

North Carolina Regional Vegetation ^[1]

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by Emily Horton

NC Government & Heritage Library ^[2], 2012.

Quick Introduction to North Carolina Plant Life:

- North Carolina has over 4000 native plant species.
- North Carolina is home to 26 endangered plant species in the United States.
- North Carolina has over 700 rare plant species, and 162 of these are threatened or endangered in North Carolina.

List of Endangered North Carolina Plants: <http://www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry/plant/plantconserve/plist.htm> ^[3]

The wide variety of landforms found in the three regions of North Carolina is evident in the extreme range of vegetation throughout the state. Click on one of the three regions below to see a list of some of the most common plants found in each region.

The Coastal Plain

The Piedmont

The Mountains

The Coastal Plain



(1)

Marshes and dunes are predominate vegetation types in the Outer Coastal Plain. Additionally, there are areas of preserved forests, which include: Nags Head Woods ^[4] Preserve of the Nature Conservancy, Hatteras Woods ^[5] in Buxton, and others scattered throughout Bougue Banks.

The Inner Coastal Plain is home to many swampforests and hardwood swampforests, a a feature which distinguishes it from the the Tidewater sub-region of the Coastal Plains.

Below is a list of several common plant species found throughout the entire Coastal Plains:

Asters
Beech
Black Gum
Blackjack Oak
Catbrier
Cypress
Dotted Horsemint

Dwarf Huckleberry
Gaillardia (aka Fire-Wheel, Indian Blanket)
Gallberry
Goldenrods
Hickory
Hophornbeam
Hypericum (aka St. John's Wart)
Laurel Oak
Lilies
Loblolly Pine
Loblolly Bay
Long Leaf Pine
Orchids
Palmetto (especially on Smith Island, aka Bald Head ^[6] Island, and other southern islands)
Pine
Pine Hickory
Pitcher Plants
Pocosin (aka Bay, Shrub Bog)
Pond Pine
Post Oak
Purple Rhododendron
Red Cedar
Red Maple
Scrubby Post Oak
Sea Oats
Southern Red Oak
Sunflowers
Swamp Chestnut Oak
Swamp Mallow (aka Marshmallow, Swamp Rose)
Sweet Bay
Sweet Gum
Tulip Poplar
Turkey Oak
Variety of herbs
Venus Flytrap
Water Oak
Wax Myrtle
White Oak
Willow Oak
Wire Grass
Yaupon ^[7]
Yellow Jessamine

Marshes: Bulrush, Cattail, Cordgrass, Needlerush, Saw Grass

Dunes: Beach Pea, Broomsedge, Croton, Dune Elder, Perennial Grasses ^[8], Primrose,; Spurge

Swamp Forests: Cypress Tree, Gum-Cypress Tree

Hardwood Swamp Forests: Ash, Cherrybark Oak, Elm, River Birch, Sweet Gum, Sycamore, Water Oak, Willow Oak

The Piedmont:



(1) "Loblolly Pine," photo courtesy of Flickr user 'Konomike', Photo taken in Johnston County, NC. Posted on April 26, 2009. (2) "Oak Tree and Bench," photo courtesy of Flickr user 'Bumeister', Image taken in Chapel Hill, NC on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus. Photo taken on November 19, 2007. (3) "Sweet Gum Seed Tree Pod," Photo courtesy of Flickr user 'Ivy Dawned', Photo taken on September 24, 2008. (4) "Tulip Poplar!" photo courtesy of Flickr user 'BlueRidgeKitties', Photo taken on May 20, 2010 in Laxon, NC.

