

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

Hypercium (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 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).

Photo courtesy of Flickr user 'BlueRidgeKitties', "Mountain Ash." Photo taken on September 4, 2011 at Grandfather Mountain, NC. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/blueridgekitties/6116641888/> [19] (accessed April 4, 2012).

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