

## **North Carolina Regional Vegetation**<sup>[1]</sup>

### **North Carolina Regional Vegetation**

by Emily Horton

NC Government & Heritage Library<sup>[2]</sup>, 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><sup>[3]</sup>

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](#)<sup>[4]</sup> Preserve of the Nature Conservancy, [Hatteras Woods](#)<sup>[5]</sup> 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 <sup>[6]</sup> 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 <sup>[7]</sup>  
Yellow Jessamine

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

**Dunes:** Beach Pea, Broomsedge, Croton, Dune Elder, Perennial Grasses <sup>[8]</sup>, 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](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).

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#### Subjects:

Forests and forestry [20]

Plants [21]

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**Origin - location:**

Coastal Plain<sup>[23]</sup>

Mountains<sup>[24]</sup>

Piedmont<sup>[25]</sup>

**From:**

NCpedia.<sup>[26]</sup>

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