

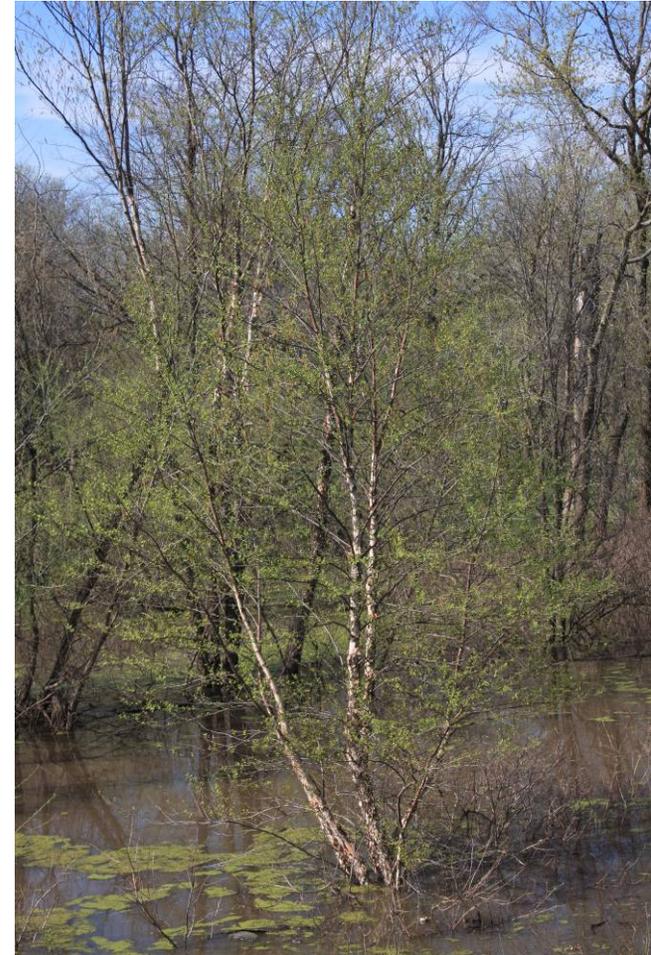
River Birch – Sycamore Small River Floodplain Forest

Site Characteristics: Stands commonly occur along stream and small river banks, shores of ponds, and in swampy forests. In the Midwest, this community is typically found between a wetter or earlier successional forest on the river side and upland forest or prairie communities on the landward side. The alluvial soils that support this natural community are relatively deep, moist, well-drained, and often sandy on the surface. This community is typically found on the natural levee of watercourses and, therefore, is slightly elevated from the flats behind the levee. This community is most common along small streams and blackwater streams than along alluvial floodplains, largely because of the higher sustained flow rates of larger rivers. This community experiences seasonal inundation or groundwater saturation for approximately 12.5-25% of the year, usually during spring and early summer with a frequency of 51-100%.

Vegetation Characteristics: This forest type harbors a number of ubiquitous species and tends to extend into and mix with adjacent communities, resulting in numerous transitional variants. The overstory is composed of deciduous trees with an uneven canopy and the shrub layer is sparse to absent. River Birch and Sycamore are the typical dominants. Both of these species are fast-growing, relatively short-lived, and do not tolerate excessive shade at any stage of growth. *River Birch* should contribute at least 50% of the tree density to be placed in this community. *River Birch* prefers acid soils and is often the dominant tree found along streams affected by acid mine drainage. A wide range of canopy species are present because, along with common bottomland species, mesophytic species from nearby uplands and terraces may be found. A variety of swamp species may be found on more poorly drained sites. The forb and vine strata are abundant, especially in canopy gaps, with composition varying somewhat due to flooding regime and geographic location.

Range:

Conservation Status: G5 – Secure



Iowa NRCS Plant Community Description

This community description is a compilation of the Community Association and its over-riding Community Alliance descriptions as provided by NatureServe (www.natureserve.org/explorer). Where necessary, community descriptions were adapted as recommended by Iowa plant community experts.

