

The central hardwood forest: its boundaries and physiographic provinces.

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The Central Hardwood Forest: its boundaries and physiographic provinces



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Description

The Central Hardwood Forest (CHF) refers to the area where deciduous hardwood species overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, dominate the stands and cover types that occur as repeating units across the landscape. Transition zones where Central Hardwood species mix with species from adjacent regions identify boundaries of the region. These regions are the Northern Hardwood-Conifer Forest along the northern border, the Southeastern-Pine Forest along the eastern and southern borders, and the Tall Grass Prairie region to the west. There is a distinctness and cohesiveness to the CHF as its boundaries frequently cut across geographic features. The 18 oak and 10 hickory species that dominate stands from Missouri to West Virginia, and Wisconsin to Alabama, unify the region. The more important species such as white, black, and chestnut oak may form essentially climax communities on dry sites or successional communities on moist sites. These species may be regarded as obligate xerophytes and facultative pioneers. Such a successional/stability pattern/process is either absent or difficult to identify in other forested regions. Geographically, the region is also diverse. Physiographic provinces include the unglaciated Blue Ridge Mountains, Appalachian Plateaus, Interior Low Plateaus, and Ozark Plateaus, and the glaciated Central Lowlands. The Mississippi floodplain and Gulf Coastal Plain extend into the region. Bedrock, surface deposits, topography, and the soil mosaic vary from province to province and with subregions within provinces.

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