



(Photo from Kemp Natural Resources Station Archives)

Plant Identification

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(Photo from Kemp Natural Resources Station Archives)

This section will assist you with identification of the species used in the habitat type keys and some additional common forest plants. However, it is not intended as a complete guide to flora. Consult other references when needed. Species are arranged alphabetically, by scientific name.

Graphs of each species' representation on a moisture-nutrient grid are included. Shading represents frequency of occurrence classes for reference stands (10-25%; 26-50%; 51-75%; >75%). Distribution of species on habitat types of Region 3 are shown.

FIELD IDENTIFICATION

When faced with an unknown plant, first examine it carefully and note features such as size of the whole plant, color of flower or foliage, hairiness (pubescence), flower and fruit characteristics, shape, arrangement, and attachment of leaves. Remember that within any species, some of these features will vary depending on the season, microhabitat, or historic influences (e.g., defoliation, grazing, frost, etc.).

Examine the color plates and line drawings in this section. When you find one that best matches your specimen, carefully read the description. If no match is found, you may have to consult other sources (see list below; complete references are listed on pages 8-6, 8-7 and 8-8). Perhaps the easiest reference to use is *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*, but note that it does not include ferns.

Additional Resources:

- *Ferns of Michigan* (Billington)
- *Ferns of Minnesota* (Tyron)
- *Michigan Wildflowers* (Smith)
- *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* (Newcomb)
- *Spring Flora of Wisconsin* (Fasset)

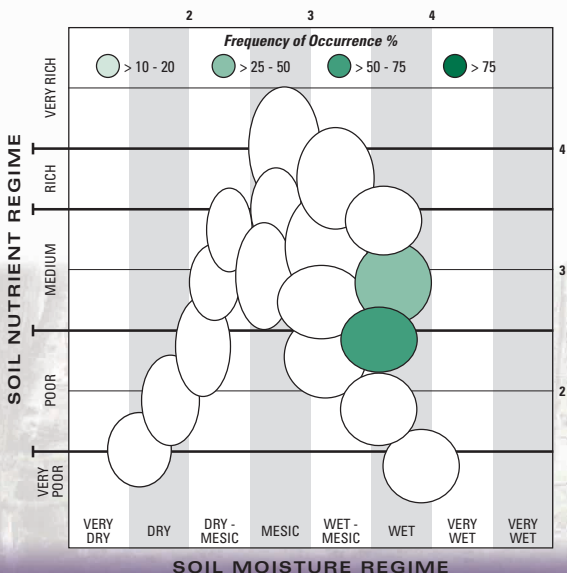




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Acer spicatum Mountain Maple

- Perennial shrub or small tree.
- Long spike-like flower clusters.
- Do not confuse with red maple saplings and seedlings. Mountain maple leaves have more pronounced venation and slightly hairy twigs and buds.

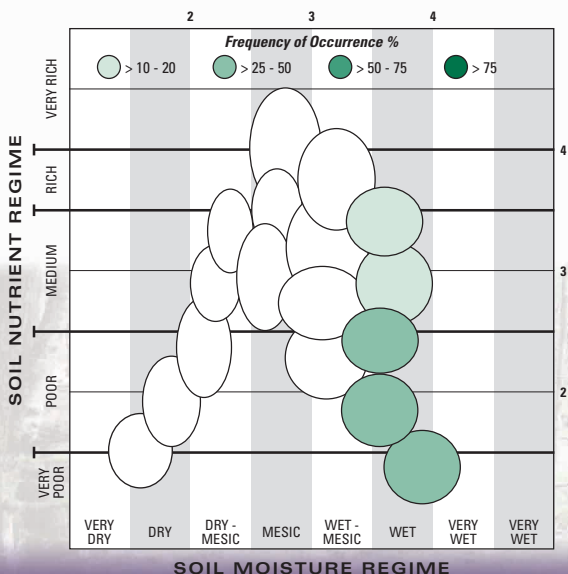
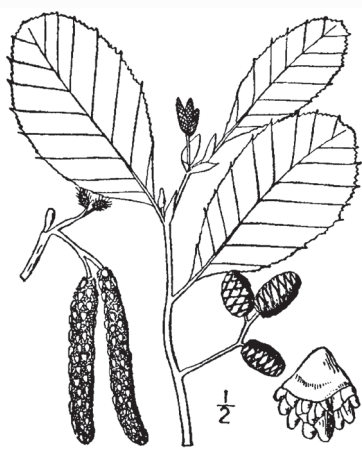




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Alnus rugosa Speckled Alder

- A tall shrub with coarsely-toothed, somewhat shiny leaves.
- Bark is gray, reddish to brown, thin and smooth, often with whitish lenticils.
- Thicket forming with open crowns; found only in wet places.

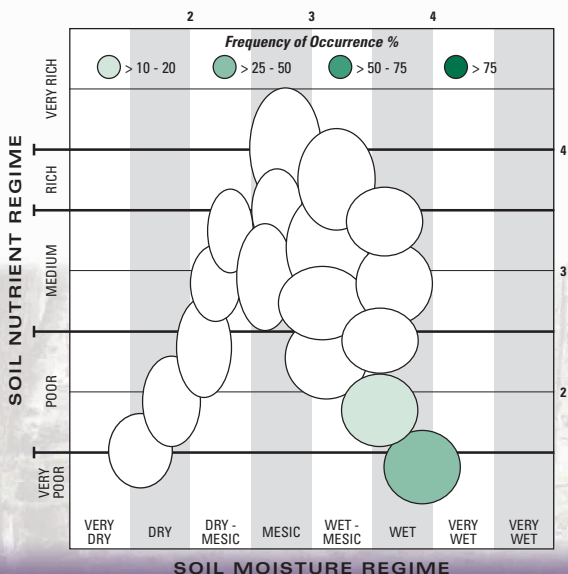
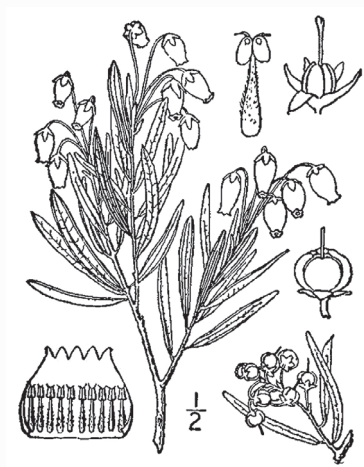




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Andromeda glaucophylla Bog Rosemary

- A low, erect, evergreen shrub; round, hairless stems; bark is grey to blackish.
- Leaves alternate, leathery, whitish beneath when young; flower pink, urn-shaped, on backward-curving stalks.
- A wetland obligate.

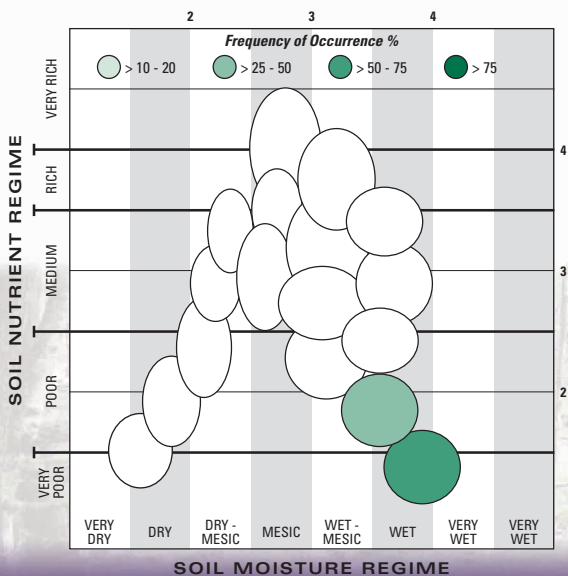




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Aronia melanocarpa Black Chokeberry

- Medium shrub up to 6' tall with finely serrated leaves.
- Leaves commonly draw to a point at the end and taper toward the base.

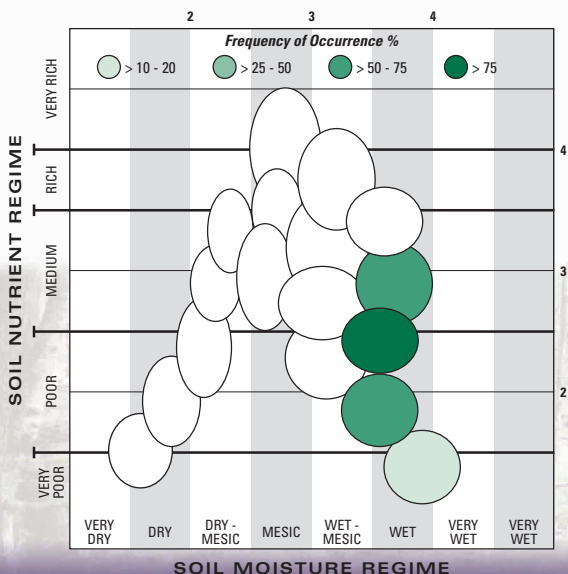




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Aster puniceus Purple-stemmed Aster

- Perennial wildflower with stout stems light green to reddish purple, evenly covered with stiff spreading hairs.
- Alternate leaves becoming gradually smaller along the upper half of each plant.

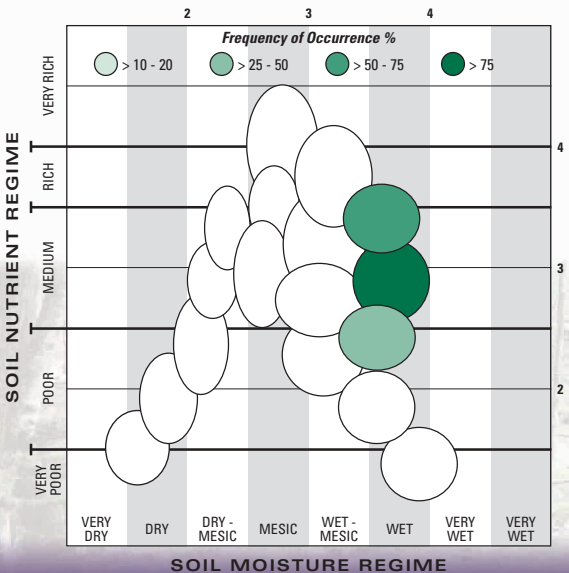
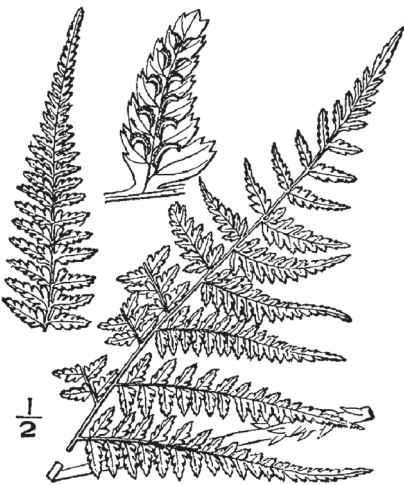




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Athyrium filix-femina Lady Fern

- Lacy-cut, finely-divided, light green fronds which grow in a dense circular clumps to 2' to 3' tall.
- Base of fronds with dark brown or reddish scales.
- Species is found in rich moist woods, thickets, fields, meadows and ravines.

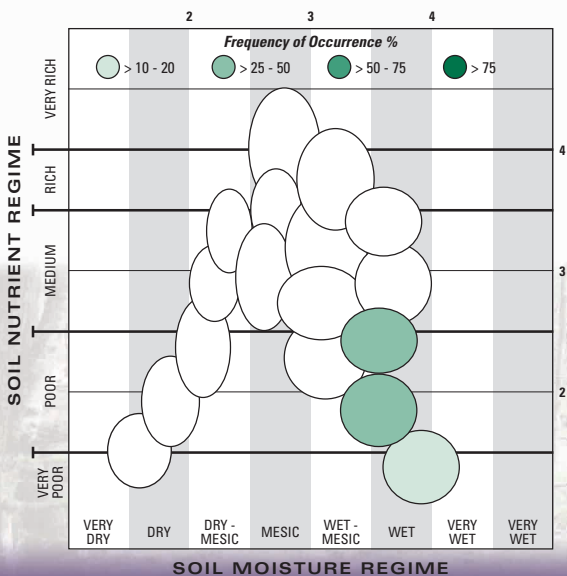
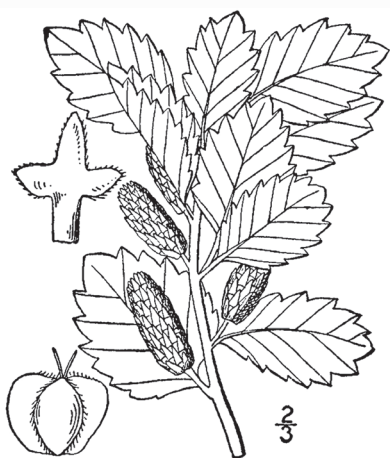




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Betula pumila Bog Birch

- Erect, coarse, irregular shrub; smooth bark dark reddish brown; forms large colonies.
- Leaves stiff; broadly-round above and at the base; edges coarsely toothed.
- Found in bogs, calcareous fens, wooded swamps, muskegs, and along lakeshores.

