

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Aspen/gray (paper) birch forest

This type is frequently mixed, but sometimes occurs in nearly pure stands of one of the named species. The birch may be *Betula papyrifera* (paper birch) on more northern sites, or *B. populifolia* (gray birch) and occasionally *B. lenta* (sweet birch). The aspen may be *Populus grandidentata* (large-toothed aspen), or *P. tremuloides* (quaking aspen). Associates include *Sassafras albidum* (sassafras), *Acer* spp. (maples), and *Prunus* spp. (cherry). This is an early successional forest type, commonly found on former agricultural land, in areas of ice scour along stream banks, and where there has been major disturbance resulting in areas of exposed mineral soil. This community type may also result from forestry practices that maintain an early successional stage.

Related types: The "Northern hardwood forest" type may contain a substantial birch component. Many forest types may contain patches of aspen or birch in former canopy gaps; this community type is not intended to describe such small patches.

Range: Entire state.

[Crosswalk: Smith's "Young Miscellaneous Forest," TNC's *Populus tremuloides* Forest Alliance, SAF's Aspen (16) and Gray birch - red maple (19).]