

Red Maple Swamp

State Rank: S5 - Secure



Red Maple Swamp with tussock sedges and ferns. Photo: BioEngineering Group.

Description: Red Maple Swamps are broadly defined and some of the obviously recurrent variants (for example, Red Maple - Black Ash Swamp; Red Maple - Black Gum Swamp; Alluvial Red Maple Swamps, and others) are classified separately. Generally, occurrences remaining in the Red Maple Swamp category occur in seasonally flooded basins or on slopes with groundwater seepage. Soils are shallow to thick organic layers overlying mineral sands/silts. Standing water is often present in the spring and the substrates remain saturated throughout the growing season. Most sites are relatively low in nutrients and somewhat acidic. Vegetation is strongly influenced by water dynamics.

Characteristic Species: Red Maple Swamps are dominated by red maple, mixed with scattered other trees, such as yellow birch, black gum, white ash, white pine, American elm, swamp white oak, and Atlantic white cedar. The community usually has a well developed shrub layer of winterberry, highbush blueberry, wild raisin, red osier dogwood, swamp azalea,

Red Maple Swamps are forested wetlands that are dominated by red maple. They are the most common forested wetlands in Massachusetts.

and sweet pepper-bush. In southeastern Massachusetts, dense thickets of sweet pepper-bush are often bound together by greenbriers. The herb layer is often dominated by ferns such as cinnamon fern, sensitive fern, and royal fern, mixed with skunk cabbage, jewelweed, and sedges.



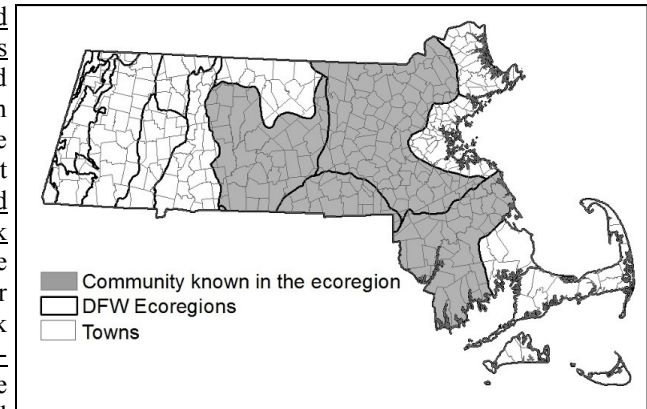
Red maple leaves. Photo: T. Davis Sydnor, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org.

Differentiating from Related Communities: Red Maple Swamp is a broadly defined red maple dominated defined community type. Several fairly distinctive types have been defined separately. Alluvial Red Maple Swamps occur along low-gradient rivers and receive river flood waters. Silver maple is often a codominant with red maple. Alluvial Hardwood Flat Communities are along small, flashy streams, usually have black cherry and white pine abundantly in the canopy, and have ironwood and alternate leaved dogwood mixed with

other shrub species. Red Maple - Black Ash Swamps are an enriched variant of Red Maple Swamps with black ash close to codominant in the canopy/subcanopy in at least parts of the swamp. Red Maple - Black Ash - Bur Oak Swamps occur in Berkshire County and have bur oak or bur oak/swamp white oak hybrid trees. Red Maple - Black Gum Swamps are generally in small topographically constrained basins surrounded by upland forests. Black gum needs to be abundant in large areas of the swamp. Black Gum - Pin Oak - Swamp White Oak Perched Swamps occur in the Connecticut River Valley on glacial Lake Hitchcock lakebed sediments. The presence of fairly high proportions of black gum, pin oak and swamp white oak in the canopy, in addition to the topographic setting distinguish the type. When Atlantic white cedar is dominant in the overstory, the community is classified as an Atlantic white cedar swamp.

Habitat for Associated Fauna:

Red Maple Swamps contribute variation to the habitats of wide-ranging wildlife species. The dense shrub layers provide excellent nesting locations for birds of thickets. The amount of escape cover and water availability makes swamps important habitat for many species of small mammals. Ground-dwelling species, such as reptiles and amphibians, are affected by the presence of wet or moist soils in swamps, and tend to use them for breeding and feeding.



Examples with Public Access:

Red Maple Swamps literally occur state wide. Because they are so widespread and abundant, NHESP does not usually keep track of occurrences. Examples on public lands from the NHESP database are in the Quaboag WMA, West Brookfield, and Haskell Swamp WMA, Rochester.



Red Maple Swamp with dense undergrowth in midsummer. Photo: Patricia Swain, NHESP.