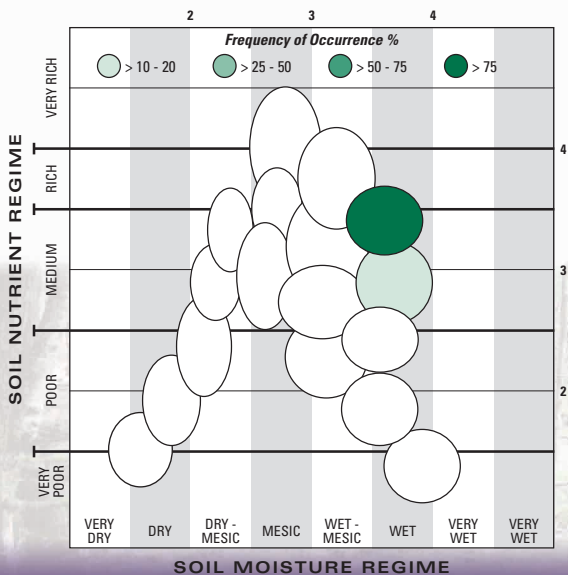
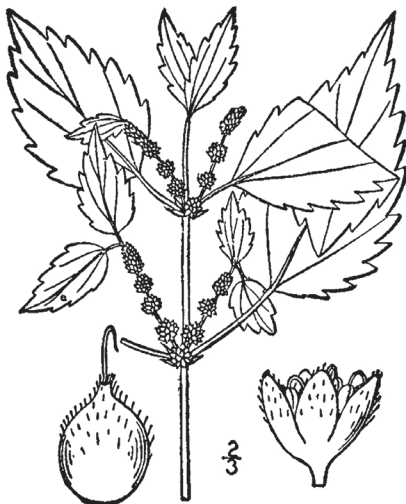




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Boehmeria cylindrica False Nettle

- Erect, perennial forb with no stinging hairs.
- Leaves long-stalked, opposite, and coarsely toothed.
- Found in wet to moist habitat; woods, shores, marshes.

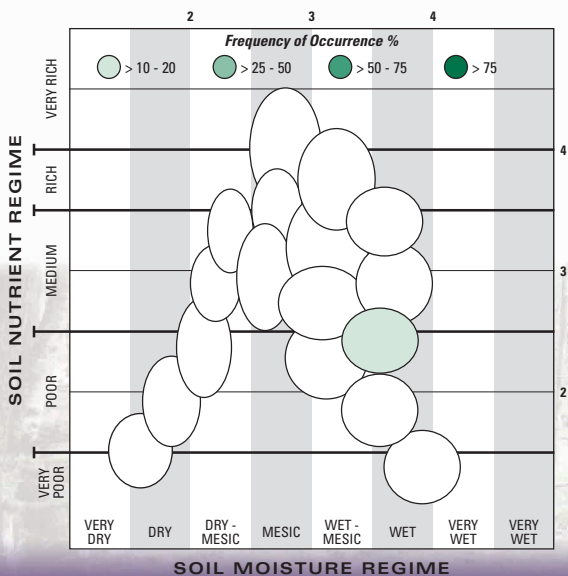




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Calla palustris Water Arum

- Erect, perennial, emergent, semi-aquatic 5" to 10" tall.
- Leaves broadly oval with a pointed tip.
- Found in bogs, shallows, cold water; in peaty, mucky soil.

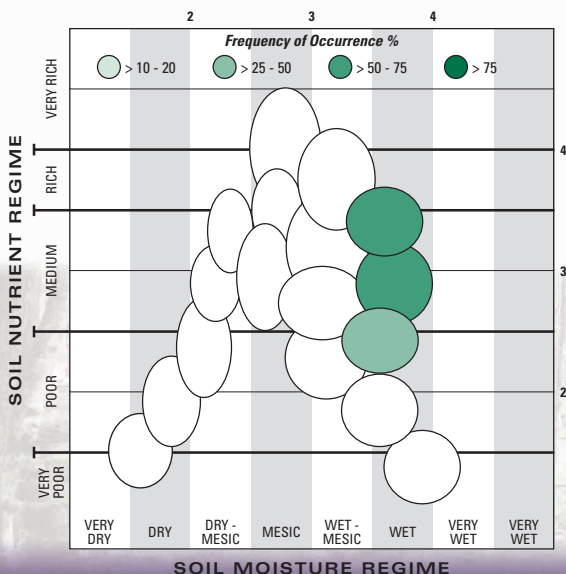




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Caltha palustris Marsh Marigold

- Erect, perennial forb; stems hollow, branched toward the top.
- Leaves widely heart-shaped; yellow flowers, blooms April through May.
- Found in wet habitat; meadows, woods, forest marshes, and streambanks.

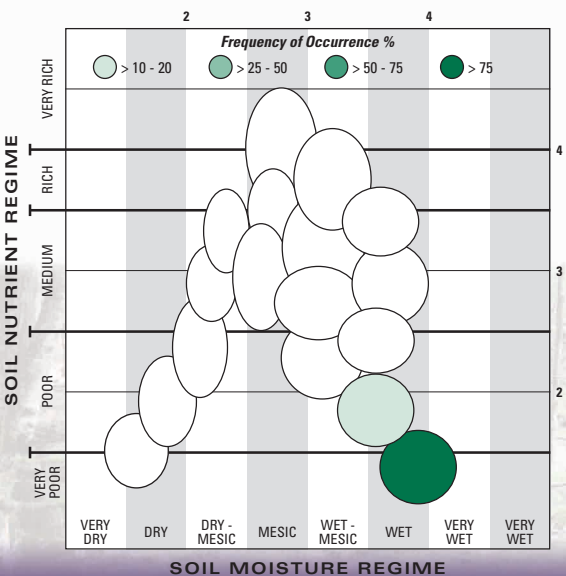




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Chamaedaphne calyculata Leatherleaf

- Erect, perennial shrub; branched, covered with tiny, brown scales, forms dense thickets.
- Leaves evergreen, oblong, edges curled downward; flowers solitary, nodding, on one-sided, spike-like cluster.
- Found in wet habitat; bogs; in acidic soil.

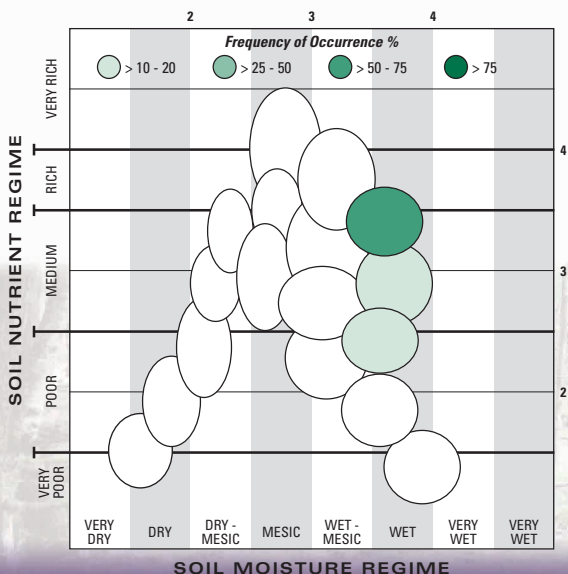
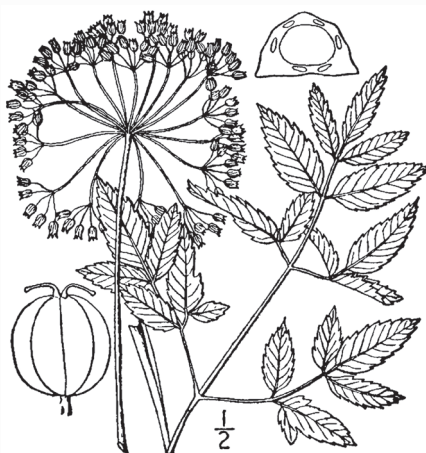




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Cicuta maculata Water Hemlock

- Erect, perennial, 2' to 7' tall, emerging, semi-aquatic forb; stems often purple-spotted.
- Leaves pinnately-divided; broad, toothed leaflets; 3" flat-topped inflorescence, blooms June thru August.
- Found in wet to moderately moist habitat; woods, meadows and marshes.

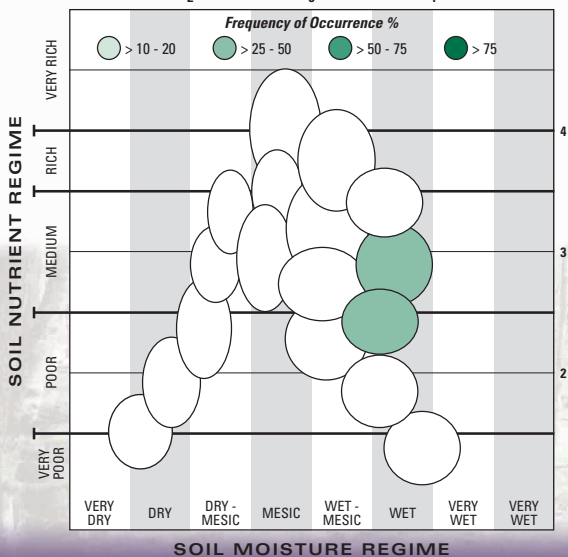
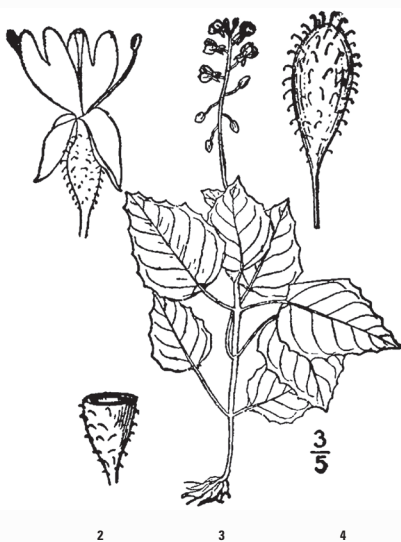




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Circaea alpina Dwarf Enchanter's Nightshade

- Erect, perennial, 4" to 12" tall forb; stems weak, soft.
- Leaves opposite, more than half as wide as long, sharply-pointed.
- Inflorescence with open, stalked flowers, blooms June through August.

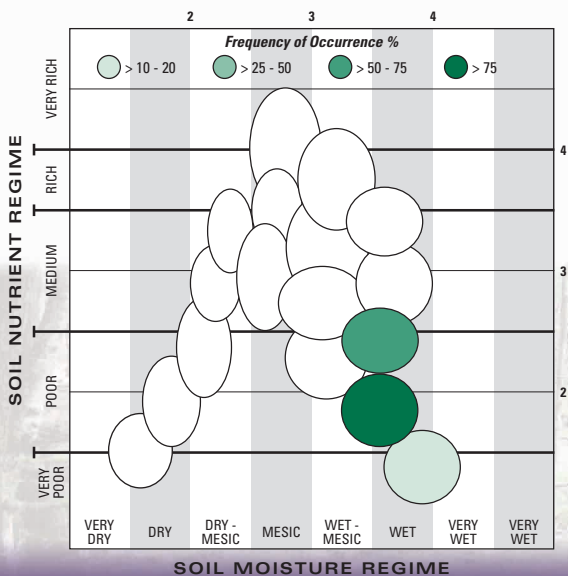
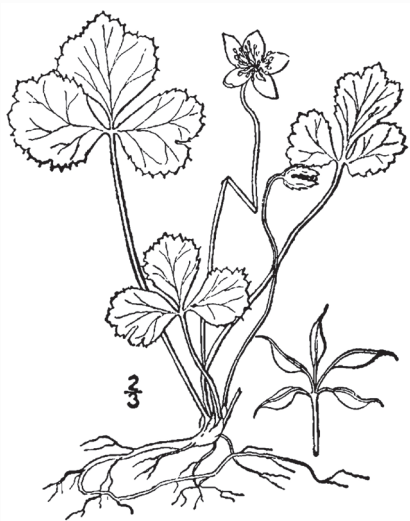




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Coptis groenlandica Goldthread

- Erect, perennial, evergreen forb; slender.
- Shiny, evergreen leaves, roundish with rounded teeth.
- Flowers white, tiny, with petal-like sepals on 2" to 6" stalks, blooms May through June.

