

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

Northwestern Region

The district manager in Cornplanter State Forest District (Warren, Erie counties) reported ideal conditions of warm, sunny days and noticeably cooler nights have triggered the fall colors in northwestern Pennsylvania. While yellow was the early dominant color, more reds, oranges, and golds are dotting the landscape, producing an abundance of color along the roads and communities in the region.



Pithole Road, Venango County. (photo by T. Ryen)

Northcentral Region

The district manager in Susquehannock State Forest (Potter, McKean counties) said maples in the area are noticeably vivid. The hillsides across the northern two-thirds of Potter County are showing brilliant yellow, orange, and reds. Some areas are currently reaching peak and most of the northern hardwood forest should peak by the end of this weekend. Beech and cherry stands are starting to turn yellow, adding to the display. A beautiful, scenic drive can be found along Route 6, from Route 449 to Denton Hill to Coudersport.

The Clinton County service forester (Sproul State Forest) reported oaks and birches contributing yellows, but very few maples showing good color. Peak color in the region is about a week away.

In Tiadaghton State Forest, ridgetop oaks are just beginning to yellow. The best color is currently found in northern hardwood species like maple, birch, and cherry. Colors are coming along nicely in the Pine Creek Gorge where visitors can enjoy the sights on foot, bike, and horseback.



Lyman Run, Potter County. (photo by C. Nicholas)



Four-mile Vista, Tioga State Forest (photo by T. Oliver)

The Tioga County service forester stated that the fall transition is picking up pace in Tioga State Forest. More color has appeared in the forests, with a lot of yellow from birch and cherry and beautiful reds on red maples. Overall, the foliage viewing is still quite variable; much green still remains along the lower slopes and the Route 6 corridor. The eastern part of the district in the Armenia Mountain area is becoming beautiful and worth the drive to Lambs Lookout or County Bridge Picnic Area. The western part of the district is the most variable, but the area along Colton Road is becoming very picturesque, as well.

Foresters in Elk State Forest (Elk, Cameron counties) noted the district is divided with northern hardwoods in the northern half of Elk and Cameron counties and oak forest in the southern half of Elk and Cameron counties. The northern half of the district shows pockets of red maple at or near peak. Route 120 between St. Marys and Emporium and Route 255 south of St. Marys are excellent scenic driving options to view fall color.



Elk State Forest. (photo by T. Herzing)

The Clearfield County Service Forester (Moshannon Forest District) reported that leaf color progressed quickly this week. Birches are bright yellow and red maples seemed to turn overnight to vibrant red, orange, and maroon. The understory sassafras are bright yellow and orange, providing a nice contrast with the oaks, which are still mostly green.

A recommended drive is the Quehanna Highway from Medix Run to Karthaus, where one can see the unique, maroon color on many red maples. Stop at Marion Brooks Natural Area and Losey Trail to see the color contrast between white birch stems and brilliant maple color. Be sure to take a side trip on to Lost Run Road to Mosquito Creek to see the brilliant yellow birch leaves.



Mill Run Road, Moshannon State Forest. (photo by R. Conrad)



Vista on High Knob Road, Loyalsock State Forest. (photo by A. Young)

Forestry staff in Loyalsock State Forest indicated colors seem to be changing later this year, perhaps due to the unseasonably warm weather. Most of the maples, cherries, and sumacs are in full color while the oaks, poplars, and beech trees are just starting to change. State forest visitors are recommended to hike on the Bridle, Ski, and Canyon Vista trails between Eagles Mere and Shanerburg Road. This area is particularly swampy, and the wet areas currently offer some of the best colors in the region.

West-central and Southwestern Regions

In Venango and Clarion counties (Clear Creek Forest District), the northern hardwood forests north of I-80 are showing more color due to recent colder temperatures. Maples, sumac, black gum, wild grape, sassafras, birch, and walnut are approaching full color. Oaks and most hickories are still very green but hinting a color change. Good places to see fall colors include Brady's Bend Overlook (Clarion County), Seneca Fire Tower at Cook Forest State Park, Beartown Rocks, and Kennerdell Overlook.



Kennerdell Overlook, Venango County. (photo by H. May)

In Mercer County, the change in leaf color has advanced rapidly in the past week. Nearly all of the non-oak species are now some shade of color other than green. Most of the maples are yellow, as are the aspen, walnuts, birches, sassafras, and poplar. Black gums are a mixture of deep burgundy on some branches, and green on others. Sumacs, dogwoods, and native vines are bright red, and will start fading soon. As a group, only the oaks are still completely green. The purple asters are dazzling along the roads, making up for the faded goldenrod. The peak in Mercer County will probably be during the week of October 11.



Colorful black gum, Forbes State Forest. (photo by R. Mahony)

The Forbes State Forest Environmental Educator reported that autumn colors are progressing, especially in the higher ridges of the Laurel Highlands. The Mt. Davis ridgeline is reaching peak color this week and will likely hold on through the upcoming weekend. Maples, black gum, and sassafras are displaying vibrant red, pink, and orange leaves, while the witch hazel shows its autumn blooms. The Mt. Davis Highpoint Area is a great place to view the fall foliage; a short climb up the 50-foot observation tower near the highpoint rock offers a beautiful view of the landscape. The Highpoint Lake overlook is another easy stop to take in the autumn color.

