

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Black-gum ridgetop forest

This community type occurs on fairly dry ridgetops. The canopy may be somewhat open; tree growth is somewhat suppressed. These ridgetops may have been exposed to repeated fires. *Nyssa sylvatica* is the dominant species; *Betula lenta* (sweet birch), *Sassafras albidum* (sassafras), *Acer rubrum* (red maple), *Quercus montana* (chestnut oak), *Q. velutina* (black oak), and *Q. rubra* (red oak) are often present. The shrub layer is dominantly ericaceous; common species include *Kalmia latifolia* (mountain laurel), *Gaylussacia baccata* (black huckleberry), *Vaccinium* spp. (blueberry), and *Hamamelis virginiana* (witch-hazel). The herbaceous layer is generally sparse. Common constituents include *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge), *Carex communis* (a sedge), *Epigaea repens* (trailing arbutus), *Gaultheria procumbens* (teaberry), *Aralia nudicaulis* (wild sarsaparilla), and *Pteridium aquilinum* (bracken fern).

Related types: This type is fairly uniform in composition and is restricted to ridgetops and high shoulders. The "Birch (black-gum) rocky slope woodland" occurs on talus or scree slopes and boulderfields, has an open canopy, and has a wide range of possible associates depending on aspect and location.

Range: Ridge and Valley.

Selected references: Daniel Devlin—personal communication.

[Crosswalk: none.]