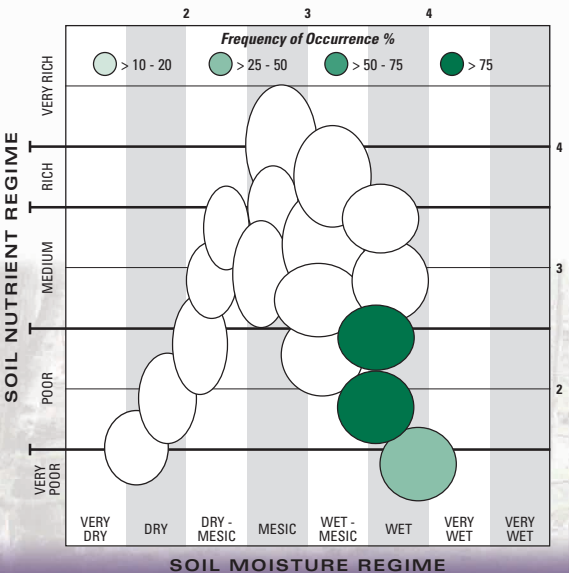
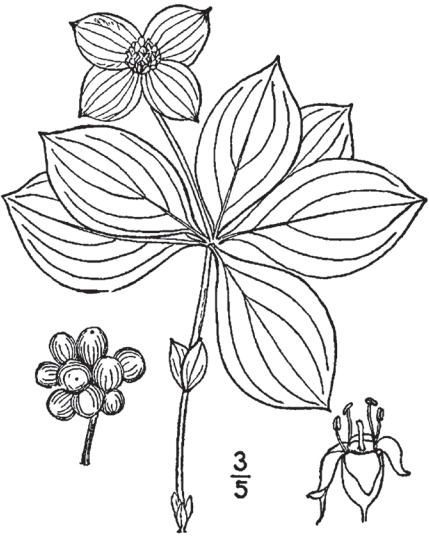




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Cornus canadensis Bunchberry

- Small, perennial, herb usually occurring in patches.
- Single flowers appear white, fruit in clusters of red berries.

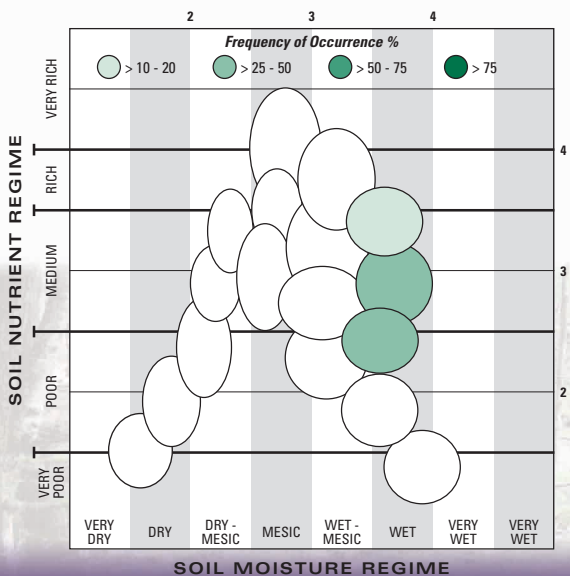
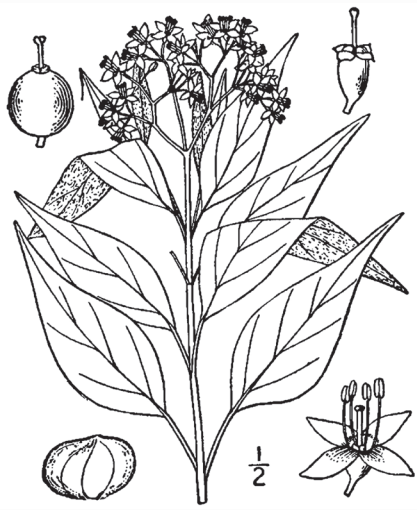




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Cornus stolonifera Red-osier Dogwood

- Medium-sized shrub; stems smooth and bright red to reddish purple.
- Leaves with five to seven veins, pale beneath.
- Most often found on wetter sites.

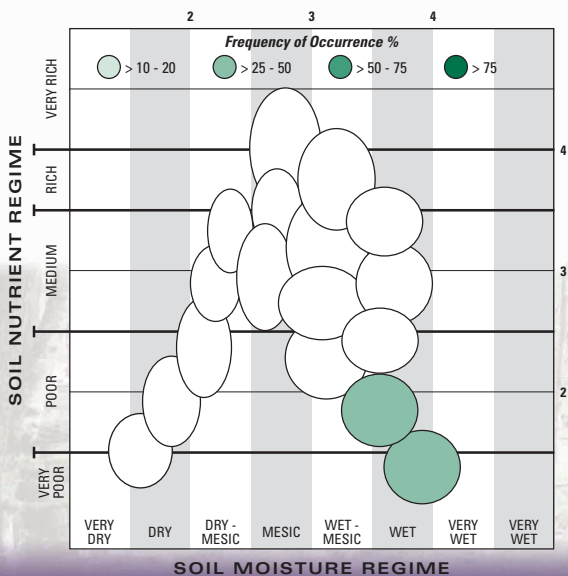




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Cypripedium acaule Pink Lady's Slipper

- Perennial forb with hairy stems; leaves, oblong with pointed tips, ribbed, undersides pale.
- Flowers long, pink pouch with red veins, hairy inside.
- Dry to wet habitat; prefers acidic, sandy soil.

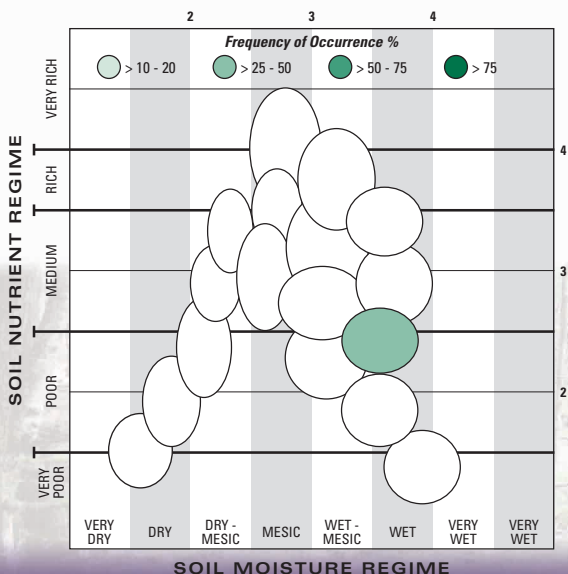
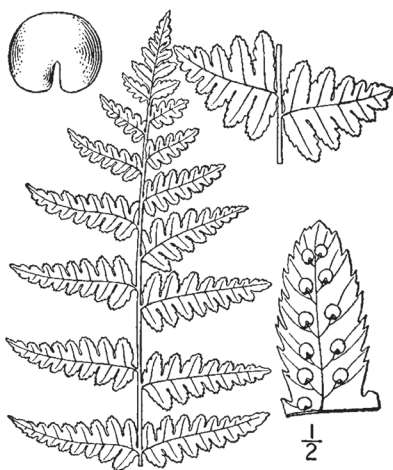




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Dryopteris cristata Crested Wood Fern

- Easily identified by small, broadly triangular shaped lower leaflets.
- Leaves once-compound, tapering at the tip; leaflets with six plus pairs of lobes with bristly tipped teeth.
- Prefers swamps and boggy woods.

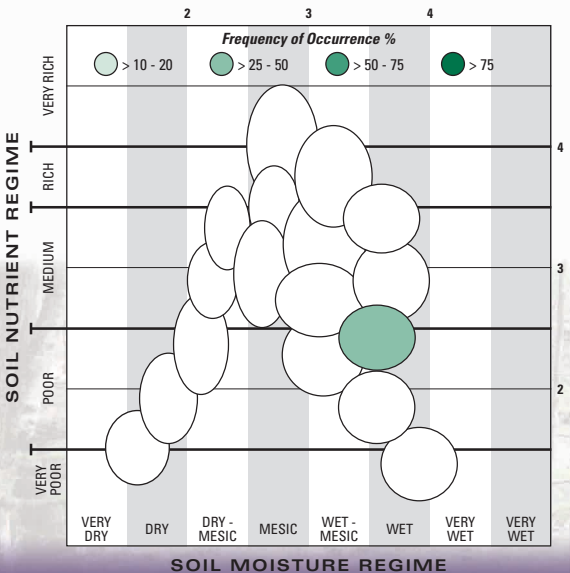
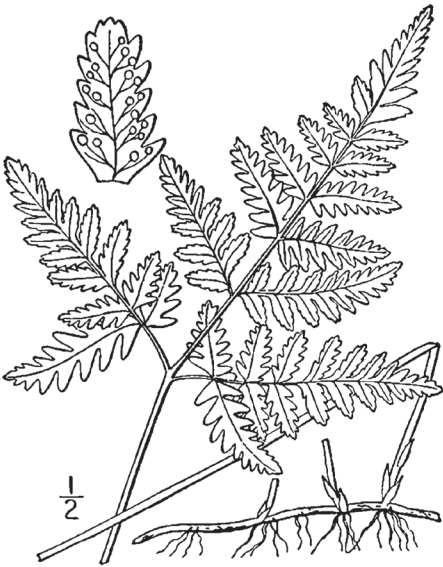




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Dryopteris disjuncta Oak Fern

- Delicate looking fern with a dark stem.
- Slightly scaly near the base only.

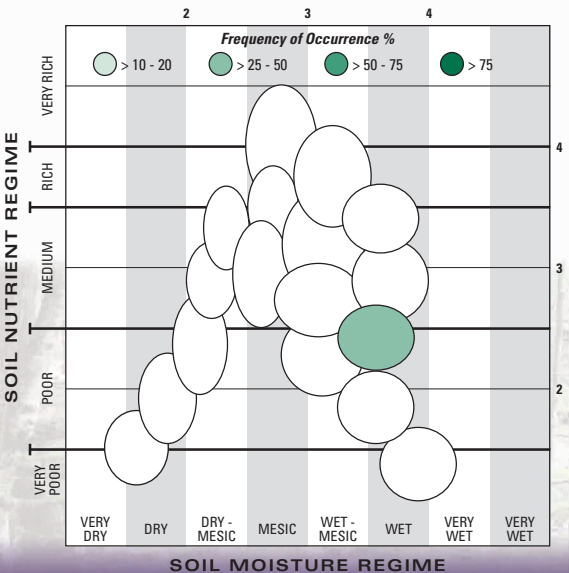
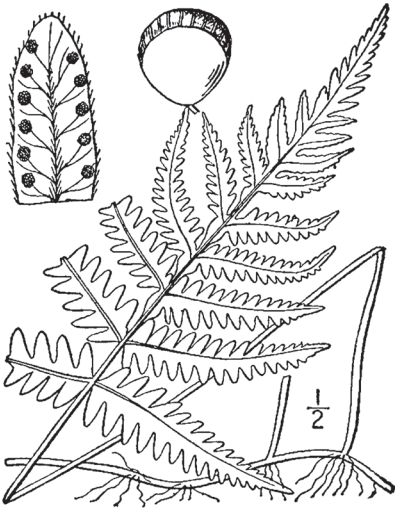




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Dryopteris phegopteris Beech Fern

- Scaly stem and more coarse in appearance than Oak Fern.
- Lowest pair of leaves point away from the tip of the plant.

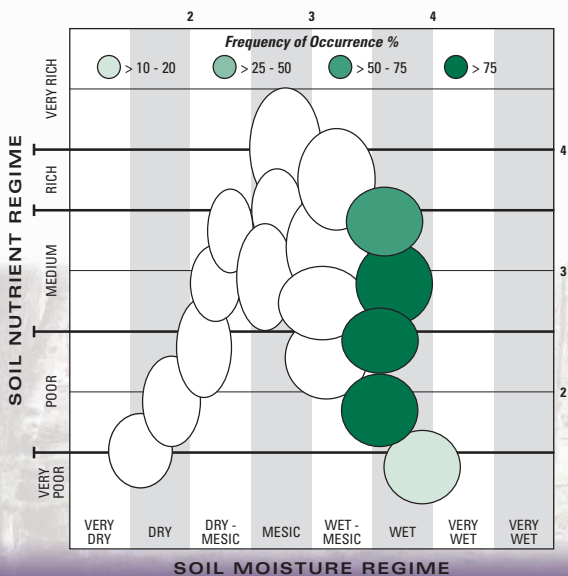




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Dryopteris spinulosa Spinulose Shield Fern

- Scales on base of fronds are light brown.
- Some fronds remain alive during the winter.

