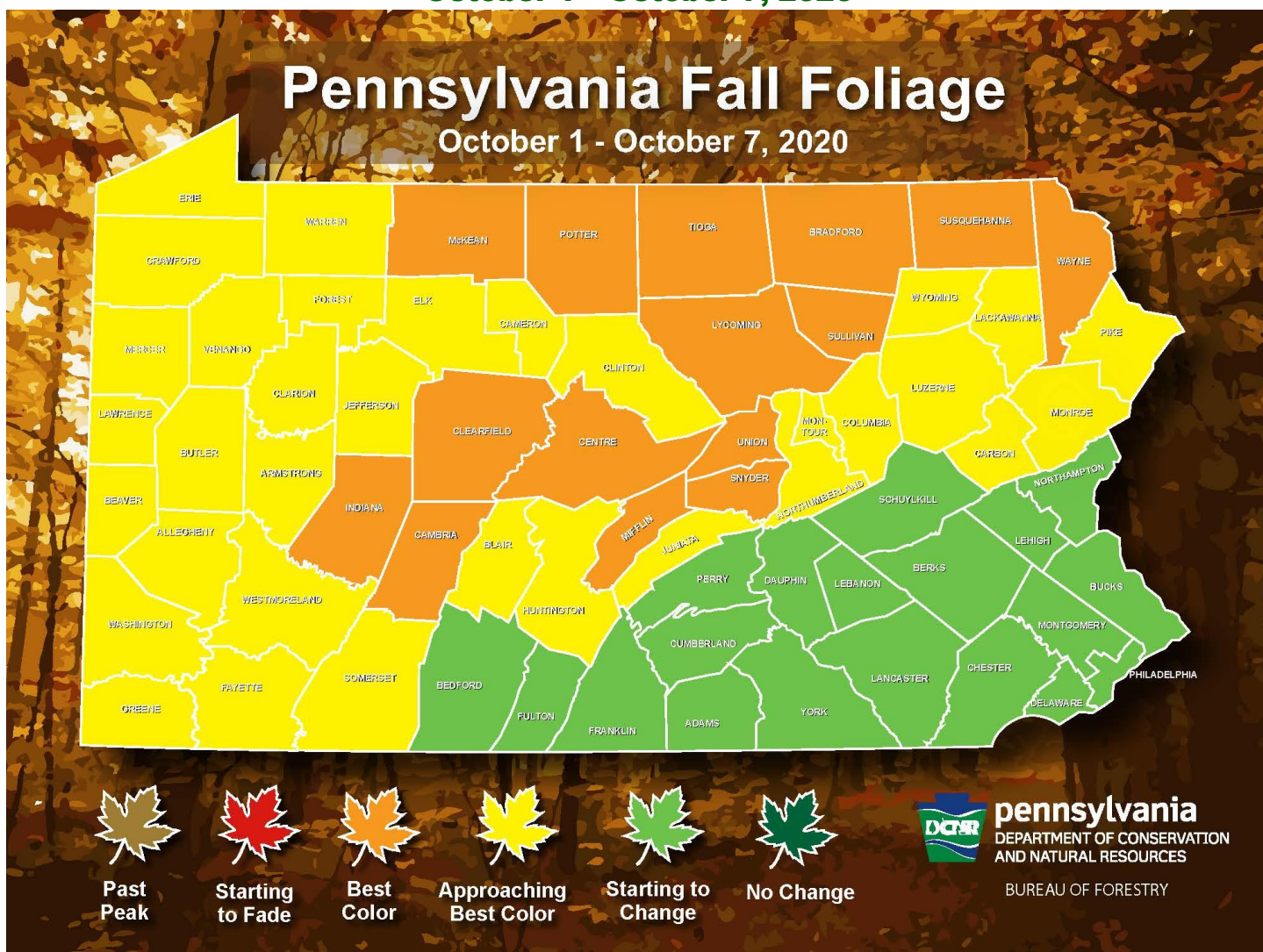


**Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Forestry**

PENNSYLVANIA WEEKLY FALL FOLIAGE REPORT

October 1 – October 7, 2020



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

- Dark Green/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

What a difference a week makes! Cold and frosty nights and very dry conditions have ushered in marked changes across the northern tier, where foliage is at its spectacular peak. Sugar and red maples are the stars of the show, contrasting beautifully with the still-green oak canopies. Another cold snap could jumpstart much of the Appalachian and Allegheny mountain regions, setting the table for back to back weeks of fantastic fall foliage viewing opportunities across wide swaths of the commonwealth.

Northwestern Region

The district manager in Cornplanter State Forest District (Warren, Erie counties) reports that cooler nights have spurred fall colors in northwest Pennsylvania. Many oaks are still quite green, but maples (sugar and red) are displaying brilliant colors. Aspen, hickory, and birch are continuing to color the landscape with warm yellow hues. Route 6 to Chapman State Park is a recommended fall foliage corridor in Warren County.



