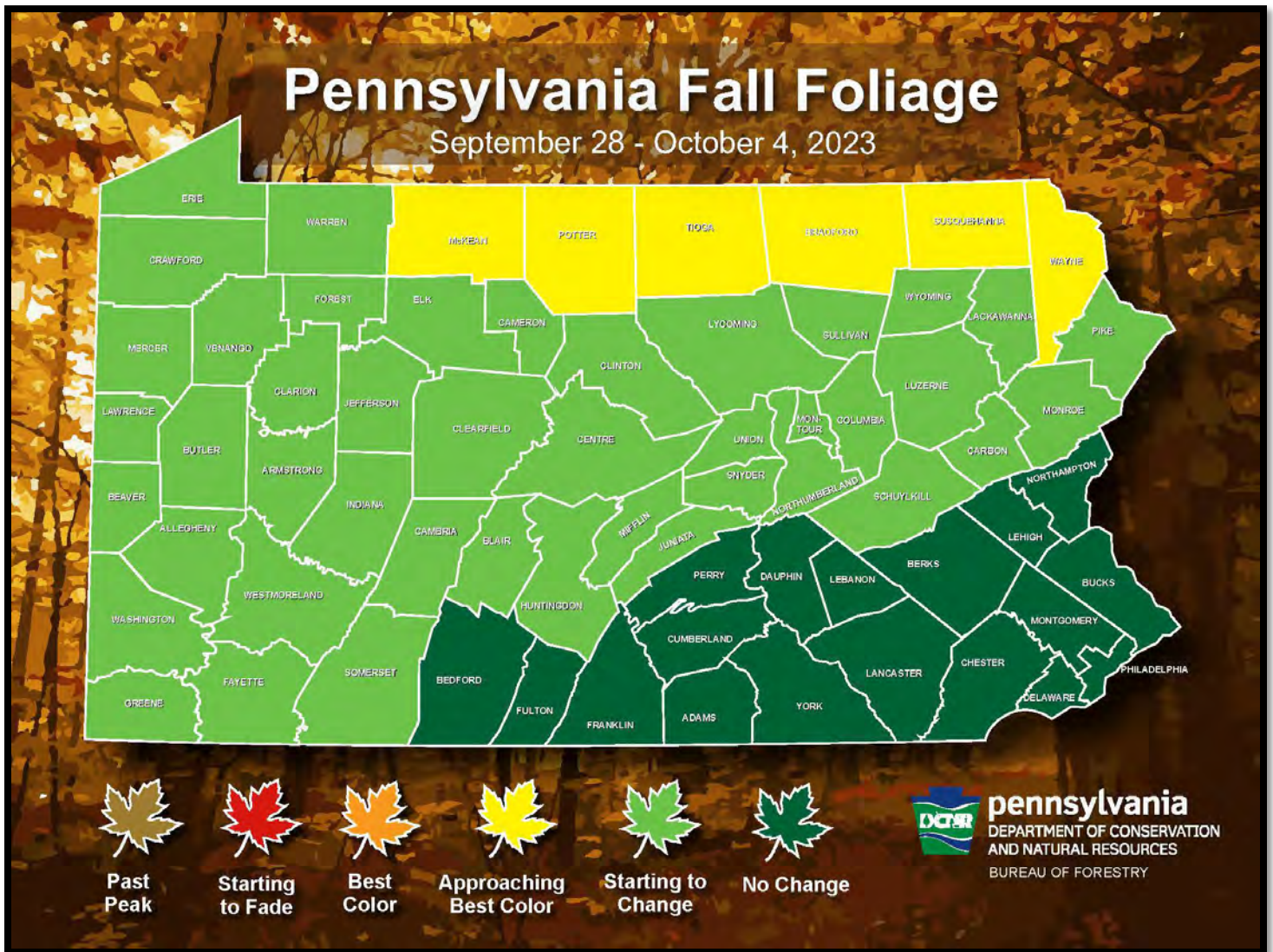


Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Forestry

PENNSYLVANIA WEEKLY FALL FOLIAGE REPORT

September 28 - October 4, 2023



To predict peak season from the colors, use these guidelines:

- Dark Green/Little to No Change= peak is *three weeks to a month* away
- Light Green/Starting to Change= peak is *approximately two to three weeks* away
- Yellow/Approaching Best Color= peak is *approximately one week* away
- Orange/Best Color= foliage is *peaking this week*
- Red/Starting to Fade= still some nice color but won't last more than *a few more days*
- Brown/Past Peak= all or nearly all color is *gone*

Statewide Fall Foliage Overview

After a remarkably long spring drought, timely summer rainfall and moderate temperatures helped to green the canopy of Penn's Woods, setting the stage for a very colorful autumn display. Fall temperatures seemed to arrive earlier than in recent years, compelling noticeable changes throughout Commonwealth forests. Peak color throughout most of the Keystone State should center around mid-October.