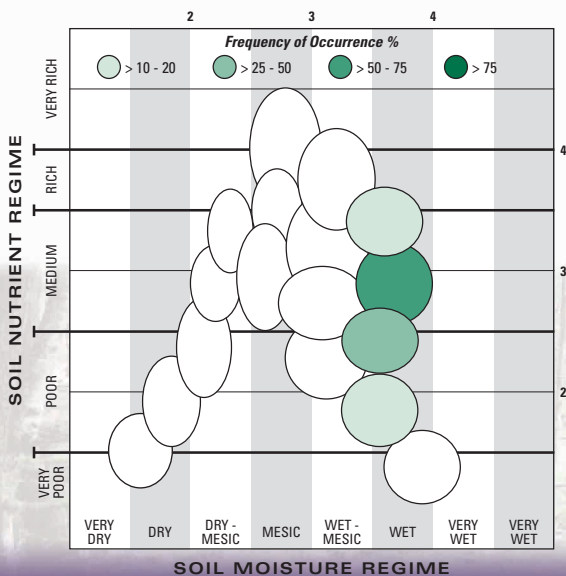
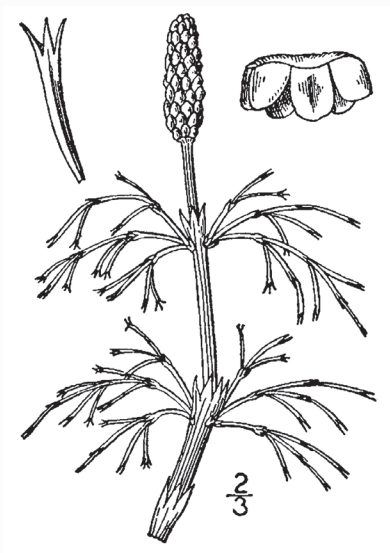




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Equisetum sylvaticum Wood Horsetail

- Fern ally; prefers moist shaded areas.
- Jointed stems.
- Branches in regular whorls, usually branched again.

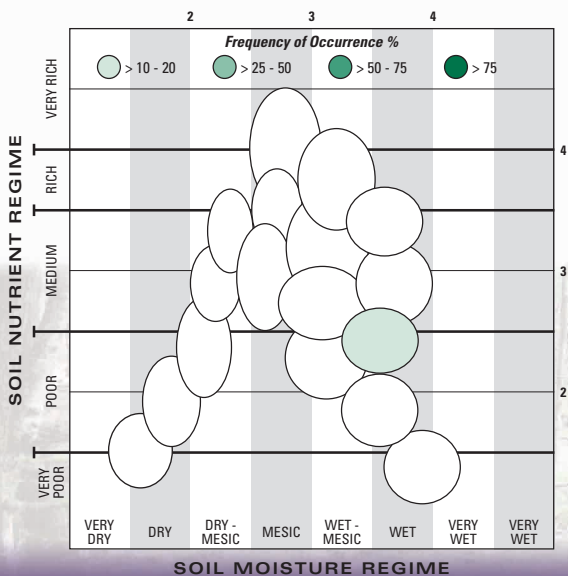
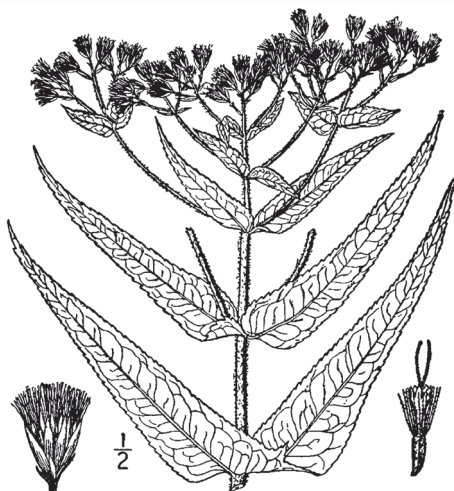




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Eupatorium perfoliatum Boneset

- Erect, perennial forb; stems with long spreading hairs.
- Leaves opposite, sharply toothed, pointed tip and a wide base surrounding the stem.

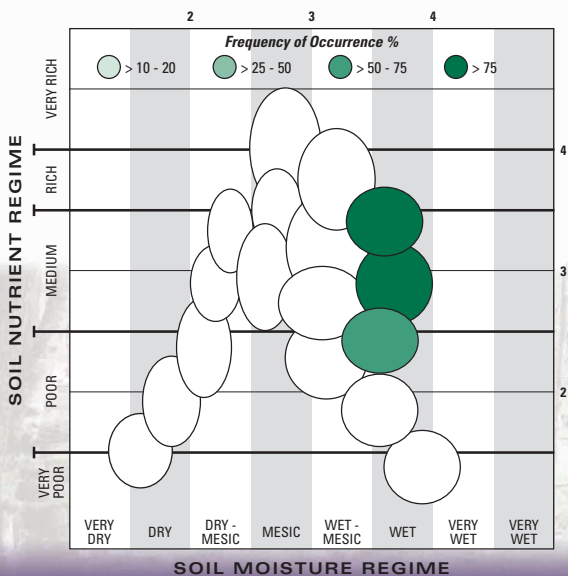




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Galium asprellum Rough Bedstraw

- Erect to sprawling square-stemmed herb with narrow leaves in whorls of six.
- Stems are prickly-rough on the four sides.

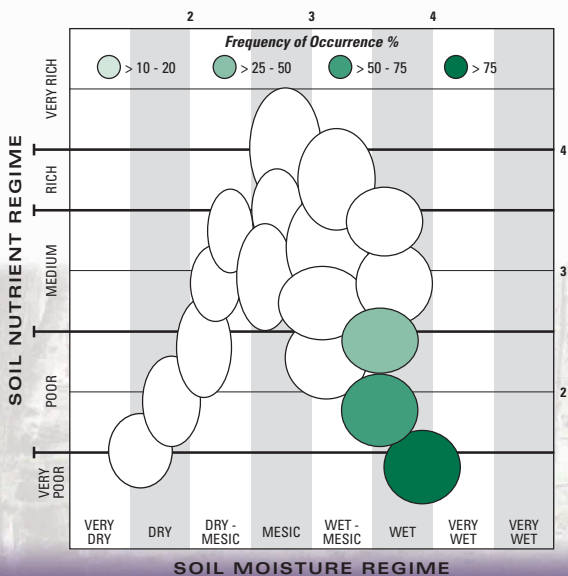




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Gaultheria hispidula Creeping Snowberry

- Trailing, perennial shrub, bristly; stems very leafy, prostrate.
- Leaves are short-stalked and round with bristles underneath.
- White flowers develop into small white edible berries.

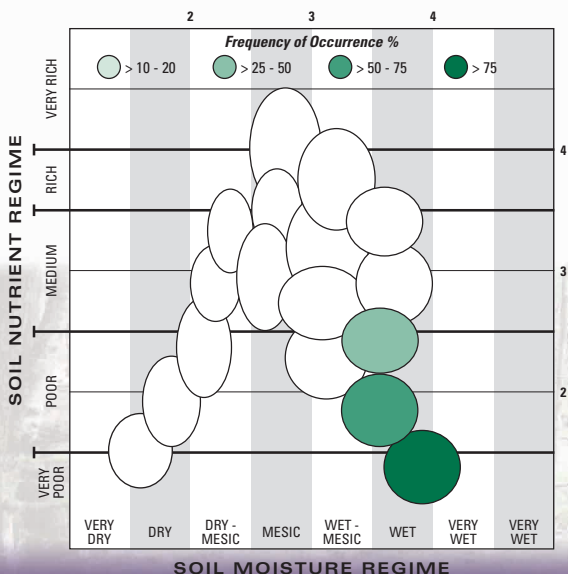




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Gaylussacia baccata Black Huckleberry

- Small woody shrub.
- Fruit is similar to blueberry, but appear in clusters and vary in color from blue to black.
- Underside of leaves covered with shiny resinous dots.

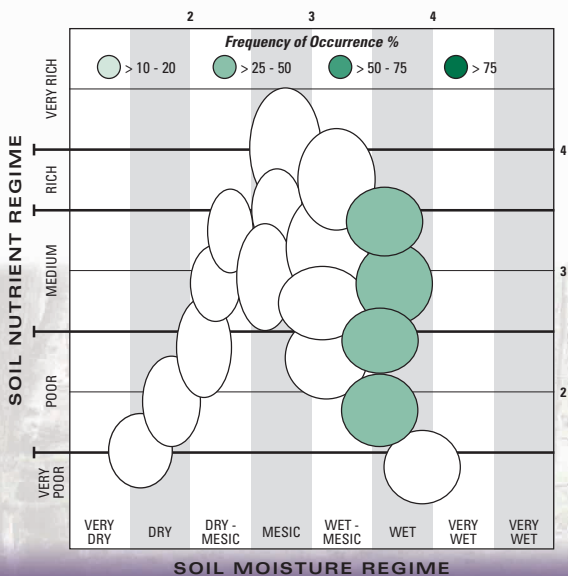
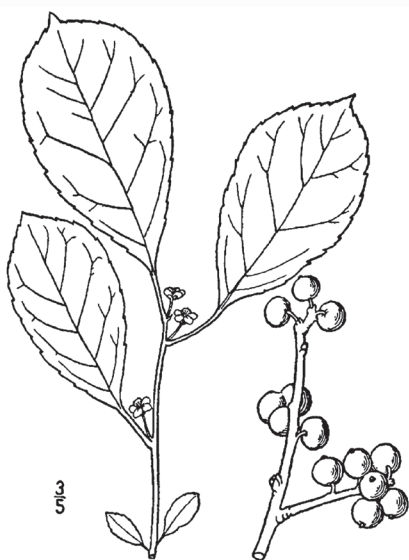




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Ilex verticillata Winterberry

- A large shrub with finely toothed deciduous leaves.
- Bright red berries appear at base of leaves in October and persist into winter.

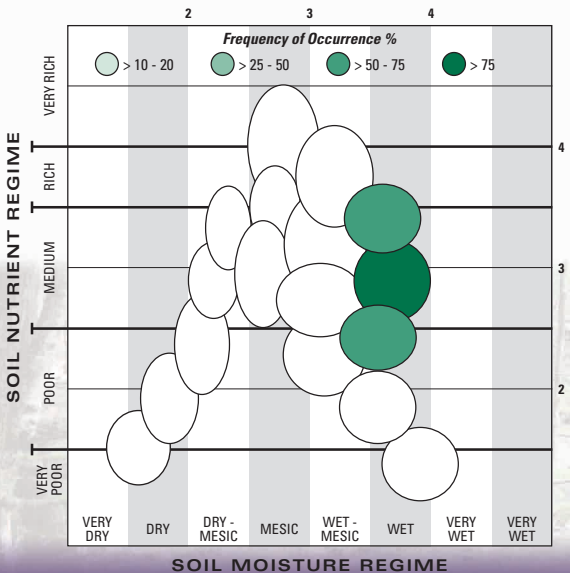
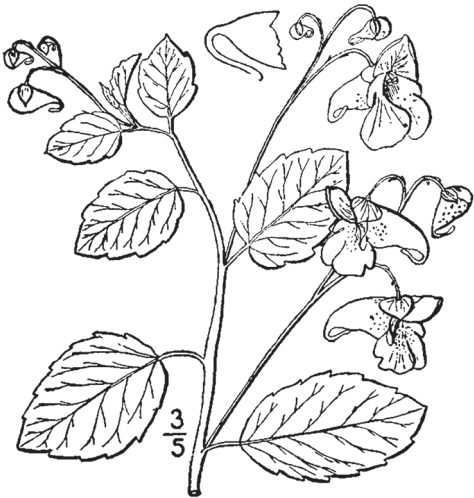




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Impatiens capensis Spotted Touch-me-not

- Succulent, quickly wilting herb with translucent stems.
- Orange, tubular shaped, drooping flowers; blooms July through September.

