

# Chapter 2: Minnesota's Trees and Forests

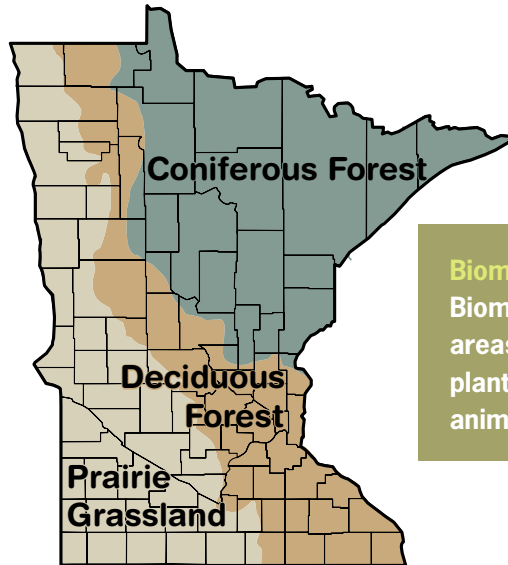
Minnesota is the meeting place of three biomes: the coniferous forest, the deciduous forest, and the prairie. This juxtaposition produces a remarkable diversity in living things within our state.

Trees and forests have always been an important part of Minnesota's natural resource heritage. Today, of Minnesota's 51 million acres of land, 16.3 million acres are forested—almost one-third of our total land area. This forested land can be broken into categories in many ways.

## What Kind of Forest Is It?

The kinds of trees that make up a forest vary from place to place, depending on soil, climate, water, topography (the lay of the land), history, and other factors.

Different forests have different combinations of plants and animals. The trees in one forest may be predominantly aspen and birch; another forest may consist largely of spruce and fir trees. Foresters often identify forests by the tree species found there.



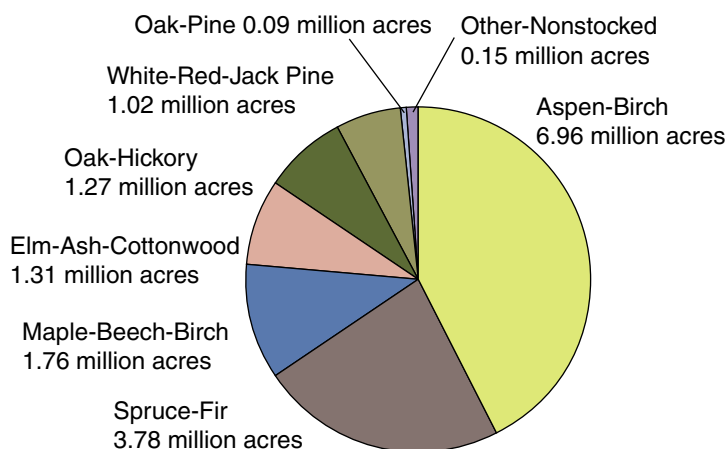
**Biomes:** Biological communities. Biomes usually occur over large areas and include many similar plant communities and the animals that live in them.

Like to learn more about Minnesota's biomes? Detailed descriptions are available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us/biomes](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/biomes). Or call the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367 to request a poster of Minnesota's biomes.

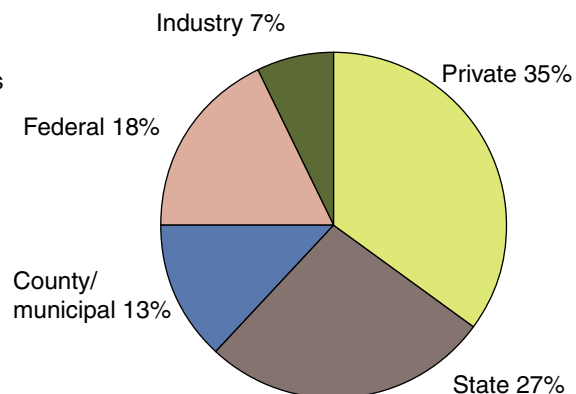
## Who Owns It?

Minnesota's forests have many owners. Some forests are owned by the public and managed by public agencies (federal, state, county, local). Others are in the hands of private owners such as individual citizens, forest products companies, and other industry and private nonprofit organizations.

**Major Kinds of Forest in Minnesota**  
(in order of total acreage as of 2002)



**Who Owns Minnesota's 16.3 Million Acres of Forest Lands?**



Source: U.S. Forest Service, North Central Research Station, Resource Bulletin NC-225, 2003

Source: Minnesota Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA), 2002

**What is Timberland?** Of Minnesota's 16.3 million acres of forested land, 15 million acres are considered timberland—land that is not reserved from harvest and has enough trees to be useful. More than half (54 percent) of this land is publicly owned.