Below is a list of several plant species found throughout the Piedmont

Region:

Beech
 Blackjack Oak
 Carolina Shagbark Hickory
 Chestnut Oak
 Crabgrass (weed)
 Hemlock (scattered)
 Horseweed (weed)
 Loblolly Pine
 Northern Red Oak
 Post Oak
 Purple Rhododendron
 Sand Hickory
 Scarlet Oak
 Several spring and summer flowering herbs
 Shortleaf Pine
 Southern Red Oak
 Tulip Poplar
 White Oak
 White Pine
 White Tipped Aster (weed)

Like the Inner Coastal Plain, the Piedmont has many hardwood swampforests, which are located in the floodplains. Some of the vegetation in the Swampforests include:

Ash
 Elm
 River Birch
 Swamp Chestnut Oak
 Sweet Gum
 Sycamore
 Tulip Poplar
 Willow Oak

The Mountain Region:



(1) "Christmas Tree Production," photo courtesy of Flickr user 'Soil Science', Photo taken on October 19, 2010. (2) "Blackberries to be," Photo courtesy of Flickr user 'BlueRidgeKitties', photo taken on June 3, 2011 at Grandfather Mountain, NC. (3) "Mountain Ash," Photo courtesy of Flickr user 'BlueRidgeKitties', photo taken on September 4, 2011 at Grandfather Mountain, NC. (4) "Hemlock at the Church," photo courtesy of Melina Stuart. Photo taken on January 7, 2011 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Mountains have two distinct areas of vegetation: the Deciduous Forests, which have more species of trees than all of Europe combined, and the Boreal Conifer Forests.

Below are lists of plant species predominately found in each of these areas:

Deciduous Forests:

Beech
 Blackberry
 Black Gum
 Black Locust
 Butternut Hickory
 Chestnut Oak
 Cucumber Tree
 Dogwood
 Few herbs sparsely scattered
 Flame Azalea
 Fraser Magnolia
 Hemlock
 Lack Oak
 Mountain Laurel
 Northern Red Oak
 Red Maple
 Rosebay Rhododendron
 Scarlet Oak
 Shortleaf Pine
 Silverbell
 Sourwood
 Sugar Maple
 Table Mountain Pine
 Tulip Poplar
 Virginia Pine
 White Ash
 White Basswood
 White Oak
 Yellow Birch
 Yellow Buckeye

Boreal Conifer Forests:

Balsam
 Beech Yellow Birch
 Blueberry
 Ferns and herbs present

Fir
Fire Cherry
Flame Azalea
Fraser Fir
Hawthorn
Mosses and Liverworts abundant
Mountain Ash
Mountain Laurel
Plott Balsam
Purple Rhododendron
Red Spruce
Rosebay Rhododendron
Shadblow
Spruce
Sugar Maple
Yellow Birch
Yellow Buckeye

Sources:

"Education," North Carolina Native Plant Society, accessed January 24, 2019, <https://ncwildflower.org/education/> [9].

Orr, Douglas M. The North Carolina Atlas: Portrait for a New Century. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. 2000.

"The NC Natural Guide to Coastal Flowers of the NC Coast Barrier Islands," Last modified 2003, <https://www.ncnatural.com/wildflwr/coastal/index.html> [10] (accessed April 3, 2012).

Additional Resources:

List of Endangered North Carolina Plants: <https://www.ncnatural.com/wildflwr/endangrd.html> [11]

"Native Plants of North and South Carolina," *Plant Native*, <https://plantnative.org/rpl-ncsc.htm> [12] (accessed April 3, 2012).

Image Credits:

Photo courtesy of NC Hiker, "Pink Rhododendron," Posted June 14, 2011. Photo taken at Roan Mountain. Available from https://www.flickr.com/photos/nc_hiker/5839567616 [13] (accessed April 4, 2012).

Photo courtesy of NC Orchid, "Venus Flytraps", posted on October 1, 2004. (accessed April 4, 2012).

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Photo courtesy of Flickr user Soil Science. "Christmas Tree Production." Photo taken on October 19, 2010. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/soilscience/5097054069> [16] (accessed April 4, 2012).

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Photo courtesy of Melina Stuart. "Hemlock at the Church." Photo taken on January 7, 2011 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/melystu/5333639810/> [18] (accessed April 4, 2012).

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Subjects:

Forests and forestry [20]

Plants [21]

Authors:

Horton, Emily S.^[22]

Origin - location:

Coastal Plain ^[23]

Mountains ^[24]

Piedmont ^[25]

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