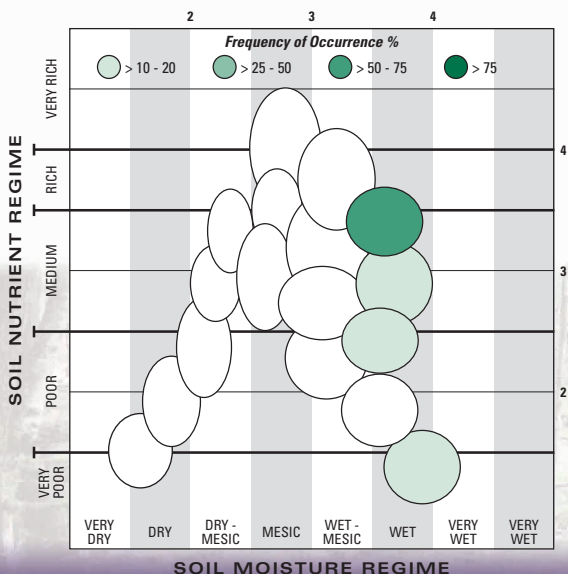




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Iris versicolor Larger Blue Flag

- Erect, perennial, semi-aquatic to emergent, forb with sword shaped leaves.
- Flower blue to purple, 4" wide, inflorescence held above the leaves; blooms June through July.

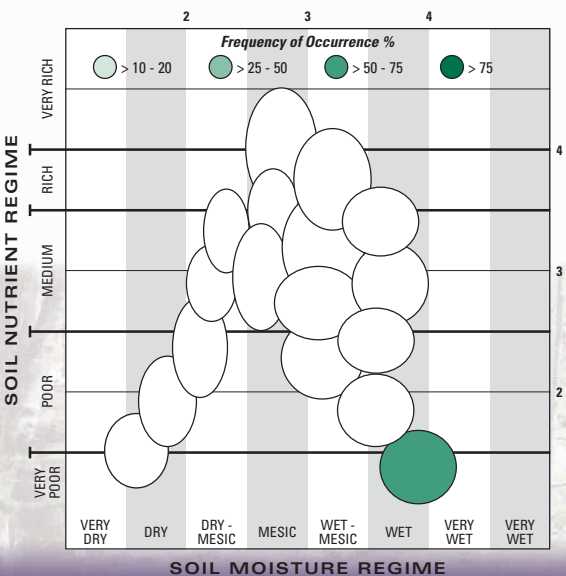




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Kalmia polifolia Pale Laurel

- Erect, perennial, 1' to 2' tall shrub; twigs with two sharp edges.
- Leaves evergreen, leathery, linear to lance-like and shiny; fine, white hairs below.
- Usually found in bog habitats.

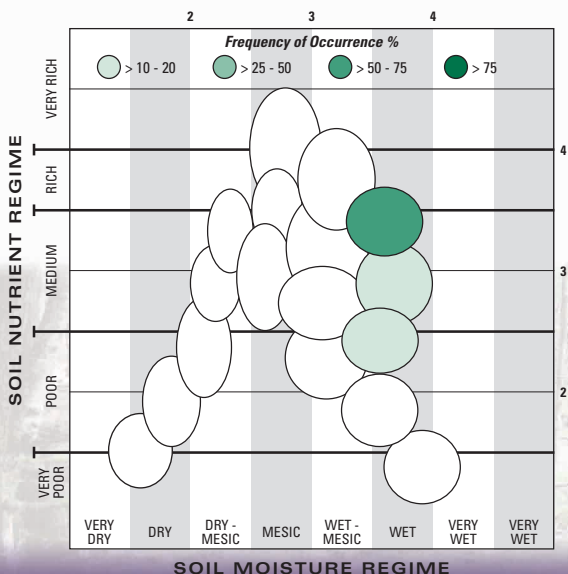




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Laportea canadensis Wood Nettle

- Erect, perennial, forb with stinging hairs.
- Leaves widely-oval, coarsely-toothed, hairy, and long-stalked; only nettle species with alternate leaves.

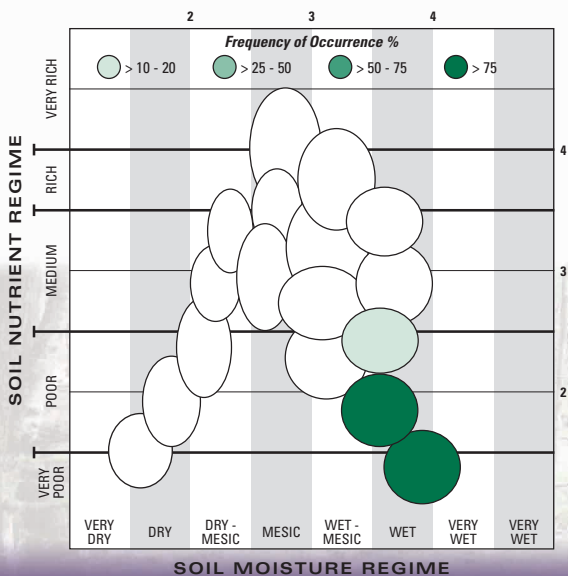




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Ledum groenlandicum Labrador Tea

- Erect, perennial, shrub; stems densely orange-hairy.
- Leaves evergreen, thick, lance-like to elliptical, woolly, often with orangish hairs beneath.

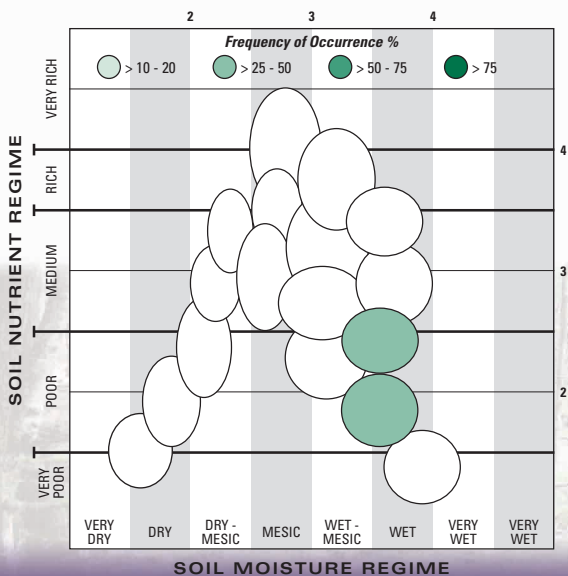




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Linnaea borealis Twinflower

- Creeping, perennial, evergreen forb with opposite leaves.
- Flowers pink/white, long, funnel-shaped, very fragrant, hairy inside; inflorescence a two-flowered, nodding cluster; blooms June through August.

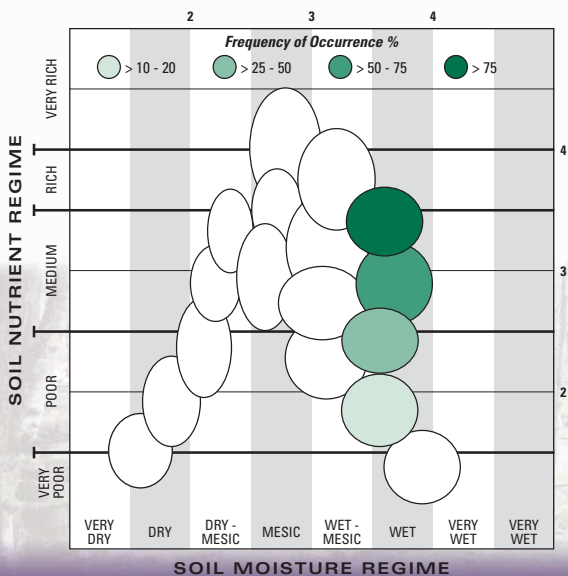
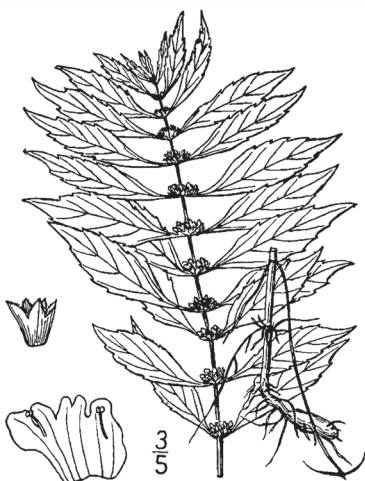




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Lycopodium uniflorum Bugleweed

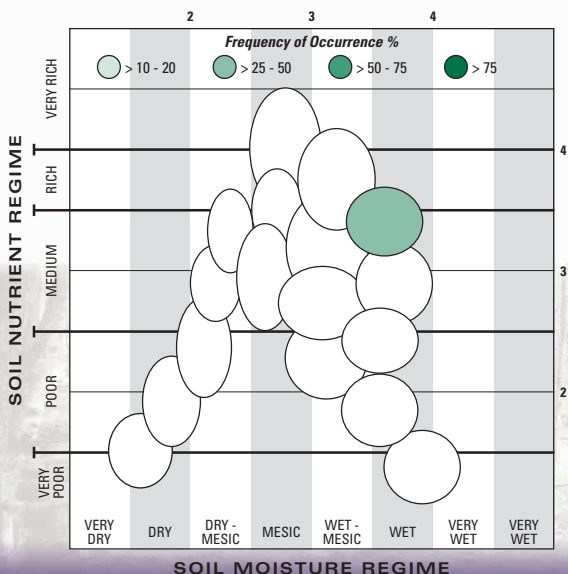
- Erect, perennial, aromatic forb; stems square.
- Leaves opposite, long and narrow with a pointed tip and a few shallow teeth.
- Flower inflorescence tight, small, whorled clusters from the leaf axils; blooms July through September.





Lysimachia ciliata Fringed Loosestrife

- Erect, perennial, forb; slender, long, creeping rhizomes.
- Leaves opposite with hairs along the entire stalk.
- Flower yellow with a rusty-red "eye," stalked; solitary in the upper leaf axils; blooms June through July.

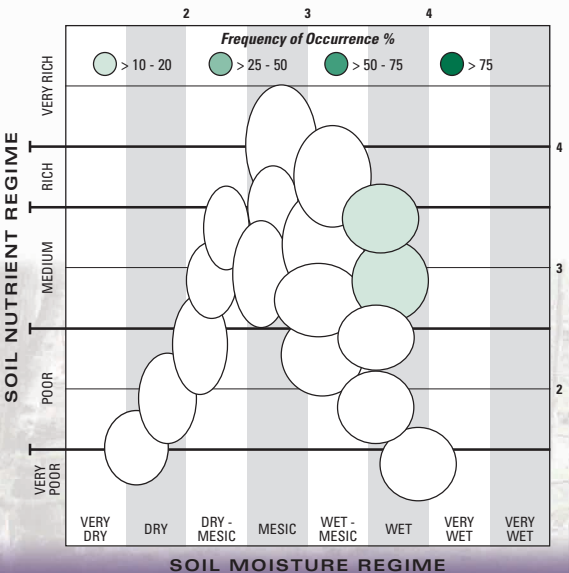
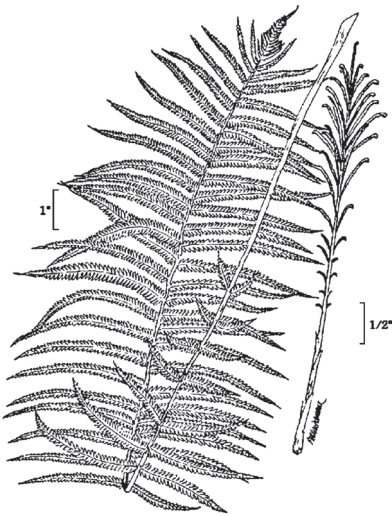




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Matteuccia struthiopteris Ostrich Fern

- Clump-forming, upright to arching, deciduous fern.
- Finely dissected, medium green, fronds with a feathery appearance.
- Prefers wet woodland habitat.

