New Map Format

You will notice the fall foliage map is different this year. We hope you find it more useful and attractive. A few words follow on how to interpret the new format.

The new Fall Foliage Map is based on a color-code system, where brighter colors essentially mean more vibrant foliage. To predict peak season from the colors, use these guidelines:

➢ Dark Green/No Change= peak is approximately one month away
➢ Light Green/Starting to Change= peak is approximately three weeks away
➢ Yellow/Approaching Best Color= peak is approximately one week away
➢ Orange/Best Color= foliage is peaking this week
➢ Red/Starting to Fade= still some nice color but won’t last more than a few more days
➢ Brown/Past Peak= all or nearly all color is gone
Statewide Fall Foliage Overview
The drastic cool down last week failed to deliver anticipated, major foliage changes throughout Pennsylvania, presumably due to late production of chlorophyll during the abnormally warm first two weeks of October. Other reasons include anthracnose fungus, storms, and species composition of remaining leaves. Many northern hardwoods like red and sugar maple, which typically give the most vibrant colors across the state, dropped their leaves early. Remaining leaves making up the forest canopy are likely to be of several oak species, which peak later. Therefore, in many areas of the state, peak foliage will now be predicted based upon the oak/beech and oak/hickory community peaks, which occur one to two weeks after the northern hardwoods. Best color for the oak communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds south through the Pennsylvania Appalachians is expected in the last week of October and first week of November, respectively.

Northeastern and a few northwestern counties continue to follow a predictable fall foliage timeline, peaking or starting to fade this week, while the southeast from Lancaster to Philadelphia remains essentially unchanged. Foliage in the Laurel Highlands area in southwestern PA is peaking quickly but has been described as “spotty”. Continued average to below-average fall temperatures should push foliage toward peak in many areas of the state. Next week’s report is expected to feature the most color for the season.

Northwestern Region
The Cornplanter State Forest district forester reports fall coloration is most evident in mixed forests, especially those dominated by beech, maple, and cherry. Some of those forests have reached a 50% or more color change, especially in Warren, Forest, and Venango Counties. The forests that are dominated by oaks and forests in Erie and Crawford counties have been slower to change and are displaying a 25-30% change in color. Fall foliage season can be expected to continue for several more weeks. A trip to a scenic vista overlooking the Allegheny River is recommended to view fall foliage in northwestern PA.
Northcentral Region
Foresters report less vibrant foliage in much of the Pennsylvania Wilds region, comprising Susquehannock, Elk, Sproul, Tiadaghton, and Tioga State forests; due to premature leaf drop in maple and cherry species. The oak/beech peak, which occurs one to two weeks after the northern hardwood peak, is expected to deliver the area’s best color one to two weeks from now.

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Northeastern Region
Bureau staff in Loyalsock State Forest report that foliage in most of the district is past peak. Oak-dominated areas are expected to yield a potentially more vivid “second peak” in about a week.

Foresters in Pinchot State Forest report fading foliage in the northern part of the district, but peaking conditions in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties. Red and sugar maples are giving good color, and oaks
are expected to add deeper reds and some yellow to the landscape soon. Recommended areas to visit include Mocanaqua Loop Trail, Wanamie Loop Trail, D&L Black Diamond Trail, and Nescopeck, Hickory Run, and Lehigh Gorge State parks.

Delaware State Forest staff report peak foliage in Pike and Monroe counties. Species adding shades of yellow, orange, and red include sassafras, birch, and oak species.

**West-central and Southwestern Region**
Forbes State Forest staff report spotty color at Mt. Davis and on Laurel Mountain from sassafras, beech, maples, and occasional black gums. Many leaves dropped due to more rain and wind. Peak foliage in the Pondfield area is expected to be delayed until late October.

Foresters in Clear Creek State Forest report lackluster foliage in the region, currently, but expect a strong showing from the red oaks in northern Jefferson County next week. Good color has been observed in Gallitzin State Forest District near Ebensburg. Toward the northwestern end of the district (Mercer County), the bureau service forester reports many species that traditionally would be contributing color have dropped their leaves. These species include maple, birch, aspen, cherry, walnut, and sumac.

**Central and Southcentral Regions**
Bureau of Forestry staff in Moshannon, Rothrock, Tuscarora, and Buchanan State forests report few noteworthy changes since last week. The Bald Eagle State Forest service forester reports fair color from sassafras, black Gum, Virginia creeper, black walnut, and some dogwoods. He also noted that this year’s color is later than most years.
Foliage is changing at Jacks Mountain Trail. (photo by G. Hoy)

East-central Region
Field staff in eastern Weiser State Forest (Schuylkill and Carbon counties) observed more progress toward peak conditions this week. Birches, poplars, and hickories are contributing yellow and orange colors to the landscape and a few oaks are adding deeper red shades. Colors are expected to be good for the Fall Foliage Festival in Jim Thorpe this weekend. A scenic ride along the Lehigh River via train or bike is recommended for foliage viewing.

Southeastern Region
Foresters in Michaux and William Penn State Forest districts report that fall colors have progressed only marginally since last week but expect a marked increase in color this week from maples, hickories, birches, and sassafras with forecasted frosty nights.