

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Great Lakes Region lakeplain palustrine forest

These wetlands are specific to the Erie Lake Plain. While the usual aspect is that of a forest, on wetter and/or more recently disturbed sites, there may be a more open canopy. The topography is flat overall with a hummock-hollow microtopography, often with small vernal ponds scattered throughout. The water table is near the surface throughout most of the year. The dominant tree species are *Ulmus americana* (American elm), *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (red ash), *Fraxinus profunda* (pumpkin ash), and *Acer saccharinum* (silver maple). Other trees commonly present include *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Populus deltoides* (cottonwood), *Tilia americana* (basswood), *Betula alleghaniensis* (yellow birch), and *Nyssa sylvatica* (black-gum). The shrub layer is usually dominated by *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush) — although this is likely a result of deer over-browsing. The herbaceous layer may be very diverse, representative species include *Carex bromoides* (a sedge), *C. intumescens* (a sedge), *C. crinita* var. *crinita*^S (short hair sedge), *Dryopteris carthusiana* (triploid wood fern), *Onoclea sensibilis* (sensitive fern), *Cardamine douglassii* (purple cress), *Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern), and *Viola cucullata* (blue marsh violet). This community type in Pennsylvania remains on only a handful of sites.

Related types: In Pennsylvania this type is restricted to the Erie Lake Plain. It shares species with both floodplain forest types and rich upland types, but is distinguishable by its setting, by the presence of *Fraxinus profunda*^S (pumpkin ash) on most sites, and by the unusual combination of tree species.

Range: Great Lakes Region.

Selected references: PNDI field surveys.

[Crosswalk: none.]