

SP8

Black spruce – Aspen / Bracken – Sarsaparilla

Picea mariana – *Populus tremuloides* –
Populus grandidentata / *Pteridium aquilinum* –
Aralia nudicaulis

n=6



Mount William,
Pictou County

Concept: This early successional Vegetation Type (VT) supports a mixedwood canopy of black spruce and pioneer hardwoods including large-tooth aspen and trembling aspen. Residual trees having survived past disturbances are often present, including large over-topping white pine and red oak. These residuals have important ecological value, but their presence has minimal significance in classifying this VT. Black spruce – Aspen / Bracken – Sarsaparilla usually follows stand-replacing disturbance events such as fire, windthrow or harvesting.

Vegetation: Black spruce, large-tooth aspen and trembling aspen are the dominant overstory trees, along with white and grey birch, red maple and red oak. The shrub layer is dominated by lambkill, velvet-leaf blueberry and wild raisin. Black spruce, white pine, balsam fir and red maple regeneration can also be extensive. The herb layer consists primarily of sarsaparilla, bracken, bunchberry and wild lily-of-the-valley. Schreber's moss and wavy dicranum are the dominant bryophytes.

Ecological Features

This closed or open forest forms large-patch ecosystems following stand-level disturbances in many parts of the province. It provides several ecological functions including nutrient cycling, rapid site regeneration, and nurse crop protection for later successional species such as white pine and red spruce. Excessive surface stoniness

is common, limiting the extent of canopy development. Black spruce has intermediate shade tolerance and does not seed well under closed canopies. Vegetative regeneration by layering is common in black spruce, producing small clonal groups. However aspen regenerates profusely from root suckers when disturbed, producing extensive

clonal colonies which may also support large fungal associates such as shoe-string root rot (honey mushroom). Aspen is an important tree for cavity nesting birds, and its buds provide winter food for ruffed grouse. Other bird species that may be found in this habitat are vireos, ovenbirds and veery.

Characteristic Plants

SP8

	Freq. (%)	Cover (%)
Black spruce	100	27.8
Red maple	83	8.2
Balsam fir	83	6.0
Large-tooth aspen	67	29.5
Trembling aspen	33	13.0
Red oak	33	6.5
Hemlock	33	0.1
White pine	17	20.0
White spruce	17	20.0
Red spruce	17	8.0
Grey birch	17	3.0
Tamarack	17	0.1
White birch	17	0.1
Tree Layer (Mean % Cover)		74
Balsam fir	100	8.8
Lambkill	83	10.9
Velvet-leaf blueberry	83	4.2
Black spruce	83	1.8
Wild raisin	83	0.9
Red maple	83	0.7
White pine	67	3.2
Fly-honeysuckle	50	0.1
Large-tooth aspen	50	0.1
Serviceberry	50	0.1
Lowbush blueberry	33	1.3
Red oak	33	0.6
Striped maple	33	0.2
False holly	33	0.1
Trembling aspen	33	0.1
White birch	33	0.1
Shrub Layer (Mean % Cover)		28
Wild lily-of-the-valley	100	6.4
Sarsaparilla	100	1.5
Bracken	83	8.1
Twinflower	83	1.5
Starflower	83	1.1
Bunchberry	67	3.1
Partridge-berry	67	1.4
Teaberry	50	5.8
Interrupted fern	50	3.2
Bluebead lily	50	0.3
Wood aster	50	0.2
Cow-wheat	33	0.1
Goldthread	33	0.1
Ground pine	33	0.1
Indian cucumber root	33	0.1
Rice grass	33	0.1
Herb Layer (Mean % Cover)		25
Schreber's moss	100	4.9
Wavy dicranum	83	1.4
Bazzania	83	0.3
Broom moss	67	0.2
Stair-step moss	50	0.7
Hypnum moss	50	0.2
Common green sphagnum	33	0.8
Shaggy moss	33	0.1
Bryo-Lichen Layer (Mean % Cover)		8

Distinguishing Features

A mixedwood forest of black spruce on well drained nutrient poor soils, with either large-tooth or trembling aspen as the dominant hardwood species. Sarsaparilla, bracken and bunchberry give a leafy appearance to the understory. Lambkill and blueberry are extensive.



Round-leaved pyrola

Site Characteristics

Slope Position:	Level ³ Middle ³ Lower ² Upper ²
Surface Stoniness:	(Non - Slightly) ⁸ (Moderately) ²
Bedrock Outcrop:	(Non-rocky) ¹⁰
Elevation Range:	33 - 153m
Slope Gradient:	Gentle ⁸ Level ²
Aspect:	North ⁵ South ² West ³
Exposure:	Moderate ⁸ Mod. sheltered ¹ Mod. exposed ¹
Microtopography:	Moderately ⁵ Strongly ³ Level ²
Drainage:	Imperfect ⁵ Well ³ Moderately well ²

Soil Characteristics

Soil Type:	ST2 ⁵ ST6 ⁵
Parent Material:	Glacial till ¹⁰
Rooting Depth (cm):	(<30) ² (30-45) ³ (>45) ⁵
Duff Thickness (cm):	(0-5) ³ (6-10) ⁵ (11-20) ²

