

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Poison sumac - red-cedar - bayberry fen

This community type is specific to northeastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey. These are wetlands that have developed under the influence of base-rich water, and usually have a substantial organic layer. The pH of surface water during the growing season ranges from 7.0 to 8.1. Structurally, they are dominated by a mixture of shrubs and herbaceous plants (predominantly sedges). Most sites have areas in the wettest portions that are without woody vegetation. Depth of organic matter ranges from zero in actively seeping areas to over a meter in basins. The dominant shrubs include *Juniperus virginiana* (red-cedar), *Myrica pensylvanica* (bayberry), *Toxicodendron vernix* (poison sumac), *Salix* spp. (willow), *Potentilla fruticosa*^S (shrubby cinquefoil), *Cornus racemosa* (swamp dogwood), *Rhamnus* (alder-leaved buckthorn), and *Physocarpus opulifolius* (ninebark). Herbaceous species include *Carex sterilis*^S (Atlantic sedge), *C. flava*^S (yellow sedge), *C. tetanica*^S (Wood's sedge), *C. lurida* (a sedge), *C. stricta* (tussock sedge), *Muhlenbergia glomerata* (spike muhly), *Rhynchospora capillacea*^S (capillary beak-rush), *R. alba* (white beak-rush), *Lobelia kalmii*^S (brook lobelia), *Eupatorium maculatum* (spotted joe-pye-weed), *Cirsium muticum* (swamp thistle), *Thelypteris palustris* (marsh fern), *Pycnanthemum virginianum* (mountain-mint), *Selaginella apoda* (creeping spikemoss), *Lycopus uniflorus* (bugleweed), *Drosera rotundifolia* (round-leaved sundew), *Parnassia glauca*^S (grass-of-Parnassus), *Aster lateriflorus* (calico aster), and *Vernonia noveboracensis* (New York ironweed). Characteristic bryophytes include *Campylium stellatum*, *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Fissidens adiantoides*, and *Bryum pseudotriquetrum*. *Chara* spp. (stoneworts) occur in seeps and in unvegetated flats.

Related types: This type is ecologically similar to and shares many species with the "Buckthorn - sedge fen" type. The two differ in their distribution and species composition.

Range: Glaciated Northeast.

Selected references: PNDI field surveys, WPC and TNC 1995.

[Crosswalk: Smith's "Shrub Fen," "Basin Graminoid Forb Fen," TNC's *Carex flava*, *hystericina*, *interior*, *sterilis*) -*Campylium stellatum* Herbaceous Alliance.]