

The principal trees of the Region are white and black spruce, balsam fir, poplars, white birch and jack pine. Near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains the latter species is replaced by lodgepole pine. In Quebec and Ontario, and as far west as a line running from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Athabaska in the Prairie Provinces, the Region is, for the most part, underlain by granitic rocks of the Precambrian formations, known as the Canadian Shield. Within the area described there are extensive tracts of good soil, formed from glacial or sedimentary deposits, but a larger portion of the Region is characterized by shallow soils. Very considerable areas of bare rock testify to the disastrous results of forest fires followed by erosion. The forests of this part of the Region are mainly coniferous, with black spruce and balsam fir as dominants, and are valuable chiefly for pulpwood.

West of Lake Winnipeg the same tree species are in evidence but in different proportions. Here the soil is deep and relatively fertile, and the characteristic forest is a mixture of poplar and white spruce.

The climate of the Region is severe, and precipitation ordinarily varies from 15 to 30 inches annually, although these amounts are exceeded in eastern Quebec.

The Northern Transition Section.—This area is a part of the Boreal Region, but is described separately because none of its forests is of commercial value although of considerable local economic value. It represents a transition from the merchantable forests of the south to the treeless wastes of the Far North. White and black spruce, larch and birch are the principal tree species, and these are usually of stunted growth because of the severity of the climate. In river valleys and other protected sites occasional clumps of trees of fair size are to be found. The principal economic value of the forests probably consists in the habitat they provide for fur-bearing animals, and the wood they furnish for fuel and buildings for the scattered inhabitants of the Region.

The Aspen Grove Section.—This Section, which lies entirely within the Prairie Provinces, is also a part of the Boreal Region, but has very special characteristics. It is a zone of transition between the true forest region to the north and the open grasslands to the south. Aspen is the dominant tree, and is in sole possession of most of the area. In southern Manitoba stands of bur oak are found, and elm, basswood and ash occur singly or in small groups in river beds. Most of the area is farmed and much of the forest is now in the form of woodlots.

The Sub-Alpine Forest Region.—This is essentially a coniferous forest extending from the grasslands of the prairies and the western border of the Boreal Region up the eastern slopes of the Rockies to timber-line. This same type of forest reappears in a narrow strip extending northwesterly from the International Boundary between the plateaux of the Montane Region and the non-forested tundra formation of the mountain tops of the Coast Ranges.

In general, this forest formation occupies areas from 3,500 to 6,000 feet above sea-level. Rainfall is moderate, temperatures are low, and the growing season is short. The topography is mountainous with steep-sided valleys, and the soils are mostly derived from glacial and other residual material. The dominant tree species are Englemann spruce, alpine fir and lodgepole pine. Less widely distributed are mountain hemlock, alpine larch and white-barked pine.

The Columbia Forest Region.—This Region, often referred to as the Interior Wet Belt of British Columbia, supports forests that are somewhat similar in composition to those of the Coast Region.