Source: Minnesota Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA), 2002

## What Kinds of Trees Grow in Minnesota?

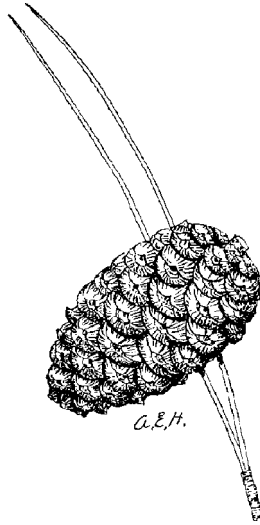
Descriptions of many of Minnesota's tree species are available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees\\_shrubs](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees_shrubs).

Minnesota is home to 52 native tree species. Among the most familiar:

### NAME: Red Pine (*Pinus resinosa*)

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** Northern and northeastern Minnesota.

**FUN FACTS:** This is Minnesota's state tree. It gets its name from its reddish bark, which peels off in puzzle-piece-like plates. It is also called Norway pine.



### NAME: Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** Mainly in northeastern and eastern Minnesota.

**FUN FACTS:** Deer like to eat the tops (terminal leaders) of young white pines. Porcupines eat the inner bark of mature trees.



### NAME: Jack Pine (*Pinus banksiana*)

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** North-central and northeastern Minnesota.

**FUN FACTS:** Jack pine cones are serotinous. That means they only release their seeds under high temperatures such as those occurring during a forest fire.



### NAME: White Spruce (*Picea glauca*)

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** Northern Minnesota.

**FUN FACTS:** White spruce is also called skunk spruce because of the strong odor given off by its needles when they are young.



### NAME: Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*)

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** Northern and northeastern Minnesota.

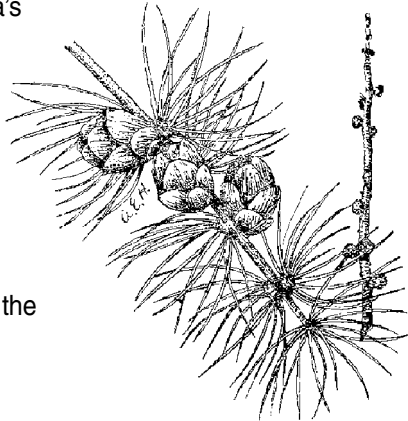
**FUN FACTS:** Black spruce grows very slowly in cold, wet conditions. Century-old trees may be only 2 inches in diameter.



**NAME: Tamarack** (*Larix laricina*)

WHERE TO FIND IT: Northern Minnesota.

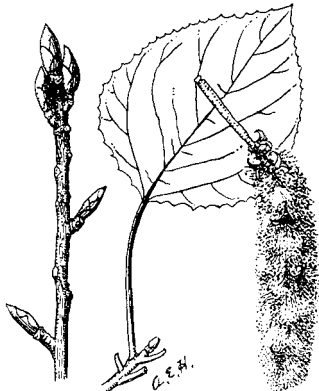
FUN FACTS: Tamarack is Minnesota's only coniferous (cone-bearing) tree that sheds its leaves (needles) in the fall.



**NAME: Quaking Aspen** (*Populus tremuloides*)

WHERE TO FIND IT: Throughout Minnesota; one of the first trees to grow after fire or harvest.

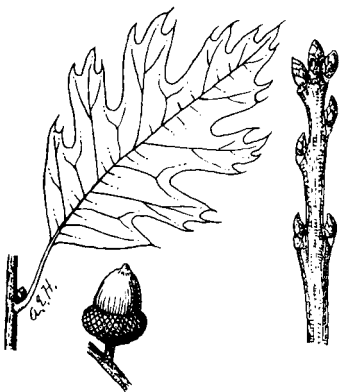
FUN FACTS: The quaking aspen's flattened leaf stems cause the leaves to tremble—"quake"—in the breeze, hence its name.



**NAME: Northern Red Oak** (*Quercus rubra*)

WHERE TO FIND IT: Throughout the state, but most common in southern, central, and southeastern Minnesota.