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Management Considerations: This community occurs on relatively undisturbed sites and often succeeds from riverfront forests dominated by Willow, Cottonwood, Hackberry, Elm, or Green Ash. This community is typically found between a wetter or earlier successional forest on the streamward side and upland forest or prairie on the landward side. Stands are subjected to frequent, fast, short-duration flooding, which contributes to a thin understory. River Birch requires soils near field capacity throughout the year but is relatively intolerant of flooding. Sycamore is intolerant of growing season floods and will die if the entire tree is inundated for more than two weeks. Consequently, this species is most commonly located on levees of smaller rivers. Occurrences may have a high percentage of standing dead trees and there may be remnant snags from previous, earlier successional communities. Large streams with long flood durations are more strongly dominated by River Birch or Silver Maple. On these sites, River Birch (less shade-tolerant than maple) is commonly restricted to narrow zones immediately adjacent to the streambank. Smaller streams on narrow floodplains of young valleys will have greater canopy mixtures. Here River Birch is less abundant, Sugar Maple is often absent, and more mesic species, such as Sycamore, may be prominent.

RIVER BIRCH – SYCAMORE SMALL RIVER FLOODPLAIN FOREST						
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STRATA	FUNCTIONAL GROUP	IA CofC	SEEDS/LB	STATE STATUS
<i>Acer negundo</i>	Box elder	Canopy, Associate	TREE	0	11360	
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple	Canopy, Associate	TREE	*	22720	
<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	Green dragon	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	6	9051	
<i>Asimina triloba</i>	Pawpaw	Shrub Layer	SHRUB	6	697	SC
<i>Betula nigra</i>	River birch	Canopy, Dominant	TREE	6	374400	
<i>Boehmeria cylindrica</i>	Bog hemp	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	5	325000	
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Blue beech	Sub-canopy	TREE	9	30000	
<i>Carya</i> spp.	Hickories	Canopy, Associate	TREE			
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Hackberry	Canopy, Associate	TREE	2	96000	
<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	Wild oats	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, COOL SEASON	6	64000	SC
<i>Elymus hystrix</i>	Bottlebrush grass	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, COOL SEASON	5	121600	
<i>Fraxinus americana</i> *	White ash	Canopy, Associate	TREE	6	10000	
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	Wild geranium	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	6	80000	
<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	Spotted touch-me-not	Herbaceous Layer	A-FORB	3	64000	
<i>Juglans nigra</i>	Black walnut	Canopy, Associate	TREE	4	40	
<i>Laportea canadensis</i>	Wood nettle	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	3	185899	
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tuliptree	Canopy, Dominant	TREE	*	14000	
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia creeper	Vine Component	W-VINE	2	112000	

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RIVER BIRCH – SYCAMORE SMALL RIVER FLOODPLAIN FOREST						
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STRATA	FUNCTIONAL GROUP	IA CofC	SEEDS/LB	STATE STATUS
<i>Pilea pumila</i>	Clearweed	Herbaceous Layer	A-FORB	3	273413	
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore	Canopy, Dominant	TREE	5	192000	
<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>	Mayapple	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	4		
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Cottonwood	Canopy, Dominant	TREE	1	425000	
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Wild black cherry	Canopy, Associate	TREE	3	4800	
<i>Quercus spp.</i>	Oak	Canopy, Associate	TREE			
<i>Salix nigra</i>	Black willow	Sub-canopy	TREE	3	2500000	
<i>Symphotrichum ontarionis</i>	Ontario aster	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	3		
<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>	Poison ivy	Vine Component	W-VINE	0	30442	
<i>Ulmus americana</i>	American elm	Canopy, Associate	TREE	2	68000	
<i>Vitis riparia</i>	Riverbank grape	Vine Component	W-VINE	1	15200	

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