

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Red-cedar - prickly pear shale shrubland

This community type is restricted to steep, south-facing, eroding slopes composed of thinly bedded, fissile shales. The most representative examples occur along the Delaware River in Pike County. There may be species overlap with the "Red cedar - mixed hardwood rich shale woodland" community type that also occurs on south-facing shale slopes, but examples of this type occur on steeper slopes and lack endemic shale barren species. Typical species here include *Juniperus virginiana* (red-cedar), *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem), *Opuntia humifusa*^S (prickly pear), *Quercus ilicifolia* (scrub oak), *Q. montana* (chestnut oak), *Gaylussacia baccata* (black huckleberry), *Carya glabra* (pignut hickory), *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge), *Hieracium venosum* (rattlesnake-weed), *Hypericum gentianoides* (orange-grass), *Danthonia spicata* (poverty grass), *Deschampsia flexuosa* (common hairgrass), *Vaccinium angustifolium* (low sweet blueberry), *V. pallidum* (lowbush blueberry), *Campanula rotundifolia* (harebell), *Arabis lyrata* (lyre-leaved rock-cress), *Aster patens* (clasping aster), *Corydalis semperuirens* (rock harlequin), *Solidago nemoralis* (gray goldenrod), *Polytrichum* spp. (hairy-cap moss), *Cladina* spp., and *Cladonia* spp. (reindeer lichens).

Related types: The "Red cedar - mixed hardwood rich shale woodland" type also occurs on shale slopes, but is more southerly in distribution and, unlike this type, is characterized by the presence of shale barren endemics.

Range: Ridge and Valley.

Selected references: Dix 1990, Henry 1954, Keener 1983, Platt 1951, PNDI field surveys.

[Crosswalk: "Smith's Northern Appalachian Shale Barren," TNC's *Juniperus virginiana* - *Fraxinus americana* Woodland Alliance, *Juniperus virginiana* - *Fraxinus americana* / *Senecio antennarifolius* - *Oenothera argillicola* Community.]