

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Red maple - elm - willow floodplain swamp

This palustrine forest type is primarily associated with major rivers, often located in old oxbows along the floodplain, or in depressions behind natural levees. These systems are subject to periodic flooding, may stay inundated for substantial periods of time, and may also receive groundwater enrichment and/or surface water from adjacent uplands. Characteristic species include *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Fraxinus Pennsylvania* (red ash), *Ulmus americana* (American elm), *U. rubra* (red elm), *Quercus palustris* (pin oak), *Q. bicolor* (swamp white oak), *Carya cordiformis* (bitternut hickory), *Salix nigra* (black willow), *S. sericea* (silky willow), *Viburnum recognitum* (northern arrow-wood), *Cornus amomum* (red-willow), *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush), *Vitis riparia* (frost grape), *Sambucus canadensis* (American elder), *Onoclea sensibilis* (sensitive fern), *Matteuccia struthiopteris* (ostrich fern), and *Polygonum* spp. This community type is part of the "River bed - bank -floodplain complex."

Related types: The other floodplain forest types, "Sycamore - (river birch) - box-elder floodplain forest" and "Silver maple floodplain forest" generally occur in areas that respond more quickly to changes in river level, and do not hold water for substantial periods of time following flooding.

Range: Entire state.

Selected references: Sneddon, Anderson, and Metzler 1996, Reschke 1990.

[**Crosswalk:** Smith's "Floodplain Swamp," TNC's *Acer (rubrum, saccharinum) - Ulmus americana - Quercus (bicolor, palustris)* Temporarily Flooded Forest Alliance, SAF's Silver maple - American elm (62).]