

Glossary of Terms

Flora of Delaware On-line Database, April 2023

<i>Achlorophyllose:</i> A plant lacking chlorophyll.
<i>Amphibious:</i> A plant adapted to live either on land or in water.
<i>Annual:</i> A plant that completes its life cycle within one year or one growing season.
<i>Aquatic:</i> Plants that grow in permanently flooded waters.
<i>Arborescent:</i> A plant with a treelike habit; resembling a tree in growth or appearance.
<i>Biennial:</i> A plant that requires two growing seasons to complete its life cycle.
<i>Broad-leaf:</i> Leaves that are broad in dimension, compared to narrow-leaf, or needle-leaf.
<i>Cactus:</i> Plants of the Cactus Family with succulent leaves that often have spines.
<i>Carnivorous:</i> Referring to plants that catch and consume insects; also known as insectivorous plants.
<i>Coastal Plain:</i> An area of broad, flat, low-lying land that is parallel to coastline and lies between the sea and the Piedmont.
<i>Coefficient of Conservatism:</i> Coefficient of Conservatism ranks are used to calculate a Floristic Quality Assessment Index (FQAI). The FQAI is a quantitative measure to express the relative condition, or ecological "quality" of a natural area or site. See criteria for determining the Coefficient of Conservatism for more details.
<i>Cool Season/Warm Season Grasses:</i> Generally, cool-season grasses grow quickly in the spring, flower and then slow their growth during the summer months. Warm-season grasses are slower to start growth in the spring but tolerate drought during the summer. Warm-season grasses are usually very slow to establish, compared to cool-season grasses which take only a few months to establish. A warm-season grass stand will often be taller than a cool-season grass stand, and warm-season grass stands are considered to have much better wildlife value than cool-season grass stands.
<i>Deciduous:</i> Referring to trees or shrubs that drop their leaves at the end of each growing season.
<i>Dioecious:</i> A plant that has male and female reproductive structures on different plants.
<i>Disjunct:</i> A species or population that is widely separated geographically from other populations of the same species.
<i>Duration:</i> The time needed for a plant to complete its life cycle (annual, biennial, perennial).
<i>Dwarf Shrub:</i> A low-growing shrub usually less than 1.5 feet tall and never exceeding 3 feet tall at maturity.
<i>Emergent:</i> Refers to aquatic plants that are rooted in shallow water with stems that emerge above the water surface.
<i>Endemic:</i> Endemic refers to a species that is unique to a defined geographic location, such as an island, nation, country, state or other defined zone, or habitat type. Endemic species do not occur anywhere else but within the defined geographic area.
<i>Evergreen:</i> plants that have persistent green leaves for two or more growing seasons.
<i>Federal Status:</i> Listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as either Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate. See explanation of status ranks for a more detailed description of Federal status.
<i>Fern:</i> A leafy, vascular plant that does not flower, but reproduces by spores.
<i>Floating:</i> Aquatic plants that are rooted in the substrate with leaves that float at the water's surface.

<p>Horsetail: The name “horsetail” is used for the genus <i>Equisetum</i>, which is the only genus in the Horsetail Family (Equisetaceae), with 15 species known worldwide (9 in North America). The horsetails reproduce by spores, as do “ferns” and the family is often classified as ferns, but due to the ancient origin of the family (Jurassic Period, 199 to 145 million years ago), and clear morphological differences compared to ferns, the horsetails are treated here as separate from the ferns.</p>
<p>Free-floating: Aquatic plants that are not rooted to the substrate and float on the water’s surface.</p>
<p>Geographic Affinity: The core distribution of a species natural geographic range. A species is southern, northern, or western relative to its geographic position to Delaware.</p>
<p>Global Status: The status of a species throughout the world. See explanation of status ranks for a more detailed description of Global status. See explanation of status ranks for a more detailed description of Global status.</p>
<p>Grass: Plants of the Grass Family that have narrow leaves with parallel veins and small inconspicuous flowers; round stems are mostly hollow and jointed; base of the leaf wraps around the stem in a structure called the sheath.</p>
<p>Gymnosperm: Plants that produce seeds that are not enclosed within plant tissue; literally, a "naked seed."</p>
<p>Habitat: The natural environment of an organism; the place where it is typically found. Habitat descriptions are specific to the state of Delaware and are based on field experience, consultation with knowledgeable individuals and various literature sources.</p>
<p>Halophytic: Halophytic plants are salt-tolerant and can thrive and complete their life cycles in soils or waters containing high salt concentrations.</p>
<p>Hemiparasitic: A parasitic plant containing chlorophyll and is therefore partly self-sustaining.</p>
<p>Herb: A non-woody plant (annual, biennial, or perennial), whose above ground parts die to the ground at the end of the growing season.</p>
<p>Herbaceous: A plant having the characteristics of an herb.</p>
<p>Hybrid: The offspring of a cross between two different species, races, or varieties.</p>
<p>Invasive: A non-native or non-indigenous species that causes environmental harm. Invasive species have the potential for widespread dispersal and establishment, can out-compete and displace native flora, have the potential for rapid growth and high seed production, and can become established in natural areas.</p>
<p>Invasive Watchlist: Invasive species that are not yet well established in Delaware but have the potential to become abundant and widely distributed throughout the state. Invasive Watchlist species are often a priority for concern in surrounding states.</p>
<p>Life Form: The structure, shape or appearance of a plant that distinguishes it from others.</p>
<p>Lycophyte: Vascular plants that are related to ferns in that they reproduce by spores, but lycophytes have small, simple, entire leaves with a single vein. Includes the clubmosses, spike-mosses, and quillworts.</p>
<p>Monilophyte: A true fern, which are leafy, vascular plants that reproduce by spores.</p>
<p>Monoecious: A plant that has separate male and female reproductive structures occurring on the same plant.</p>
<p>Mycotrophic: Non-photosynthetic plants that obtain nourishment through an intimate association with fungi.</p>

Myrmecochorous: Plants that produce seeds with elaiosomes, which are external appendages attached to the seed that are rich in lipids, amino acids, or other nutrients and are attractive to ants. The seed from myrmecochorous plants are dispersed by ants (known as myrmecochory). Seed dispersal by ants is typically accomplished when foraging workers carry seeds back to the ant colony, after which the elaiosome is removed or fed directly to ant larvae. Once the elaiosome is consumed, the seed is usually discarded in underground middens or removed from the nest above ground to the forest floor.

