

Black Rock Forest Consortium
Dichotomous Key to Forest Community Types

Black Rock Forest community types are determined based exclusively on canopy tree species composition and relative species dominance (based on numbers of trees and trunk diameters) measured on sample plots.

Community type is usually assigned based on the most common species of tree in the largest trunk size class on a plot.

Community type nomenclature and designations follow closely the system developed by Reschke (1990) to describe the ecological communities of New York State.

(Reschke, C. 1990. Ecological Communities of New York State. New York Natural Heritage Program. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Latham, N.Y. 96p. +xi.)

1. a. Trees generally not present	Cliff and rock outcrops, Shrub swamps
b. Trees present	go to 2
2. a. Trees planted in regular rows or patterns	Conifer plantation
b. Trees not planted in regular patterns	go to 3
3. a. Trees all less than about 15 cm (6") dbh	go to 4
b. At least some trees larger than 15 cm (6") dbh	go to 5
4. a. Pitch pine, white oak, chestnut oak, scrub oak and/or pignut hickory	Hilltop woods
b. Black birch, red maple, gray birch, white ash and/or aspen	Successional hardwoods
5. a. Red maple dominant with yellow birch, black gum and/or shrubs	Red maple swamps
b. Oaks, sugar maple, or hemlock dominate	go to 6

6. a. Hemlock trees over 15 cm (6") dbh occupy at least 40% of canopy	Hemlock coves
b. Oaks or sugar maple dominate canopy	go to 7
7. a. Sugar maples over 15 cm (6") dbh common often with birch and/or beech	Sugar maple woods
b. Oaks dominate, sugar maple at most a small component	go to 8
8. a. Chestnut oak most common tree over 15 cm (6") dbh	Chestnut oak woods
b. Red oak and/or white oak more common than chestnut oak	go to 9
9. a. White oak at least as common as red oak or chestnut oak	Hilltop woods
b. Red oak dominates the canopy with other oaks, maples and/or birches	Oak slope woods