

Plant Life

The type of natural vegetation in the watershed is called pine-oak barrens. The underlying deposits of sand from glaciers are acidic with little calcium content or buffering capacity. Therefore, they hold little nutrient, and quickly drain water from rain and melting snow. The closeness to ocean waters to the east (Cape Cod Bay) and south (Buzzards Bay) moderates temperatures on land. The USDA plant hardiness climate zones (6b & 7a) for the entire Boston-South Shore area are milder than the rest of Massachusetts.

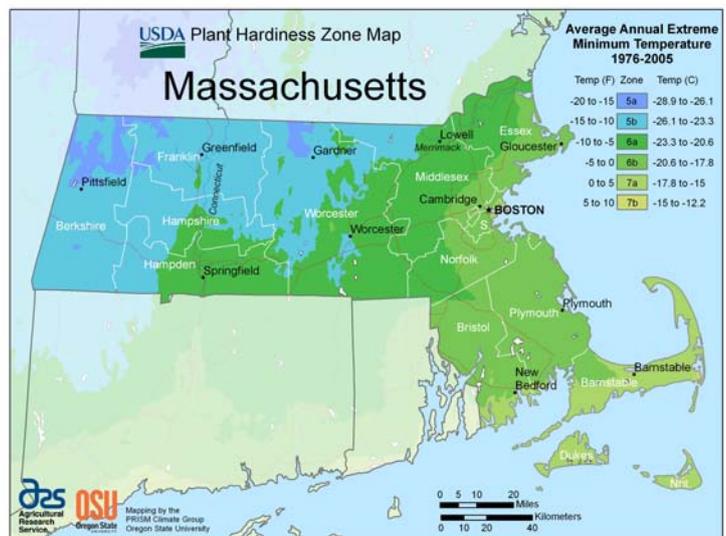
Native plants that like the soil and climate conditions of our forests include the Pink Lady Slipper orchid. Dazzling Atlantic Bluets stand out among the dragon and damselflies that grace our pond shores in summer. The yellow-orange flowers of Jewelweed provide a natural antidote to Poison Ivy. Purple New England Asters beautify roadsides in fall. Pond and river plants range from "Duckweed" (the group includes the smallest flowering plant known) to towering red maples. Swamp Azalea and Sweet Pepper Bushes on our pond and stream shores add sweet scents to our early summer breezes. High Bush Blueberries, abundant on shores of some of our watershed ponds, provide late summer treats for adventuring children.



New England Aster
Source: <http://backyard-naturalists.tumblr.com/>

Invasive species

Exotic non-native plant species (aquatic or terrestrial) introduced into the watershed often have unintended consequences. Ornamental species planted in yards may have little value to wildlife as food, and may spread into wild areas, displacing native species that wildlife depend on (example: Purple Loosestrife, wetlands invasive http://www.massaudubon.org/Invasive_Species/plants.php?id=723). Aquariums dumped into storm sewers or natural water bodies can introduce exotic algae, floating and rooted plants. Boaters can unintentionally introduce invasive species into ponds when they launch without cleaning boat hulls of hitchhikers that attached in another pond. It is important to clean your boat hull, motor, and bilge before launching.



Pretty but invasive Purple Loosestrife

Native Species

The Herring Ponds Watershed is a biologically important and still healthy landscape with interesting native species. Because this wonderful circumstance could change quickly through innocently conceived and/or inconsiderate actions, residents and visitors need to remain alert in order to protect and preserve native species, not just for the enjoyment of sightings, but also because they provide critical ecosystem functions we do not even fully understand.



Sweet Pepper Bush



Indian Pipe



Pink Lady Slipper Orchid