

# Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

## Red maple - magnolia Coastal Plain palustrine forest

This community type is largely restricted to low-lying areas of the Coastal Plain, with outliers occurring in the Piedmont and South Mountain sections. The dominant trees are *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Magnolia virginiana*<sup>S</sup> (sweet-bay magnolia), *Nyssa sylvatica*, (black-gum), *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet-gum), and *Quercus bicolor* (swamp white oak). Shrubs include *Clethra alnifolia* (sweet pepperbush), *Leucothoe racemosa*<sup>S</sup> (fetter-bush), *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry), *laevigata* (smooth winterberry), *Vaccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry), *Rhododendron viscosum* (swamp azalea), and *Viburnum nudum*<sup>S</sup> (possum-haw). The herbaceous layer is often sparse; species include *Triadenum virginicum* (marsh St.-John's-wort)—in openings, *Viola* spp. (violets), *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern), *Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern), and other ferns, sedges, and sphagnum.

**Related Types:** The upland forest type often associated with this is the "Sweet gum - oak Coastal Plain forest." In Pennsylvania, both of these types are largely restricted to the Coastal Plain. The presence of *Magnolia virginiana* (sweet-bay magnolia), *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet-gum), and other coastal plain species distinguish this type from other red maple palustrine forests.

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Piedmont, South Mountain.

**Selected references:** Heckscher 1994, PNDI field surveys, Sneddon, Metzler and Anderson 1994.

**[Crosswalk:** Smith's "Coastal Plain Forest" (in part), TNC's *Acer rubrum* - *Liquidambar styraciflua* Seasonally Flooded/Saturated Forest Alliance, SAF's Red maple (108).]