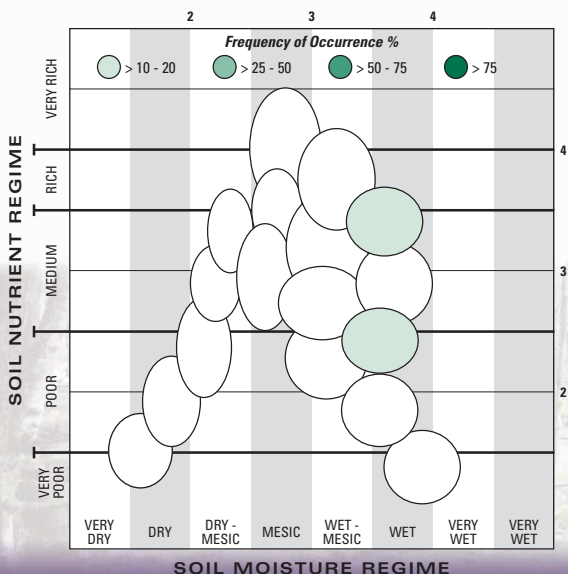
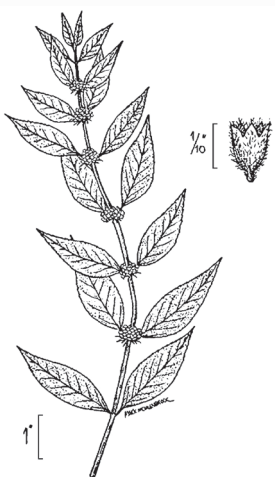




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Mentha arvensis Wild Mint

- Erect, perennial, aromatic forb with square stems.
- Leaves opposite, short-stalked, toothed, with a pointed tip.
- Inflorescence dense, whorled clusters distinctly separated along the stem; blooms July through September.

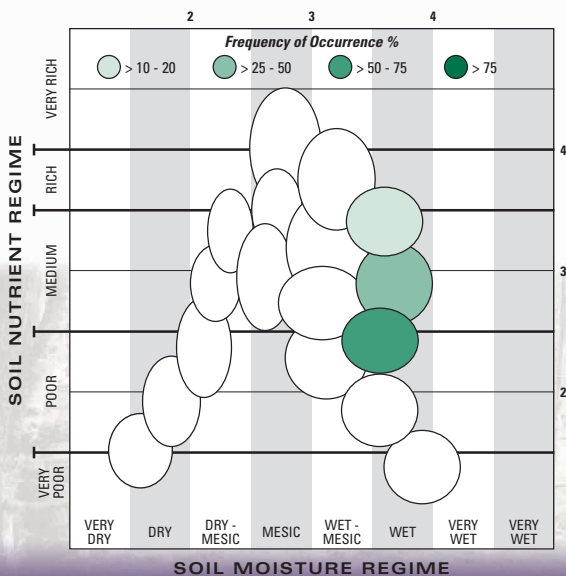




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Mitella nuda Naked Miterwort

- Small forb (3" to 8") with roundly heart-shaped and bluntly toothed basal leaves.
- Leafless flowering stem.

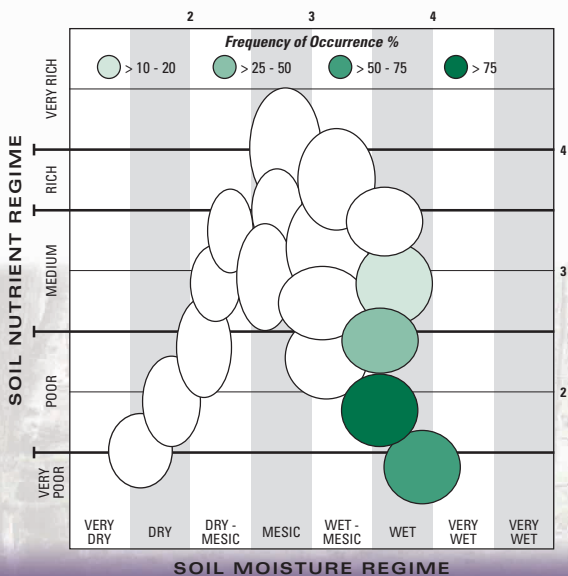




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Nemopanthus mucronata Mountain Holly

- Erect, 10' tall shrub, branched.
- Leaves short with sharp point and bases rounded, stalks often reddish.
- Red/yellow berries.

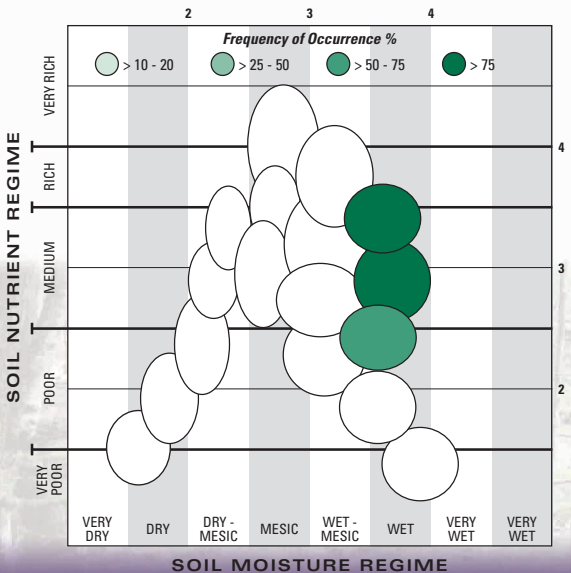




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Onoclea sensibilis Sensitive Fern

- A large, somewhat coarse, deciduous fern which occurs in wet woods and thickets and in moist soils along streams and springs.
- Distinguishable by broadly lobed, rather than finely divided, frond.
- Green fronds are extremely sensitive to frost and drought.

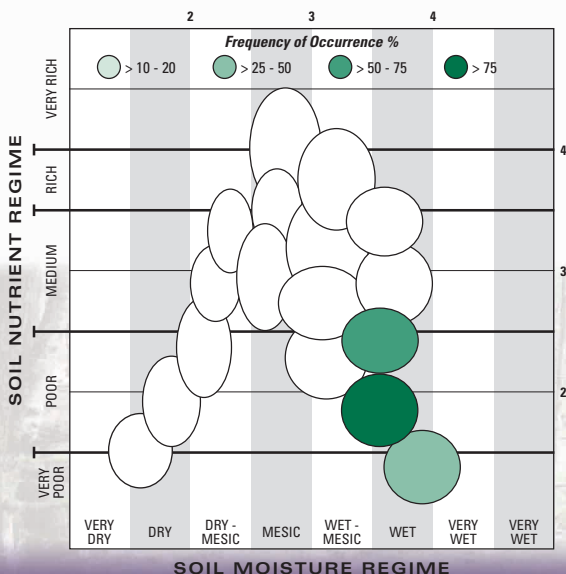
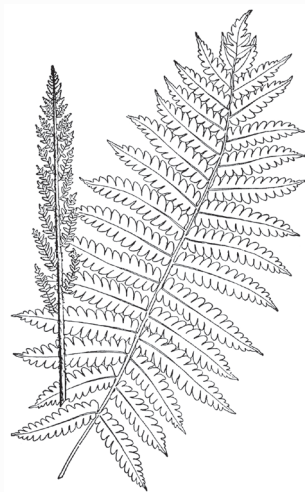




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Osmunda cinnamomea Cinnamon Fern

- Occurs in clumps in moist, boggy ground.
- Large, erect, pinnately-compound, yellowish-green, fronds persist through summer, turn yellow in autumn.
- Stiff, spore-bearing fronds grow from center of clump; appear in early spring, quickly turning brown.

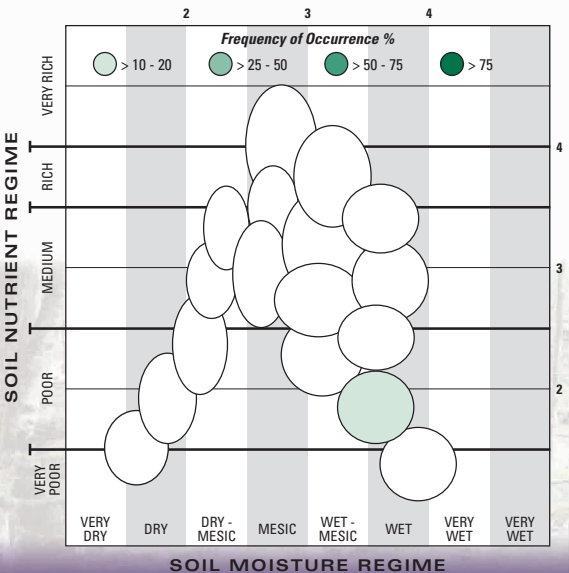




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Osmunda regalis Royal Fern

- Grows in clumps on moist bluffs and ledges and along streams.
- Broad fronds have large, well-separated leaflets which turn yellow to brown in autumn.
- Spores in brown, tassel-like, clusters at the tips of the fronds.

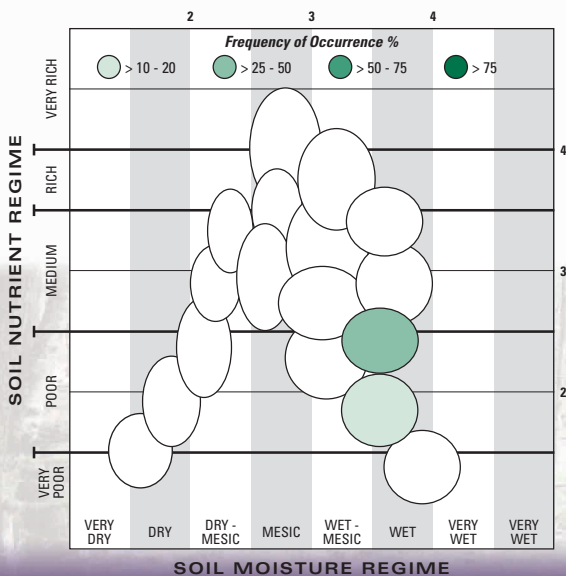




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Oxalis montana Common Wood Sorrel

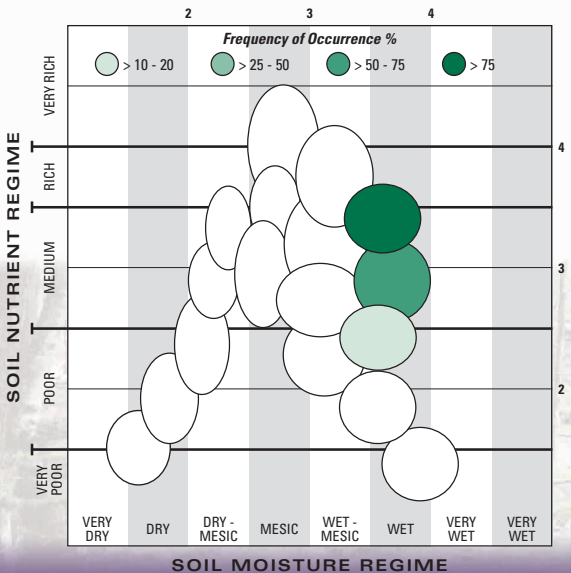
- White flowers with pink veins.
- Leaves heart-shaped, notched at tip.
- Found on somewhat poorly to poorly drained soils.





Parthenocissus spp. Virginia Creeper

- Trailing/climbing woody vine.
- Leaves palmate, dull green on top.
- Found in openings and rich woods.

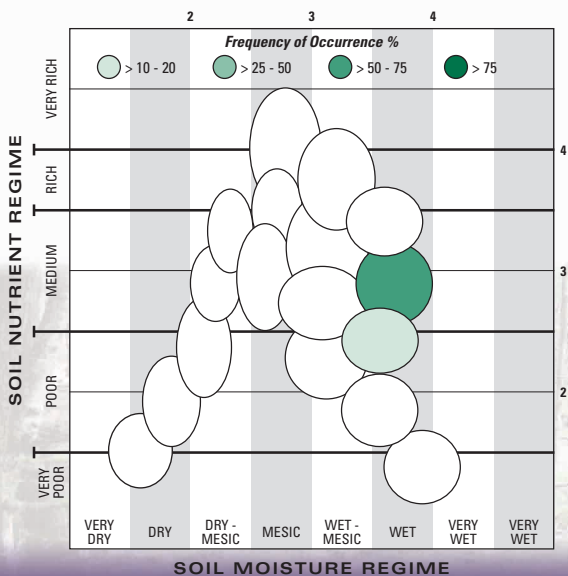
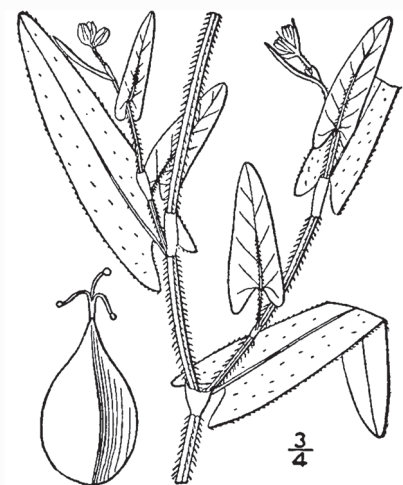




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Polygonum sagittatum Arrow-leaved Tearthumb

- Climbing or tangling, slender forb; very prickly four-angled stems.
- Leaves alternate with downward-pointed lobes forming a heart-shaped base surrounding stem.
- Wet habitat; marshes, swamps, streambanks.

