



Maritime Shrubland

Community Code: CT2A4A1000

State Rank: S3



Concept: Shrub community, dominated by patches of dense shrubs with scattered more open areas of low growth or bare ground. Cover of tree canopy is less than about 25%.

Environmental Setting: Maritime Shrubland communities occur along the coast within the area of direct influence of the ocean and salt spray, such as on barrier beach dunes, next to tidal marshes or on bluffs or rocky headlands. Maritime Shrublands often occur on sand or bedrock that does not hold water. They may extend inland in areas with droughty soils or extreme exposure to ocean winds that inhibit tree growth. Offshore islands can have extensive areas of Maritime Shrublands. They are dominated by patches of dense shrubs with scattered areas of more open low growth or bare ground, and have less than about 25% tree canopy. Plants in these communities are exposed to the direct influences of salt and constant ocean wind, which select for stress-tolerant species. The species of Maritime Shrublands do not withstand flooding by saltwater, but they tolerate or recover from salt deposits on their leaves. Fire was an important part of this environment prior to the establishment of fire suppression regimes in settled areas. Without regular disturbance, the community may succeed to forest.

Vegetation Description: Maritime Shrublands are within the northeastern oak and oak-pine forest region; species of these communities are species of oak forests. They often have dense patches of shrubs, up to about 3m (10 ft.) tall, with various species dominating in different areas. Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*), or red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) areas are often distinctive. Large areas with dense red cedar are separated out as Maritime Juniper Woodland/Shrubland. Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), beach plum (*Prunus*



maritima), chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), and bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) may be abundant. Catbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) often cover other plants or grow in dense patches on their own. Non-native species are often abundant including Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) and Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*). The herbaceous layer is usually sparse.

Differentiating Occurrences: Maritime Shrublands are intended to be large, relatively continuous areas of shrublands in the salt spray zone. Large patches of scrub oak are separated out as their own community type. When shrub cover is less than 40%, the community is considered to be something else, often Sandplain Heathland. Tree cover should be less than 25% overall. The differences among the communities and associations are often gradual, making differentiation on the ground difficult at times. Maritime Dune Communities include patches of shrubs in areas protected from winds and salt spray. When large and continuous, such patches might be considered to be Maritime Shrublands.

Associated Fauna: Shrub thickets provide nesting areas for Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), and Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). Maritime shrublands are heavily used during fall migrations for cover and forage; many of the plants have fruit attractive to migrants. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) maintain large populations in shrubland habitats. In such shrub areas, white-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*) are also very abundant, and in the openings meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) are common. Eastern moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*) have an affinity to the sand substrate in the southern part of the state. Long-tailed weasels (*Mustela frenata*) occur in the grass-dominated areas where they hunt meadow voles. Eastern hognose snakes (*Heterodon platirhinos*) occur in sandy, open areas of shrubland community areas. Coastal plain shrublands are habitat to the state-listed moth, chain dot geometer (*Cingilia catenaria*, Special Concern), whose larvae feed on a variety of the typical shrubs.

Public Access: Halibut Point State Park, Rockport; Boston Harbor Islands, Weymouth; Demarest Lloyd Memorial State Park, Dartmouth; Quivett Creek/Paines Creek Marsh (town conservation area), Brewster.

Threats: Invasive exotics in many occurrences. Shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*) and Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) are invasive in many of the locations. Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), and Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergiana*) are locally dense.

Management Needs: Removal of invasive exotics.

USNVC/NatureServe: Includes: *Prunus serotina* - *Amelanchier canadensis* - *Quercus* spp. Shrubland Alliance -- *Prunus serotina* - *Rhus typhina*/*Cakile edentula* Shrubland [CEGL006399]; *Myrica pensylvanica* - (*Prunus maritima*) Shrubland Alliance -- *Myrica pensylvanica*-*Rosa rugosa* Shrubland [CEGL006295].