandifolia - Ilex opaca* Forest Alliance, *Quercus - Fagus grandifolia / Podophyllum peltatum* Community, SAF's White oak (53) (in part).]