Northwestern Region



Virginia creeper vine, Warren County. (photo by C. Stelter)

The district manager in Cornplanter State Forest (representing Warren, Crawford, and Erie counties) said last week's warm, sunny days and cooler nights initiated noticeable color changes in northwestern Pennsylvania. In a preview of what is to come, hillsides and forests are dotted and blushed with color. Some sumacs are beginning to display their brilliant red color, while scattered maples are showing a mix of red, orange, and yellow. Virginia creeper vine is also sporting its fall color, especially against dark backgrounds.

Northcentral Region

Foresters in Elk State Forest said northeastern Elk and southeastern McKean counties are approaching best color. Cameron County, which favors more of an oak forest type, is just beginning to change. Some pockets of red and sugar maple throughout Cameron County are approaching best color. Species currently showing best color in the region include red maple, sugar maple, black gum, and sassafras. Recommended drives are in the East Branch/Clermont area, including Rich Valley, Straight Creek, Naval Hollow, Stillhouse, and Crooked Run roads.



Early fall color along Ridge Road south of the Hunts Run/Bailey Run intersection, Elk State Forest. (photo by S. Johnson)

The Clinton County service forester said Sproul State Forest is just beginning to show color along the hillsides and up on the plateau. Despite some spongy moth damage in the district, fall color is more impressive than expected, currently. The best drive is along Route 120 and the Bucktail Natural Area where the sugar maples and tulip poplars are yellowing. Peak color is expected in the region around Columbus Day.



Early color at Bakers Run, southeast of Renovo. (photo by L. Greenaway)

The Tioga County service forester reported that the region is a bit “between phases”, with some areas approaching best color and others just beginning to change. Sugar maples are showing the best color currently, with their classic golden yellow. Only a few red maples have started to change to a beautiful crimson. Area drivers will notice patchy yellow from sugar maples and other northern hardwoods. The eastern half of the county is slightly further along than the west. The Sand Run Falls Trail System in Arnot would be a nice place to see some early color. There is little to no color in the PA Grand Canyon, currently. Expected peak for the region is approximately October 7-14.

The Sullivan County service forester (Loyalsock State Forest District) indicated that the transition to fall color has just begun, overall. However, some sugar and red maples have changed significantly at higher elevations and closer to water. Sycamore and some birches are changing slowly, as well. Most color change is noticeable along roadways, from vistas, or near water. Route 154, Sones Pond, or the scenic view from High Knob Overlook are recommended destinations, currently.



View from Millcreek Road looking down Pleasant Stream, Loyalsock State Forest. (photo by J. Jordan)



The Pine Creek Valley is still mostly green. (photo by T. Oliver)

The Clearfield County (Moshannon State Forest District) service forester said area forests are just beginning to change. Red maple, sugar maple, black gum, sassafras, sweet birch, and ferns are starting to show nice color. The stunning white birches at Marion Brooks Natural Area are displaying impressive color now. The best drive to see initial fall color is Quehanna Highway between Medix Run and Karthaus. Oaks are still dark green, so peak color is still two to three weeks away.

The regional forester reported good maple color in Potter and McKean counties (Susquehannock State Forest District). Color is spotty but better in the northern halves of these counties where northern hardwoods dominate. Peak foliage conditions in the region will probably begin toward the end of the next forecast period.

Staff in Tiadaghton State Forest said area mountainsides and valleys are beginning to shimmer with blotches of fall color. Sugar maple, sassafras, and birch are showing yellows, while red maple, dogwoods, and black gums are blushing red. Best color is expected in about two weeks, but a pleasant drive on Route 414 is recommended to view current color.



