

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Leatherleaf - sedge wetland

This community type usually occurs either in upland depressions or in areas of past (often beaver) impoundment. Substrate may be organic soil or mineral soil with a substantial accumulation of organic matter. This community may occupy an extensive area or occur as a relatively narrow band between herbaceous vegetation and taller shrubs or trees. *Chamaedaphne calyculata* (leatherleaf) dominates, together with a mix of sedges and other herbs. There is usually at least a partial layer of sphagnum. In more nitrogen-poor situations, *Drosera rotundifolia* (round-leaved sundew) and occasionally *Sarracenia purpurea* (pitcher-plant) may occur. Sedges are common; species include *Carex canescens*, *C. trisperma*, *C. folliculata*, *C. lasiocarpa*, *C. rostrata*, *C. stricta*, *Eriophorum vaginatum* (cotton-grass), *E. virginicum* (tawny cotton-grass), and *Dulichium arundinaceum* (three-way sedge). Other herbs include *Sagittaria latifolia* (arrowhead), *Potentilla palustris* (marsh cinquefoil), *Lysimachia terrestris* (swamp-candles), *Vaccinium macrocarpon* (cranberry), and *Triadenum virginicum* (marsh St.-John's-wort).

Related types: The "Leatherleaf - cranberry" and "Leatherleaf - bog rosemary" peatland types below are generally found in glacial bogs, are more acidic, and have a deeper organic layer, sometimes occurring on a floating mat of sphagnum peat. This type is less acidic/nitrogen poor, younger, and often occurs on mineral soil (less than 16 inches organic matter). The associate species here are less strongly ericaceous and insectivorous plants are less common.

Range: Glaciated NE, Glaciated NW, Pocono Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Unglaciated Allegheny Plateau.

Selected references: Crum 1988, Reschke 1990, PNDI field surveys, Johnson 1985.

(Crosswalk: Falls between Smith's "Nonglacial Bog" and "Acidic Shrub Swamp" types, TNC's *Chamaedaphne calyculata* - *Carex lasiocarpa* Sparse Shrubland Alliance.]