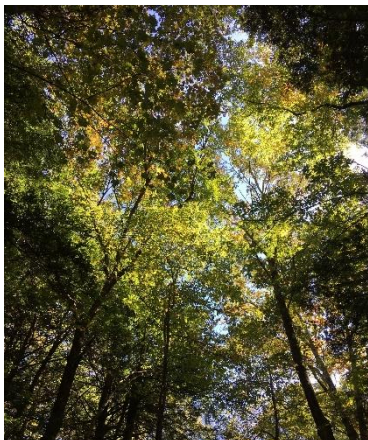
The Laurel Ridge is approaching peak fall color soon; this weekend through the following weekend will be the best time to catch a glimpse of the fleeting color display. A scenic drive throughout the Laurel Mountain Division of Forbes State Forest is a great way to observe the changing leaves. A short, one-mile roundtrip hike to Beam Rocks is a popular fall activity that many forest visitors enjoy each year.

Chestnut Ridge in Fayette County is just beginning to change, with patches of color intermixed among a sea of green leaves. Peak fall color for this area won't be for another week or so. A drive along Skyline Drive and through the Quebec Run Wild Area is a preferred corridor to enjoy the foliage.

In other counties (Allegheny, Greene, and Washington) in Forbes State Forest District and lower-elevation areas (Westmoreland, Somerset, and Fayette), leaves are displaying more vivid colors by the day. Peak foliage for these areas won't likely be for another two weeks.

Gallitzin State Forest (Blair, Indiana, Cambria counties) staff reported that color is advancing quickly. While there is still plenty of green, some pretty colors can be observed, especially in the higher elevations. This weekend should be a good time to take a drive or hike for viewing fall color in the Babcock Division along Route 56.

Central and Southcentral Regions



In Weiser State Forest District, the Dauphin County service forester said that leaves are just starting to change. Early color can be seen on birch, tulip poplar, gum, sumac and a few maples. The northern end of the district (Carbon, Columbia, Montour, Northumberland counties) is much further along with some pockets of good color.

Forestry staff in Michaux State Forest reported black gum, staghorn sumac, and Virginia creeper vines are turning. A few red maples have begun. Higher elevations are the best places to view early color, currently. Ridge Road in southwestern Cumberland County is a great drive to enjoy the foliage now. The early changing species won't show their best colors until the end of the week. This year's *Lymantria dispar* moth outbreak and the periodical cicada brood X damage have reduced some of the foliage in the northern half of Michaux State Forest.

Early color near Mauch Chunk Lake, Jim Thorpe, Carbon Co. (photo by R. Reed)



Black birch color, Michaux State Forest. (photo by J. Schwartzer)

In Buchanan State Forest (Franklin, Fulton, Bedford counties) the assistant forest manager reported increasing indicators of fall color. Color can be found in various locations on black gums, dogwoods, as well as some tulip poplars and maples. Many parts of the forest are exhibiting the yellow-green tinge indicative of the splendor to come, and you can spot some bold yellow and crimson leaves on your drive or hike. The best places to see color are still Broad Mountain Road (Franklin County, Bear Valley Division), Tower Road in Allen's Valley, Bark and Summit Road (Fulton County, Sideling Hill Division), and Martin Hill and Blankley roads (Bedford County, Chaneyville Division).

In Rothrock State Forest, forestry staff said while there are a few pockets where leaves are vibrant, the fall colors in Huntingdon and southern Centre counties seem to be a little behind this year. Maple species and black gum are beginning to change, as well as hickories and black birch. The best foliage viewing in the region is the northern part of the district. Areas of the forest that are dominated by oaks are still very green.

The Perry County service forester (Tuscarora State Forest) reported very little fall color in the region.

Northeastern Region

In Delaware and Pinchot State forests, the central region of the Pocono Mountains has undergone significant changes this week, especially in the northern hardwoods on the Pocono Plateau. Most of the central region is composed of oak and hickory forests, which will likely change next week. Red maple, black gum, Virginia creeper, sumac, dogwood, and huckleberry are showing different shades of red and some orange. Birch, ash, hickory, aspen, and poplar are multiple shades of yellow and orange. Sassafras has begun to show its vivid, variable colors. A good place to observe the fall foliage display this week is on Bushkill Road from Route 209 to Route 402.



White Deer Lake, Delaware State Forest. (photo by G. Beers)

Foresters in Pinchot State Forest reported that Susquehanna and northern Wayne County forests at peak color, with good progress in northern Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Wyoming counties. Many maples, aspens, and birches have started to change color along with understory plants like fern and winterberry. The transition is expected to accelerate as the nights get colder. State forest visitors should target the Brownell Reservoir, Moosic Mountain, and Thornhurst tracts in Lackawanna County; or Ricketts Glen or Salt Springs State Park to experience some great fall color.

Southeastern Region

The northern counties that comprise the William Penn State Forest District (Bucks, Northampton, Lehigh, Berks) are currently showing some signs of early fall color. Flowering dogwoods and Virginia creeper vines have changed to reddish-purple, and some red maples have changed to their fiery red. Poplars and birches are just beginning to transition and will add beautiful yellows by next week. The southern counties in the district (Lancaster, Chester, Delaware, Philadelphia) are largely unchanged and may not progress much this week, given the warm nights in the forecast.