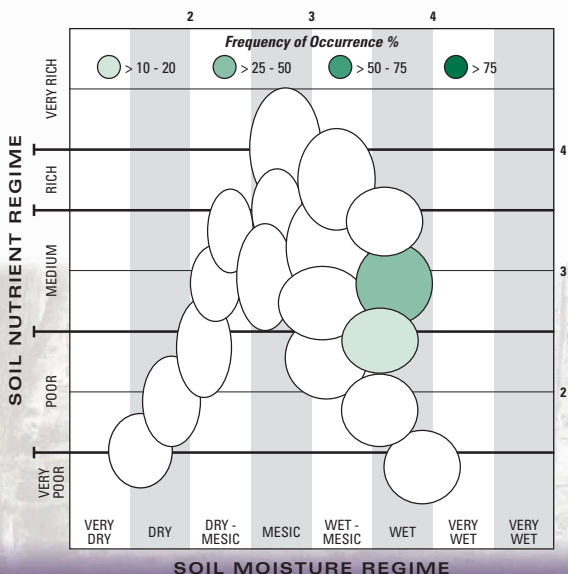
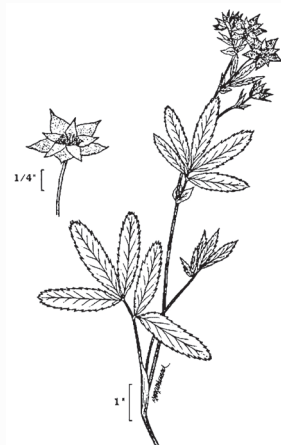




(Photo by Bernd Haynold, distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license.)

Potentilla palustris Marsh Cinquefoil

- Sprawling, emergent, semi-aquatic; stems reddish-brown.
- Leaves long stalked, divided into five to seven leaflets, oblong, sharply toothed; flowers purple to red.
- Prefers bogs, swamps, streambanks; in mucky, peaty soil.

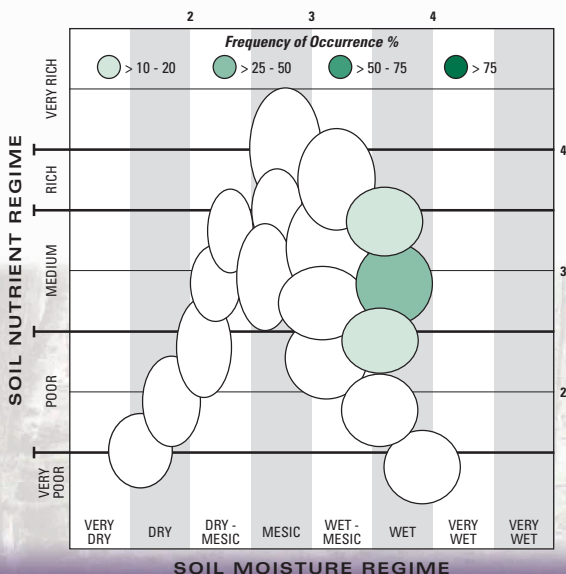




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Prunella vulgaris Heal-all

- Low, perennial forb with a square stem and opposite lance-like leaves.
- Cylindrical, terminal spikes of purple flowers with overlapping hairy bracts.

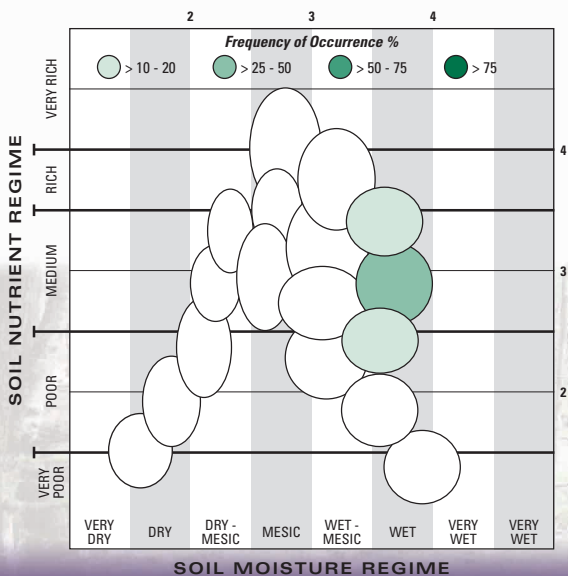




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Rhamnus alnifolia Alder-leaved Buckthorn

- Perennial woody shrub with thin roughish red-brown to gray bark.
- Leaves alternate, oval or oblong with rounded teeth; upper surface is darker green and shiny; lower surface lighter green with hairs present.
- Produces shiny, black berries.

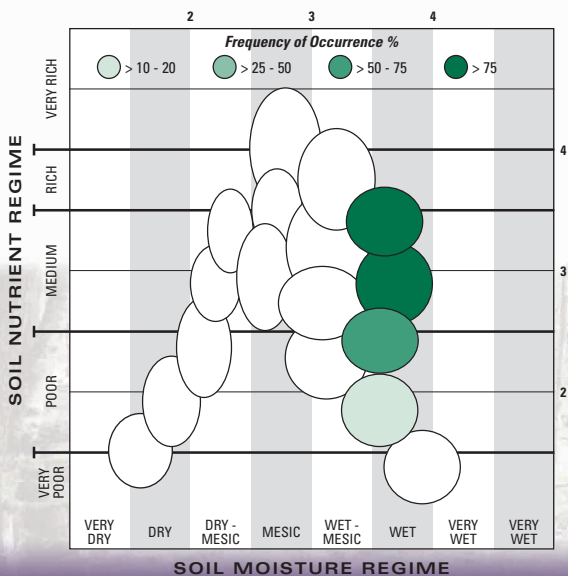
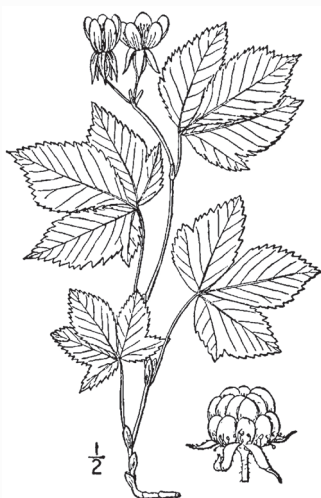




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Rubus pubescens Dwarf Raspberry

- Non-woody forb, main stems creeping along the ground then putting up erect stems with no prickles.
- Leaves long-stalked, three-parted, sharply toothed; produces small dark red berries.
- Wet habitat; woods, bogs, cedar swamps.

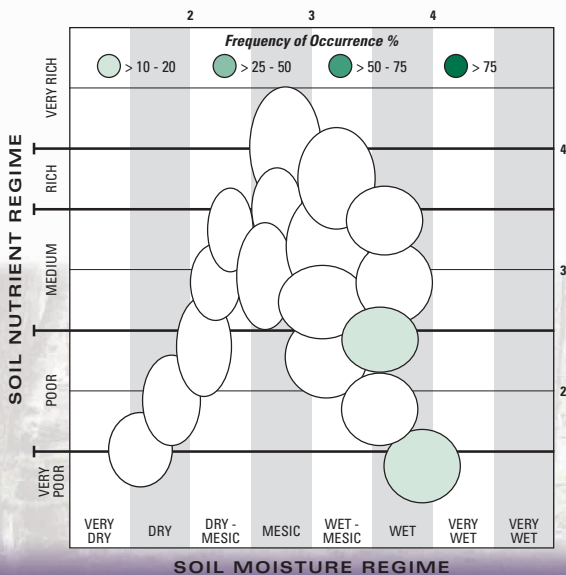
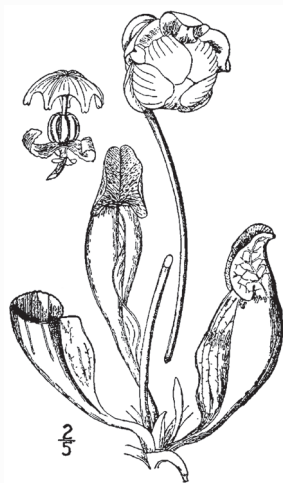




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Sarracenia purpurea Pitcher Plant

- Erect, insectivorous forb.
- Leaves hollow, forming a hooded pitcher-shaped opening that holds water to capture and digest insects, widely winged edges.
- Wet habitat; bogs, shores; in sand, marl (clayey, limy) soil.

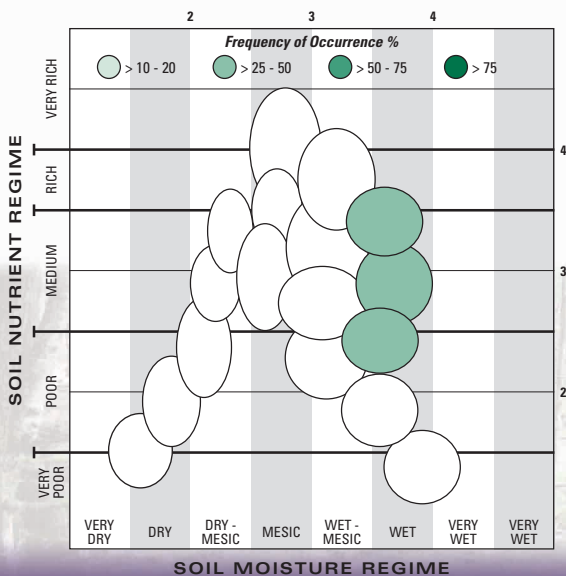
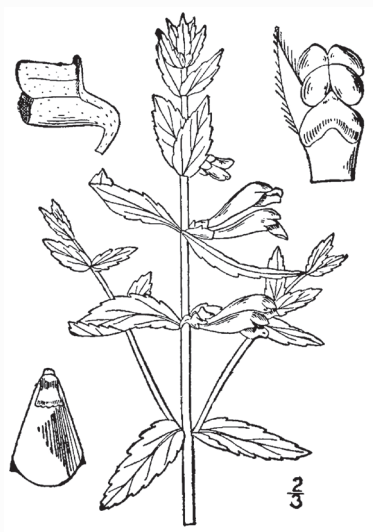




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Scutellaria galericulata Common Skullcap

- Erect, perennial, weak, aromatic forb; stems square.
- Leaves opposite, barely stalked; solitary flowers grow from axils.
- Wet habitat; shores, meadows, marshes.

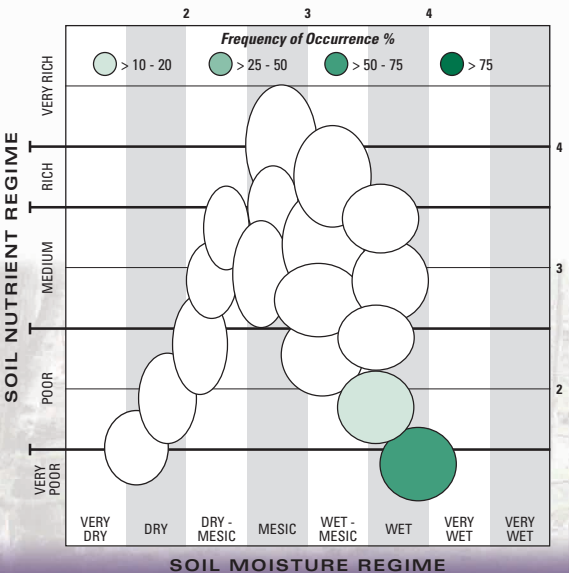
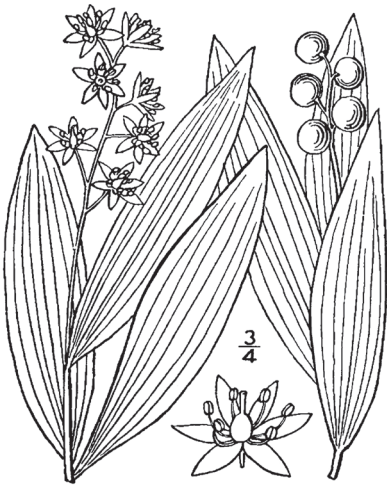




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Smilacina trifolia Three-leaved Solomon's Seal

- Erect, perennial forb; leaves alternate, stalkless, almost erect, lance-like with pointed tips.
- Flower white, starry; inflorescence with three to eight flowers on a 2" long, narrow cluster.
- Wet habitat; swamps, bogs.

