

Kentucky Ecological Regions

Appalachian Plateaus region

This region includes eastern Kentucky and the eastern coal fields. This is an interesting area because geologically, it was an ocean bottom millions of years ago. It is not uncommon to find sea fossils in this area. This area was subject to uplifting to form the mountains that contain the Red River Gorge in the Daniel Boone National Forest. It is a mixed forest with a great diversity of tree species. Much of this area was logged for its wealth of large and diverse timber. The Lilly Cornett Woods is an old growth area providing an idea of the original forest in this

Bluegrass Region

The Bluegrass Region is characterized by a limestone shale geologic base that tends to provide a basic soil pH. It also contains the Kentucky River palisades. The original bluegrass ecology was open woodland savanna characterized by a grassland understory and giant individual trees including Kentucky coffeetree, black walnut, bur oak, and blue ash. Although most of the wooded savanna is gone, numerous large trees still dominate old estates and pastures in the bluegrass.

Cumberland Mountain region

At one time, Kentucky was blessed with a mixed mesophytic forest that was as diverse as any forested area on the east coast. Unlike most climax forests that were dominated by two or three tree types, Kentucky forests in this area contained a rich diversity in mature trees, as many as twenty different species. Unfortunately, these forests have been logged extensively and no primeval forests areas remain today. Glimpses of these impressive forests can be seen at Pine Mountain State Park and Cumberland Mountain National park.

Knobs region

The Knobs region is the area surrounding the Bluegrass where the mountains begin to rise as small hills. It is considered part of the outer Bluegrass region. The vegetation in this area is very diverse containing many interesting forest communities including maple-oak and beech-tulip poplar forests.

Mississippi Embayment region

This region is also known as the Jackson purchase because Andrew Jackson purchased it from the Chickasaw Indians in 1818. It is adjacent to the Mississippi River and characterized by river bottoms and swamps. This is a unique area for Kentucky containing many coastal plain tree species more common to southeastern states. These include bald cypress, willow oak, pecan and sweet gum. Today much of this unique region has been drained and cleared for agriculture and habitation. A remnant wetland is preserved at Murphy's Pond in Hickman County.

Mississippian Plateaus region

This region is also known as the Pennyroyal or Pennyrile after a small mint-like plant native to the region. This region originally contained large sections of tall prairie. The

deep soils in this area have led to most areas being used for agricultural farming. The pennyroyal area also contains many underground caves and sinkholes.

Shawnee Hills region

This region is also known as the western coal fields. There are mixed forests, river valleys and swamps in this area. This region contains the Green River and Mammoth Cave National Park. Tree species in the Shawnee hills region are diverse because it contains both mixed and oak-hickory forests as well as swampy areas along the flood plains of the Green River. Interesting areas include the bird sanctuary at John James Audubon State Park in Henderson County, and an old upland forest called Big Woods at Mammoth Cave.

Latin name	Common name	<u>Ecological regions of Kentucky</u>				
		Mississippi Embayment	Shawnee Hills	Mississippian Plateaus	Bluegrass	Appalachian Plateaus
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar maple	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Aesculus glabra</i>	Ohio buckeye	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Aesculus flava</i>	Yellow buckeye	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Aesculus pavia</i>	Red buckeye	X	X	X		
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	Downy serviceberry	X	X	X		X
<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	Shadblow serviceberry		X	X	X	X
<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	Allegheny serviceberry				X	X
<i>Asimina triloba</i>	Pawpaw	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Betula lenta</i>	Yellow birch			X		X
<i>Betula nigra</i>	River birch	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	American hornbeam	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Carya illinoensis</i>	Pecan	X	X	X		
<i>Carya glabra</i>	Pignut	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Carya laciniosa</i>	Shellbark hickory	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Carya ovata</i>	Shadbark hickory	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	Northern catalpa	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Celtis laevigata</i>	Sugar hackberry	X	X	X	X	
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern redbud	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	Fringetree			X		X
<i>Cladrastis kentukea</i>	Yellowwood	X		X	X	X
<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	Pagoda dogwood			X	X	X
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering dogwood	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Crataegus crusgalli</i>	Cockspur hawthorn			X	X	X

<i>Crataegus viridis</i>	Green hawthorn	X				X
<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	Persimmon	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	American beech	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	White ash	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green ash	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Fraxinus quadrangulata</i>	Blue ash			X	X	X
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Honeylocust	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i>	Kentucky coffeetree	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Halesia tetraptera</i>	Mountain silverbell	X		X		X
<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	Common witchhazel			X	X	X
<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American holly			X		X
<i>Juglans nigra</i>	Black walnut	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tulip poplar	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweet gum	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>	Cucumbertree magnolia	X		X	X	X
<i>Magnolia macrophylla</i>	Bigleaf magnolia			X		X
<i>Magnolia tripetala</i>	Umbrella magnolia			X		X
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Blackgum	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	American hophornbeam	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Oxydendron arborea</i>	Sourwood	X	X	X		X
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black cherry	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	Eastern white pine		X	X		X
<i>Pinus virginiana</i>	Virginia pine		X	X		X
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus alba</i>	White oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	Scarlet oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus imbricaria</i>	Shingle oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>	Chinkapin oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Bur oak	X		X	X	
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	Pin oak	X	X	X	X	X

<i>Quercus phellos</i>	Willow oak	X	X	X		X
<i>Quercus prinus</i>	Chestnut oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Northern red oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Quercus velutina</i>	Black oak	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Black locust	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	Sassafras	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Stewartia ovata</i>	Mountain stewartia					X
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Bald cypress	X	X	X	X	
<i>Tilia americana</i>	American linden	X		X	X	X
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Eastern hemlock		X	X		X