Exciting fall color can be found at Chapman State Park. (photo by T. Martin)

Northcentral Region

The district manager reported a sudden onset of peak color in Susquehannock State Forest (Potter, McKean counties) at the end of last week and the area is “experiencing some of its best fall color in years.” Red and sugar maples were spectacular over the weekend, but recent wind and rain have dropped many leaves. Remaining maple leaves are still beautiful, and cherry, ash, basswood, and aspen are showing good color. Driving the loop of Route 6 to Route 144 in Galeton, to Route 44 in Carter Camp and back north to Route 6 would be a great drive to see the fall colors. Routes 44 and 49 near Coudersport should also reveal great fall foliage for sightseers.

Forestry staff in Moshannon State Forest report color has progressed quickly since last week. Colors are vivid, but this may be a short leaf viewing season. Birches, poplar, sassafras, and maples are close to peak color. Beeches and oaks are still green, providing a nice contrast. A scenic drive along Caledonia Pike, Lost Run Road, and Quehanna Highway provide excellent viewing opportunities and could reveal sightings of majestic elk. The Gifford Run Vista on Lost Run Road is a recommended scenic overlook.



Gifford Run Vista, Moshannon State Forest (photo by R. Conrad)

Color in Loyalsock State Forest (Lycoming, Sullivan, Bradford counties) has changed quickly over the last week and is progressing toward peak. Most maples are showing flaming scarlet, orange, and yellow leaves. Birches are bright yellow, and beech and oaks are mostly green. For a spectacular view, try hiking Rough Hill Trail from the Sandy Bottom Access Area along Route 87 south of Hillsgrove. Rough Hill Vista offers a spectacular view of the foliage along Loyalsock Creek.

Fall colors in Tiadaghton State Forest near Waterville are at or near peak. Sugar maples are a gorgeous yellow-orange and birches are also adding excellent color against contrasting mixed oaks, which are just beginning to change. Dry weather will probably shorten the leaf viewing season in the area, unfortunately, so the time to come and visit is now. The Pine Creek Rail Trail and the Tiadaghton Trail are great places to come see the fall foliage. Try routes 44 and/or 414 for a scenic fall drive in the area.



Forestry staff in Tioga State Forest District (Tioga and Bradford counties) note astounding changes within the past week. Vivid colors of maples, birches, and cherries stand out like fire against the deep greens of mixed oaks. The dry weather could portend a quick season, so don't miss your chance to take in what is truly an awe-inspiring fall foliage display. Places with excellent viewing opportunities abound in the forest district, especially in the Pine Creek Valley. Routes 6, 660, and 414 offer fantastic options for a scenic drive.

Foresters in Sproul State Forest (Clinton, Centre counties) report despite severe drought, color is spreading across the mountains. Black birch started yellowing last week and maples have started to color too. Fall foliage enthusiasts should expect a slightly earlier-than-normal peak season.

Foresters in Elk and Cameron counties (Elk State Forest) stated that leaf color has changed significantly over the last week. Maples and birches are showing nice color against oaks that are still green. The northern hardwood forests of Elk and Cameron counties are nearing peak.

Fall color along Stony Fork Creek (photo by R. Reed)



Brilliant foliage along a vista on Ridge Road, Cameron County (photo by T. Herzing)



Tioga State Forest near Stony Fork. (photo by R. Reed)

West-central and Southwestern Regions

The Lawrence/Mercer County (Clear Creek State Forest District) service forester reports pretty fall colors throughout the district. Some maples have turned yellow or orange, but most are red or deep burgundy. Virginia creeper, sumac, and dogwood are also at their peak burgundy color. They are especially impressive where they are next to goldenrod and purple asters. The black walnut and birches are turning fast. Many trees are still green, provided excellent contrast. Cold nights in the forecast could spring rapid changes in the coming days. A hike to the vista at Bear Town Rocks offers a picturesque view in the area.

Forbes State Forest staff report fall color progressing nicely across the forests of southwestern Pennsylvania. Ideal weather conditions (warm sunny days and cool, crisp nights) for fall color development have been the norm for the past two weeks leading to vivid early fall color. Maples (red and sugar) are particularly bright and colorful this year. Many black gums will show their best colors this week, displaying shades from bright red to burgundy. Black birch continues to display bright yellow and black cherry exhibits shades of yellow and red. Oaks remain mostly green while dropping their acorns. Sycamores, common along rivers in Pennsylvania, are turning golden browns and yellows. Virginia creeper, a native vine that is often found growing up the trunks of trees, will show its best shades of red this week. Remaining ash trees are displaying a unique mix of purple, green, and reds. Goldenrod has been and will continue to show its bright yellow bloom.

The best opportunities in Forbes State Forest for early fall foliage viewing continue to be in the ridges of the Laurel Highlands. A short hike to the observation tower at Pennsylvania's highest point, Mount Davis in southern Somerset County, will offer one of the best views this week. Take a drive on Jones Mill Run Road in Forbes State Forest where many maples are turning vibrant yellows, oranges, and reds. Visit Laurel Hill State Park, in Somerset county, for an unmatched variety of fall color. Don't delay your visit to the higher elevations of the Laurel Highlands. Peak fall color will occur up to two weeks earlier in the Laurel Highlands than surrounding areas of southwestern Pennsylvania. Travel US 30 east from Latrobe, through the Loyalhanna Gorge, and continue into the Laurel Highlands. Route 281 from Somerset to Confluence provides beautiful views of farms and forests.