Early fall color along Brown's Run Road, Tiadaghton State Forest. (photo by V. Curtis)



Looking north up Pine Creek from the Sinking Springs Road Vista. (photo by V. Curtis)



The white birches at Marion Brooks Natural Area are a sight to behold. (photo by R. Conrad)

West-central and Southwestern Regions

The Butler County service forester (Clear Creek State Forest District) said leaves have started to turn in the region. Many maples range from yellow to brilliant shades of red. Black gum, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, shrub dogwoods, and staghorn sumac are all vivid shades of red and maroon. Black walnuts, bigtooth aspen, birch, and some hickories are various shades of yellow. The wildflowers, including golden rod and New England asters, are in full glory. With such a fast and beautiful start, October should be a very pretty time for foliage in this area. A nice drive now is US 322 from the Brookville area to Meadville.

Foresters in Forbes State Forest reported beautiful early fall color development across southwestern Pennsylvania. The varied terrain of this region brings diverse colors and peak times. The perennial lead for fall color, black gum, is currently at peak or slightly past peak on the ridges of the Laurel Highlands. Its bright red leaves signal the beginning of the stunning color to come in the weeks ahead. Sightseers are advised to focus on northern hardwood forests that contain black cherry, sugar maple, red maple, American beech, and birches. These forests are currently showing beautiful reds, yellows, and oranges, with maples the most vibrant. Most oaks remain fully green and will be one of the last groups to change in late October. The higher elevations of the Laurel Highlands on Chestnut and Laurel ridges are exhibiting the best color this week. Higher elevations will show peak color approximately two weeks earlier than surrounding lowlands. Fall foliage enthusiasts are encouraged to visit the Blue Hole Division of Forbes State Forest or to take a country drive in Somerset County, where beautiful colors can be currently seen.

Foresters in Gallitzin State Forest (representing Indiana, Blair, and Cambria counties) said area forests are just beginning to change. Cherries and maples are starting to show color with red maple standing out.

Central and Southcentral Regions

The Perry County service forester (Tuscarora State Forest District) said most of the trees are still green in the region, but black walnut leaves are starting to yellow, indicating changes to come. Peak color is expected at the end of October.



Early red maple color at the Michaux State Forest district office. (photo by S. Hartley)

The Huntingdon County service forester (Rothrock State Forest District) said foliage is just beginning to change in the district. Oaks are still fully green, but the maples, birches, and black gum trees are starting to display some color across the forest. Brighter hues are slightly more noticeable in northern Huntingdon and southern Centre counties. It is likely that peak leaf color will occur around the third weekend in October.

Foresters in Buchanan State forest (serving Bedford, Fulton counties) reported few changes in the district except for a few black gums which are turning bright crimson. Peak in the region is expected in mid-October.

Staff in Michaux State Forest (representing Cumberland, Franklin, Adams counties) said area forests are currently showing little to no change aside from some colorful black gum. Peak is expected in three to four weeks. A drive to Dark Hollow Vista or hikes on the Beaver Trail (Long Pine Run Reservoir), Sunset Rocks, or Pole Steeple are recommended.

The Snyder, Union, and Mifflin County service forester (Bald Eagle State Forest District) reported that regional forests are just beginning to change, with some color dotting the landscape. Travels across the district bring sporadic maroon, red, and yellow from early changing species like black gum, red maple, black birch, and dogwood. Peak color in the area is still a few weeks away.

The Schuylkill/Carbon County (Weiser State Forest District) service forester indicated that foliage in the region is in early stages of transition. Red maples, black gums, and sweet birches are colorful at higher elevations, with high bush blueberry showing good color along the banks of water bodies. A visit to the Roaring Creek Tract is recommended to see some warm, early color.

