

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Black spruce - tamarack peatland forest

Picea mariana (black spruce) and/or *Larix laricina* (tamarack) dominate this community type. Other trees that may occur include *Betula populifolia* (gray birch), *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Tsuga canadensis* (eastern hem-lock), *Pinus strobus* (eastern white pine), and *Populus tremuloides* (quaking aspen). Shrub species include *Rhododendron viscosum* (swamp azalea), *Nemopanthus mucronatus* (mountain-holly), *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry), and *Vaccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry). Herbaceous species include *Carex trisperma* (a sedge), *C. disperma*^S (a sedge), *Trientalis borealis* (starflower), *Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern), *O. regalis* (royal fern), *Viola* spp. (violets), *Gaultheria hispidula*^S (creeping snowberry) and *Coptis trifolia* (goldthread). Sphagnum occurs throughout. This community type may occur as part of the "Acidic glacial peatland complex."

Related types: Where canopy closure is less than 60%, this type becomes the "Black spruce - tamarack palustrine woodland." The open canopy of the woodland type allows for a much more extensive shrub layer—usually dominated by *Chamaedaphne calyculata* (leatherleaf), and a herbaceous layer more typical of open bogs.

Range: Glaciated NE, Glaciated NW, Pocono Plateau.

Selected references: PNDI field surveys, Sneddon, Anderson, and Metzler 1996.

[Crosswalk: Smith's "Boreal Conifer Swamp," TNC's *Picea mariana* - *Larix laricina* Saturated Forest Alliance, SAF's Black spruce-sphagnum (12d).]