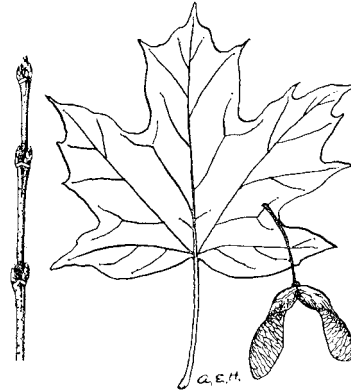
FUN FACTS: Red oak wood is so porous that a barrel made from it will not hold liquid.



**NAME: Sugar Maple** (*Acer saccharum*)

WHERE TO FIND IT: Eastern half of Minnesota.

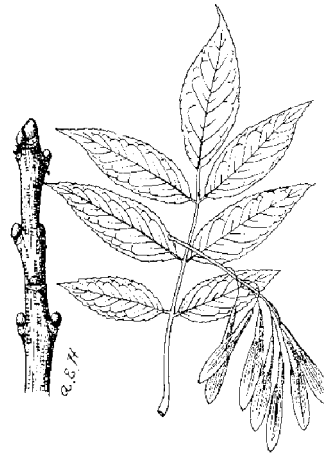
FUN FACTS: The sugar maple's rich sap is used to make maple syrup.



**NAME: Green Ash** (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)

WHERE TO FIND IT: Throughout the state, except in the western prairie region.

FUN FACTS: Green ash is a common urban tree, often planted along city streets in the late 1900s to replace elms lost to Dutch elm disease.



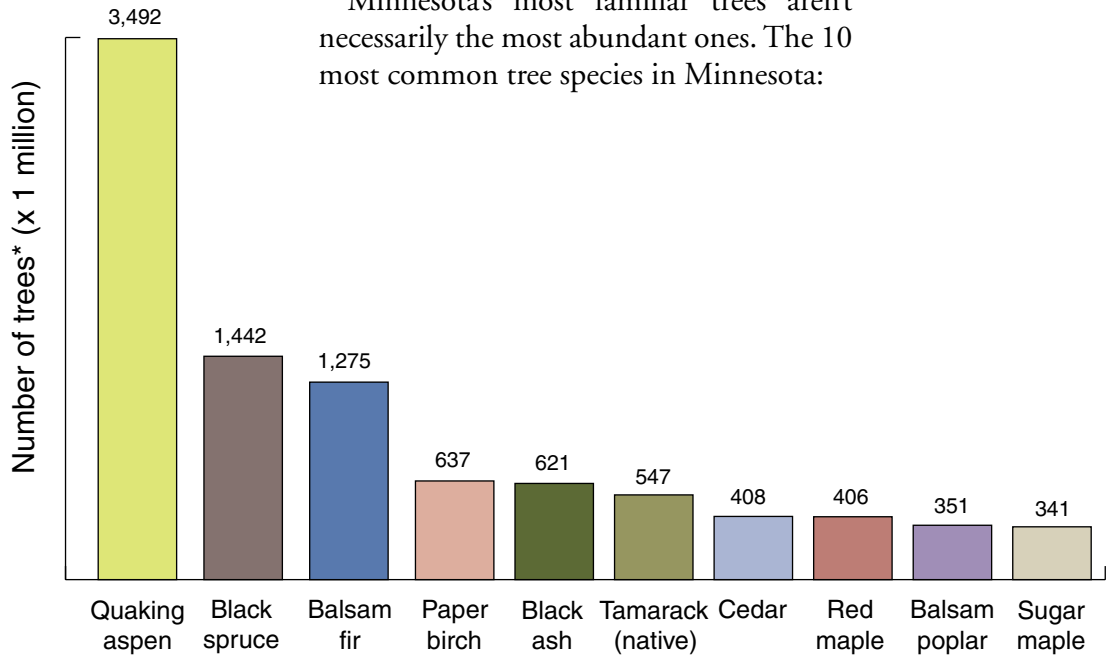
Minnesota's Forest Treasures poster illustrates 35 of Minnesota's 52 native tree species with leaves, seeds, and tree shapes. To obtain a copy, contact the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367.



**Minnesota's Big Tree Registry.** The DNR verifies and keeps records on the largest of each of Minnesota's native 52 tree species. View a list of Minnesota's current champions at [www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees\\_shrubs/bigtree](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees_shrubs/bigtree), or call the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367.

## Minnesota's Top 10 Trees

Minnesota's most familiar trees aren't necessarily the most abundant ones. The 10 most common tree species in Minnesota:



\*Stems more than 1 inch diameter, 2002

Data courtesy of Andrew Finley, Department of Forest Resources, College of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota