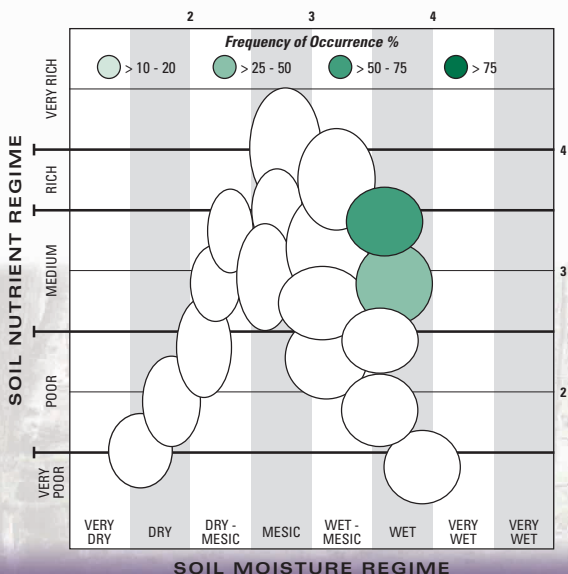




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Solanum dulcamara Bittersweet Nightshade

- Trailing or twining perennial, smooth, woody vine; leaves stalked, mostly simple but some with two lower lobes.
- Flower purple/blue with shiny, green spots in the center; inflorescence a branched cluster.
- Moist habitat; disturbed sites, woods, cliffs, marshes.

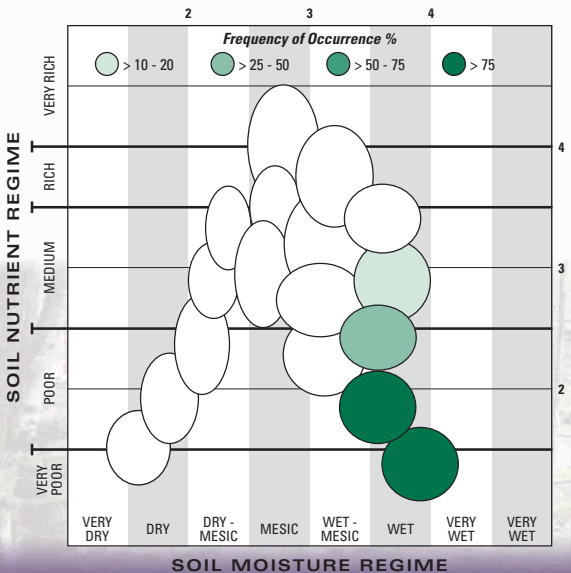




(Photo from Kemp Natural Resources Station Archives)

Sphagnum spp. Sphagnum Mosses

- Bryophyte generally found growing in thick, dense clumps.
- Leaves are tiny, sometimes slightly toothed and grow in hair-like tufts close to the stem; usually light green, but some species have yellow, pink, deep red, or brown leaves.
- Found in wet, boggy areas with acidic soil.

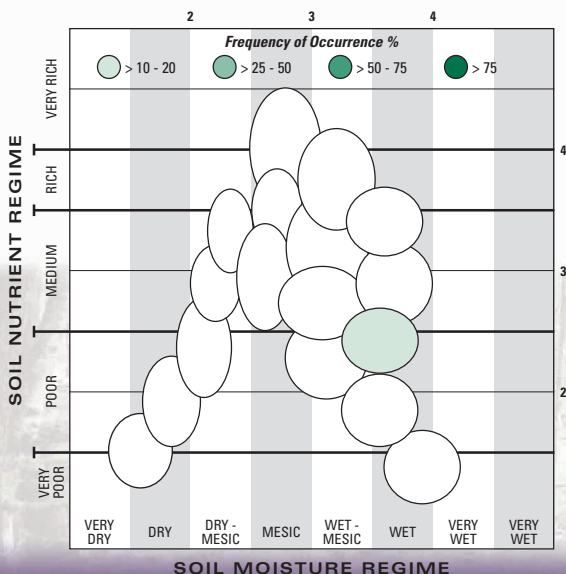
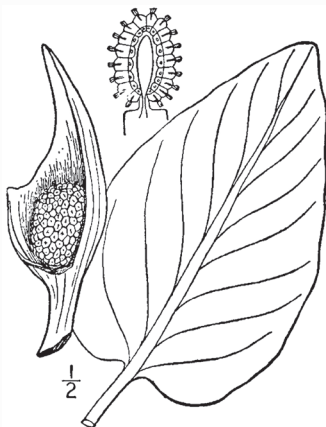




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Symplocarpus foetidus Skunk Cabbage

- Large-leaved, stemless plant that emits a skunk-like odor when crushed.
- Flowers green, tiny; inflorescence roundish, mottled, green to purplish shrouded by a pointed, broad, hood-like, purple spathe; blooms March through May.
- Found in shade; wet; swamps, low ground.

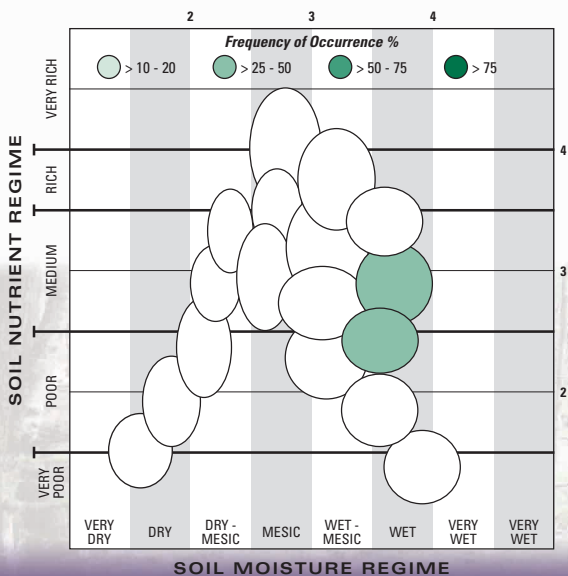




(Photo by Fungus Gus, distributed under a CC-BY 2.0 license.)

Trillium cernuum Nodding Trillium

- Single flower droops below a whorl of three simple leaves.
- Found primarily in lowland forests.

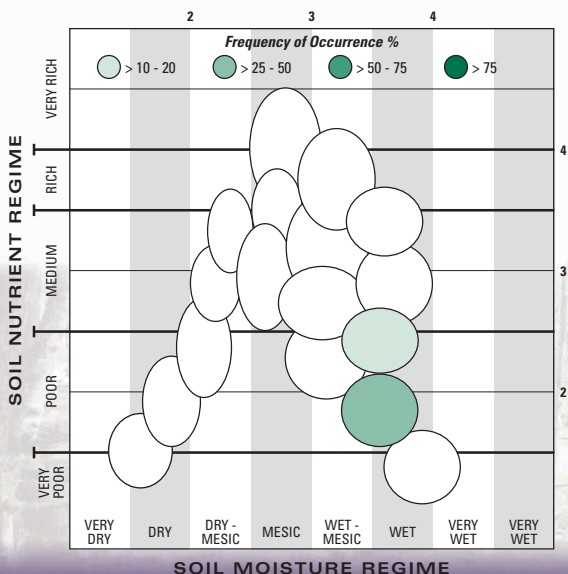
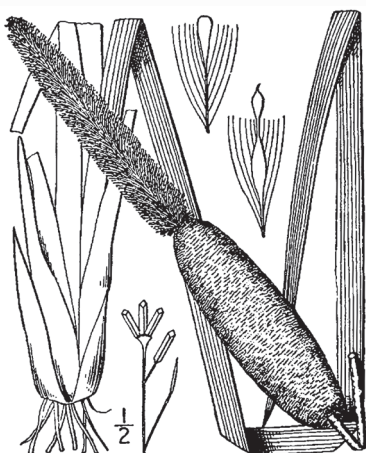




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Typha latifolia Common Cattail

- Emergent semi-aquatic, with many smooth stems; wide flat overlapping leaves.
- Characteristic seed head packed tightly into a brown, cylindrical spike.
- Found in sun; wet to damp; ditches, marshes, shallows; in muddy soil.

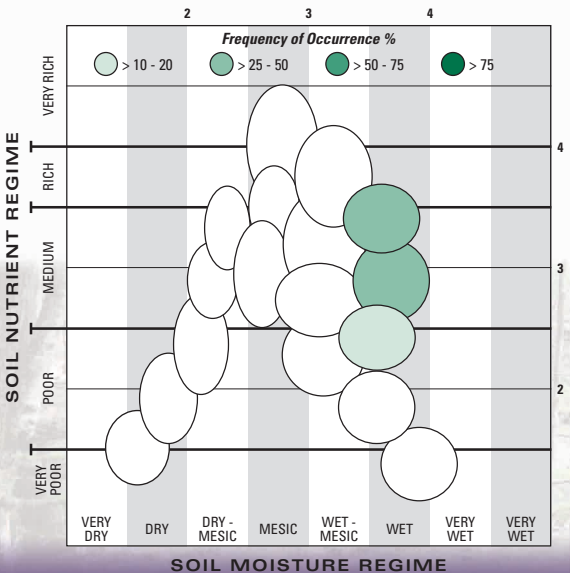




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Urtica dioica Stinging Nettle

- Erect, perennial, forb with **stinging hairs**, often forming large colonies.
- Leaves toothed, opposite, lance-like with a sharp point; flowers cream, tiny; inflorescence many-flowered, long clusters from the upper leaf axils.
- Found in wet to dry habitat; disturbed sites.

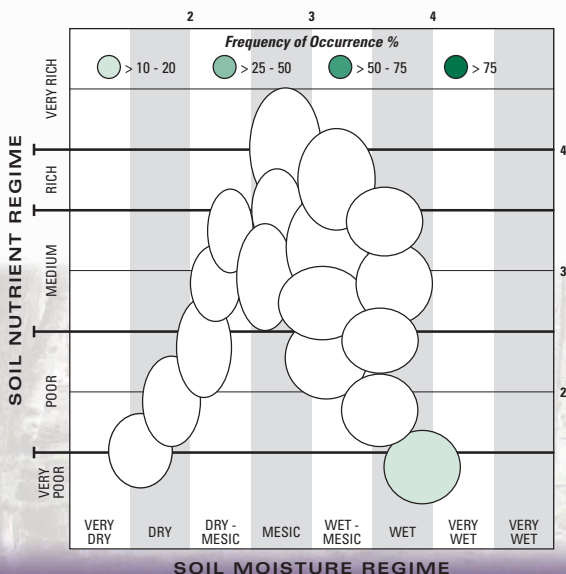




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Vaccinium macrocarpon Large Cranberry

- Trailing, perennial shrub with very thin stems.
- Leaves leathery, evergreen, oblong, tapering at both ends; flower white to pink, deep lobes turning upward; produces red tart berry.
- Found in bog habitat.

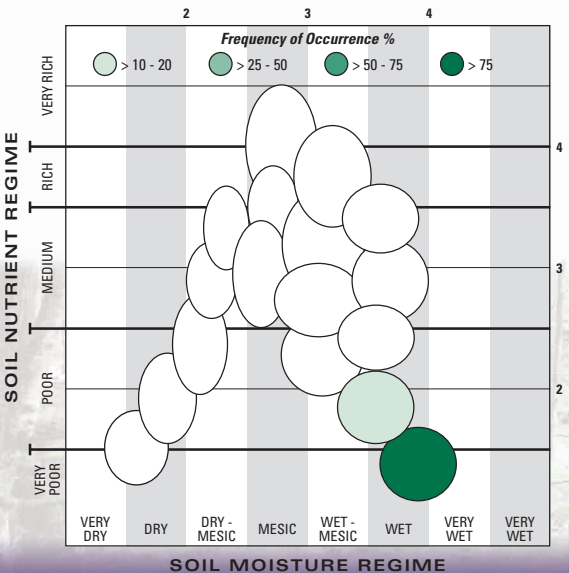




(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Vaccinium oxycoccus Small Cranberry

- Creeping, perennial shrub; leaves evergreen, elliptical, tapering at both ends, not toothed.
- Flowers pink, lobes deeply parted and turning upward; two small, red bracts; produce red berries.
- Wet habitat; bogs; in sandy soil.





(Photo from Department of Natural Resources Archives)

Vitis riparia Riverbank Grape

- Woody vine; climbing or sprawling in open areas; older stems thick with shaggy bark.
- The leaves are large, alternate, lobed, and coarsely serrated; lower surface pale green, upper leaf surface yellowish green to dark green.
- Moist to mesic habitat; woodland edges and openings, thickets, and areas along rivers, lakes, and ditches.