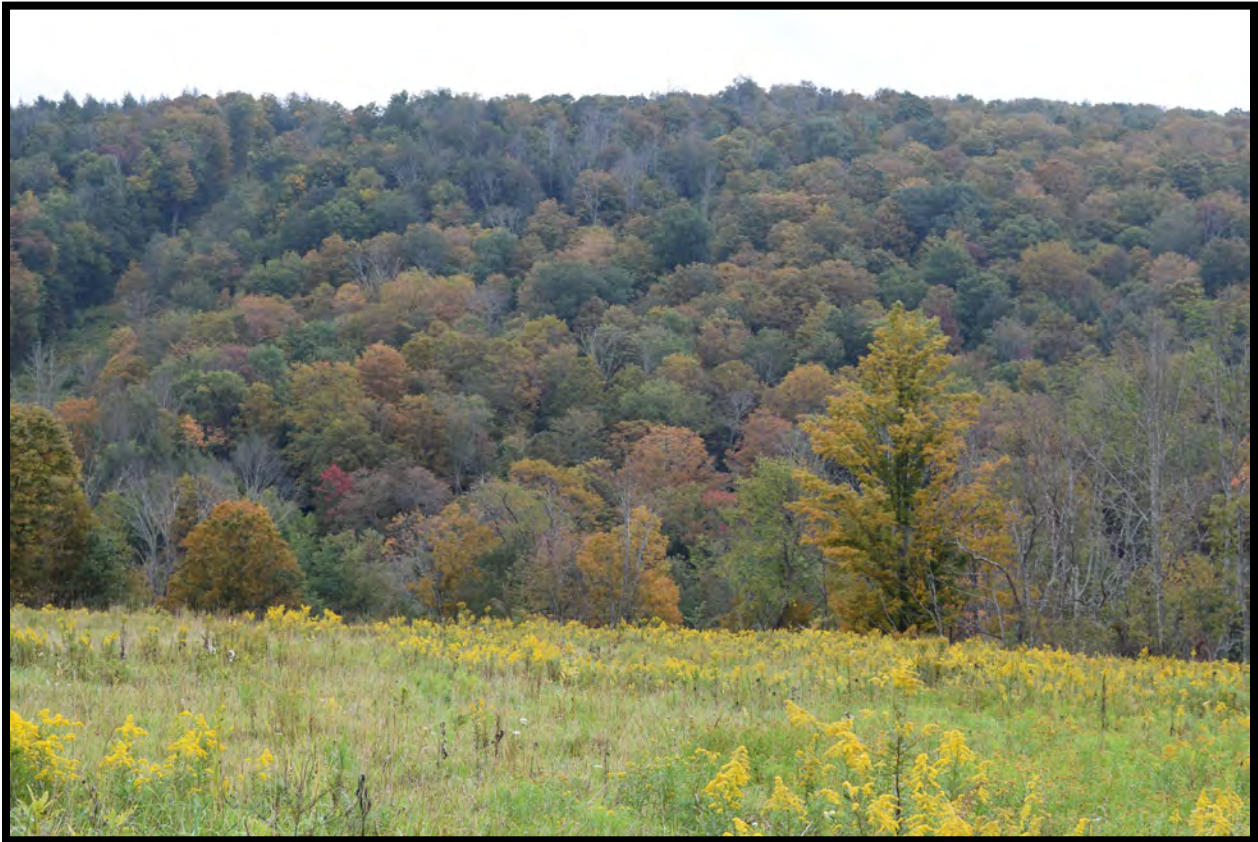


Vista on Buffalo Flat Road, Union County. (photo by J. Bausinger)



View along lake at Greenwood Furnace State Park. (photo by J. Thompson)

Northeastern Region



Brightening forested hillside in northern Wayne County. (photo by J. Maza)



View at D&H Rail Trail near Ararat. (photo by J. Maza)



View near High Knob Fire Tower. (photo by L. Goddard)

Foresters in Pinchot State Forest District (serving Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Susquehanna, and Wayne counties) said the northern half of the district has started to show some notable change where northern hardwoods are prevalent. Red maples, staghorn sumac, and Virginia creeper are providing a vibrant red, and sugar maples are adding muted shades of orange and yellow to the landscape. Even poison ivy is adding some beautiful shades of orange. In the southern portion of the district, the primary change has been mostly around wet areas where bright red can be seen in the red maples and high bush blueberry. The northern portion of the district is expected to peak during the second week of October. A good spot to hike for fall color is along the D&H Rail-Trail in Susquehanna County. The southern portion is projected to peak mid- to late October. A recommended drive to view fall foliage in the area is Pittston Road in the Thornhurst Tract.

Foresters in Delaware State Forest District (serving Monroe and Pike counties) reported that forests in the region have begun to change. Maples, birches, higher elevation oaks, and many shrub species are displaying shades of red and yellow. Best color can be found on exposed areas, mountain peaks, lake perimeters, or field edges.

Recommended viewing destinations include Stairway Lake Trail, Stairway Wild Area, Pecks Pond, and Brady's Lake. Peak color is expected in the region on approximately October 20.



Southeastern Region

Foresters in William Penn State Forest District (southeastern counties) report minor changes in the northern part of the district. Species currently showing color are dogwood, sweet birch, tulip poplar, and black gum. The Gibraltar Hill Tract and the Chestnut Spur Trail are options to glimpse some early color.

View from Ron Flad Memorial Park, Lake Trail. (photo by L. Goddard)