The Cambria County service forester (Gallitzin State Forest) observed a rapid change in color throughout the district. Peak foliage should occur toward the end of this reporting week. Maples are beautiful, offering a good mixture of green, orange, red, and yellow. A trip to the Clear Shade Wild Area in the Babcock Division is suggested for an excellent fall foliage viewing area.

Central and Southcentral Regions



Pleasant fall color along Colyer Lake. (photo by C. Neufer)

The Mifflin/Union County service forester (Bald Eagle State Forest) reported that a recent frost has pushed early leaf drop. Walnuts and other trees in the valleys are yellow. On the slopes, sugar maples are orange, and red maples, sassafras and huckleberry/blueberry are reddish. Poplars, and birches are adding shades of yellow. In the southern reaches of the district near Seven Mountains, foresters report a color “explosion”. Along US 322, red, yellow, and orange from common indicator trees suggest that fall is here. Among these are black gum, maples, sumac, sassafras, cherry, and aspen; which are painting a wide palette in the region. Peak color in this area is expected toward mid-October.



Beautiful color is spreading throughout Bald Eagle State Forest. (photo by J. Osborne)

The Perry/Juniata County service forester (Tuscarora State Forest District) reports that the district is mostly green, but some nice colors can be seen. Walnut trees have yellowed along with birch, poplar and maples. Many state forest gated roads are open now, offering more fall foliage views. Cool nights will cause trees to change quickly and colorful views will be afoot in the coming weeks.



Fall colors are just beginning in Tuscarora State Forest. (photo by L. Book)

In Weiser State Forest District, observers in Lebanon and Dauphin counties have noted slow progress of foliage in the region, probably due to warmer temperatures last week. Recent rainfall could extend the peak season, which is still a few weeks away. Fall color is more advanced toward the northeastern end of the district in Schuylkill and Carbon counties. A scenic drive up Route 443 will reveal some good, early fall color.



Nice fall colors are showing in Rothrock State Forest. (photo by J. Thompson)

In Rothrock State Forest, oaks are still green, but drastic change has occurred over the last week. Maples are approaching peak color and many others are turning as well, including birch, hickory, and poplar. Peak color overall for the area is still about ten days away. State forest vistas are recommended for fall foliage viewing in the district.

In Buchanan State Forest (Franklin, Fulton, Bedford counties), not much has changed since last week. A few black gums and birches are showing color. Any state forest road along ridgetops would be a good place to take a drive to observe fall foliage, currently. With the forecast calling for colder temperatures this week, next week should mark a notable increase in fall color.



Early color in Buchanan State Forest. (photo by K. Ewan)

The Michaux State Forest (Adams, Franklin, Cumberland counties) service forester reports higher elevations are showing more change than the lower slopes around South Mountain, where black gums are at their peak red. Sweet birches are bright, and red maples are almost at peak. Tulip poplars are yellowing, and Virginia creeper is vibrantly red. Oaks are unchanged in the area. Route 233 south of US 30 is a pleasant, short drive to view some up-close color. In the northern part of Michaux State Forest, Ridge Road northeast of Shippensburg Road to Hammonds Rocks is awash with crimson from the black gums lining the roadsides.

Northeastern Region

Foresters in Delaware State Forest reported the cooler nights last week strongly pushed fall color. Most changes are occurring in the northern hardwood forests. Some sugar and red maples are almost at peak and will only improve next week. In the oak forests, trees are still green but vibrant red and orange colors can be seen on sassafras and black gum. Many birches are also peaking, adding bright colors of yellow before they fall. The best places to view fall foliage in the coming days are in the Tobyhanna State Park area, the Promised Land State Park area, and along Route 390.



Bright sassafras in Delaware State Forest. (photo by J. Maza)

Foresters in Pinchot State Forest reported Susquehanna County areas are at the verge of peak color. Several rain events have caused many trees to drop their leaves early, mostly affecting sugar maple. Many red maples and oaks have full color along with several understory plants like fern and winterberry. Changes will become more rapid as the nights get colder. In Lackawanna and Wyoming counties, foliage has rapidly changed. Most maples are in full color. Birches and aspens are also changing, along with understory plants like blueberry and huckleberry. In northern Luzerne county, birches, aspens, and red maples are at full color. Oaks have also begun to change. This area is a little ahead of schedule in terms of expected progress. The Moosic Mountain Tract and Salt Springs State Park remain as recommended fall foliage viewing areas this week.

Southeastern Region

Foresters in William Penn State Forest district report fall foliage progress in the northern end of the district (Northampton, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, Lehigh counties). The Wertz Tract in Berks County is showing some nice, early fall color in birches, poplars, and sassafras.