Native and Indigenous: A native species indigenous to the State of Delaware is one that has, over time, evolved and adapted to the environmental conditions of the area and is thought to have occurred in Delaware prior to the time of European settlement, or has established itself within the state independent of direct human activity.

Naturalized: Non-native and non-indigenous plants that usually arrive and establish in the wild, due to the human-caused breakdown of natural barriers to dispersal, or have been introduced, or intentionally planted in Delaware and are now escaping to natural areas and surviving without cultivation.

Needle-leaf: Leaves that are small and narrow having a sharp point.

Non-indigenous: A species native to North America, but not to Delaware that is now found growing in Delaware outside of its natural range. Non-indigenous species are not considered to be part of Delaware's native flora. These species usually arrive due to the human-caused breakdown of natural barriers to dispersal, or have been introduced, or intentionally planted in Delaware and are now escaping to natural areas and are surviving without cultivation (i.e., naturalized).

Non-native or exotic: A species that is not native to North America (north of Mexico). Non-native species or exotic species are thought to have been introduced by humans, primarily through agricultural or horticultural practices. These species have become established in Delaware and are reproducing without cultivation (i.e., naturalized).

North Atlantic Region: A region that includes four Canadian Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island), 12 U.S. states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia), and the District of Columbia.

Orchid: A plant of the Orchid Family

Parasitic: A plant that obtains its nutrients from the living tissue of a host.

Perennial: A plant that lives for more than two years.

Phenology: Phenology in plants refers to the various biological processes that are correlated with the seasons, in this case flowering. Months flowering are specific to Delaware and may vary based on annual weather conditions.

Physiographic Province: A geographic region or province that has a specific geology and often a specific subsurface rock type or structural elements. A continent may be subdivided into various provinces, each having a specific character, relief, and environment that contribute to its uniqueness. Delaware is divided into two physiographic provinces: Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

Piedmont: The foothills of a mountain range. The Delaware Piedmont is part of an area that extends from New Jersey to Alabama and lies east of the Appalachian Mountains.

Rush: Plants of the Rush Family with solid stems mostly round in cross-section and multi-seeded capsules.

Section Carex: A taxonomic subdivision of the genus *Carex*.

Sedge: Plants of the Sedge Family that have mainly solid stems that are often triangular; narrow, grass-like leaves; and spikelets of inconspicuous flowers.
Semi-evergreen: A plant that bears green leaves into or through the winter but drops them by the beginning of the next growing season.
Semi-woody: A shrub with stems, branches and twigs that have both woody and herbaceous characteristics.
Shade Intolerant: Plants that do not grow well or reproduce in shade; these species prefer full-sun.
Shade Tolerant: Plants that grow well and reproduce in shade; these species avoid full-sun.
Shrub: A perennial woody plant usually less than 20 feet in height and having multiple stems arising at or near the base.
State Status: The conservation status of a species in Delaware, be it rare (S1, S1.1, S2), rare and historical (SH, SH.1), rare and extirpated (SX, SX.1), uncommon (S3), common (S4, S5), non-native, non-indigenous, a hybrid, or of uncertain status (SU). See explanation of status ranks for a more detailed description of State Status.
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation: Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) are vascular and non-vascular plants that live and grow entirely underwater, or just at the water's surface. SAV are typically found in shallow water where sufficient light for photosynthesis can penetrate.
Submersed and floating: Aquatic plants with parts that are both underwater and floating at the surface.
Submersed: Plants that live entirely underwater.
Subshrub: A plant with ground-hugging stems and low height, with perennial woody growth typically less than 8 inches tall.
Succulent: A plant that accumulates water in fleshy, water storing stems, leaves and roots.
Tree: A perennial woody plant with a single stem, branching into a well-formed crown of foliage and reaching a height of at least 20 feet.
Upland Plant: Plants that grow in areas that in general, lies above lowlands on soils that are excessively drained to moderately well-drained.
Vascular: Specialized tissue in herbaceous and woody plants that transport water and minerals.
Vine: Woody or herbaceous plants that climb or twine around the stems of other plants.
Waif: A waif is a non-native species found in the wild that only occurs ephemerally, or only rarely outside of cultivation, or only persists for a few generations and disappears. Such a plant never becomes naturalized in the wild. Many species thought to be waifs, usually spread from cultivation, but there is not enough evidence to determine if they are obviously naturalized and persisting. Over time, we may find that many of these species will become fully established components of the state's flora.
Wetland Indicator Status: The wetland indicator status expresses the estimated probability (likelihood) of a species occurring in wetlands versus non-wetlands. See criteria for Wetland Indicator Status for more detail.
Wetland Plant: Plants that grow in areas of land where the soil is saturated with moisture either permanently or seasonally.
Wintergreen: Plants that retain their leaves from the previous growing season during the winter; leaves are maintained for one full year and replaced in late-spring.

Woody: Referring to plants or plant parts that have hard and lignified (lignin - an organic substance that imparts rigidity and strength) secondary tissue.