



Natural Communities of Louisiana

Prairie Terrace Loess Forest

Rarity Rank: S1/G2

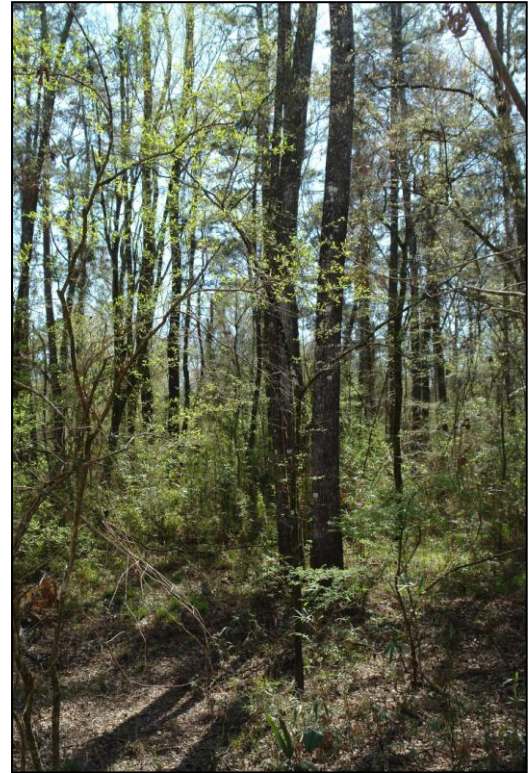
Synonyms:

Ecological Systems:

CES203.476 Southern Coastal Plain Mesic Slope Forest

General Description:

- Endemic to the flat to gently rolling Pleistocene prairie terraces of the western Florida Parishes in Louisiana
- Restricted to slowly permeable, relatively poorly drained, somewhat acid to circumneutral, silt loam soils overlying loess deposits associated with the Mississippi River
- Canopy dominated by hardwood species with *Pinus glabra* (spruce pine) as an occasional associate
- High plant species diversity
- Shares many woody taxa in common with the closely related Southern mesophytic forest



Plant Community Associates

Common overstory tree species include:

Quercus pagoda (cherrybark oak),

Q. nigra (water oak),

Magnolia grandiflora (Southern magnolia),

Ulmus americana (American elm),

Liriodendron tulipifera (yellow poplar),

Tilia americana var. *caroliniana* (basswood),

Acer rubrum (red maple),

Celtis laevigata (hackberry)

Liquidambar styraciflua (sweetgum),

Platanus occidentalis (American sycamore),

Fagus grandifolia (American beech),

Q. michauxii (swamp chestnut oak).

Q. shumardii (Shumard oak),

Morus rubra (red mulberry),

Carya glabra (pignut hickory),

Common understory & vine species include:

Sabal minor (palmetto),

Asimina triloba (pawpaw),

Halesia diptera (silverbell),

Ostrya virginiana (bluebeech),

Toxicodendron radicans (poison ivy),

Bignonia capreolata (crossvine),

Parthenocissus quinquefolia (Virginia creeper),

Vitis spp. (wild grapes)

Lindera benzoin (spicebush),

Euonymus americana (strawberry bush),

Carpinus caroliniana (ironwood),

Aesculus pavia (red buckeye),

Berchemia scandens (rattan vine),

Campsis radicans (trumpet creeper),

Smilax spp. (greenbriars),

Common herbaceous species include:

Polygonum virginianum (smartweed),

Athyrium filix-femina

spp. *asplenioides* (Southern lady fern),

Trillium foetidissimum (wake robin),

Thelypteris spp. (Southern shield ferns),

Botrychium virginianum (grape fern),



Natural Communities of Louisiana

Common herbaceous species continued:

Polystichum acrostichoides (Christmas fern),
Spigelia marilandica (Indian pink),

Tillandsia usneoides (Spanish moss),
mosses, lichens and liverworts

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

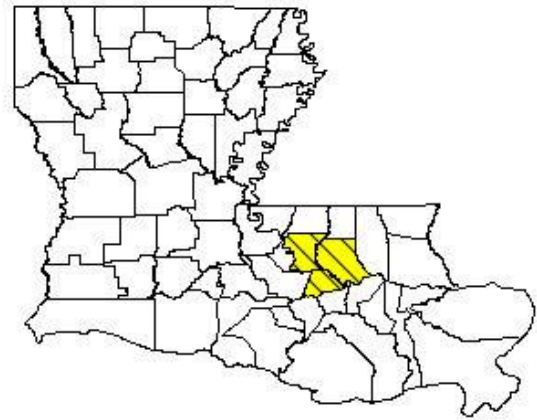
None

Range:

Restricted to East Gulf Coastal Plain in Louisiana, occurring in a very narrow range in Livingston, East Baton Rouge Parishes and perhaps Ascension Parish

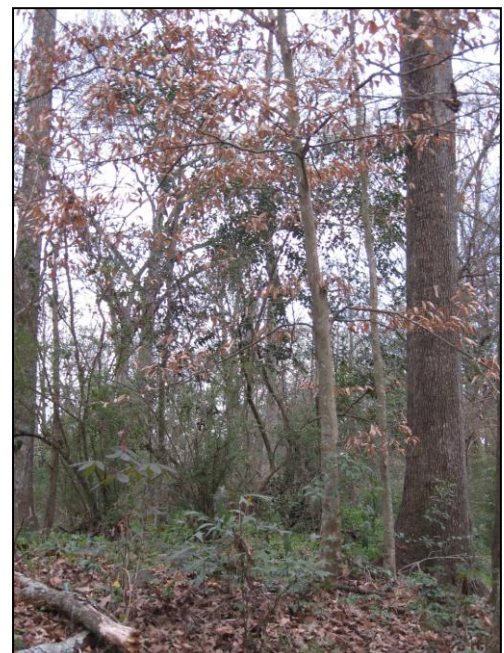
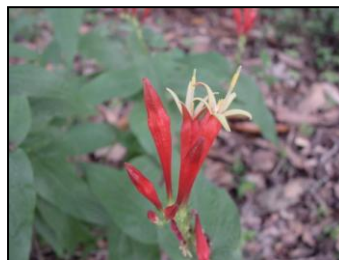
Threats & Management Considerations:

Historically more widespread, intact occurrences of the Prairie Terrace Loess Forest have now become relatively rare, following initial conversion to agricultural uses and then more recent clearing for residential, commercial and industrial development. Presettlement acreage was estimated at 500,000 to 1,000,000 acres with only 1 to 5 % currently remaining. Other major factors threatening this association include hydrological alterations, construction of roads, utilities and pipelines, and invasive exotic species.



Use of appropriate management activities and developing a compatible management plan prevents destruction or degradation of this habitat type and promotes long-term maintenance of healthy prairie terrace loess forests. Beneficial management practices:

- Prevent conversion of existing natural forests to other land uses
- Maintain natural species composition by following appropriate hardwood management techniques
- No harvesting during wet periods to prevent soil damage
- Surveying for and removal of any invasive plant species (exotics or woody) with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means



Photos left to right: *Trillium foetidissimum*,
Spigelia marilandica, and winter view of
Prairie Terrace Loess Forest