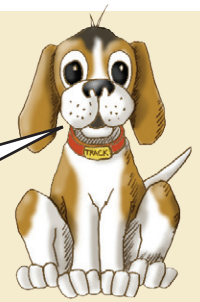




August TRACK-tivity: Uncovering Cove Forests



There are many different types of forests here in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Acidic cove forests and rich cove forests are found in bowl-shaped valleys found between two ridges in the Appalachian Mountains. Have you ever been in either type of forest?

Acidic Cove Forest

An acidic cove forest has few tree species, a dense shrub layer, and a sparse herb layer.

Few Tree Species

Few tree species can grow in acidic soils, but the trees that do grow form a thick canopy.

Eastern Hemlock

The eastern hemlock has short, rounded needles and cones about the size of a nickel.



Lots of Shrubs

Rhododendrons and laurels grow well in shaded, acidic soil.

Rhododendron

Look for evergreen shrubs with large leaves the length of an adult hand. Flowers are white, pink or purple.



Mountain Laurel

The flowers are pentagon shaped and have pink stamens. Leaves are the length of an adult finger.



Sparse Herb Layer

The dense shrub layer prevents many plants from growing on the forest floor.

Galax Look for leathery oval leaves that are close to the ground.



Canopy

Rich Cove Forest

A rich cove forest has a high diversity of large trees, a sparse shrub layer and a dense herb layer.

Biodiverse Canopy

The thick canopy protects the forest from strong winds. Trees grow fast, tall and wide.

Yellow Buckeye

Leaves have five distinct parts. The nuts are eaten by squirrels but are deadly to humans.



Sugar Maple

The sugar maple leaf looks like a hand with five fingers. They have winged seeds, called **samaras**, that spin as they fall from the tree.



Dense Herb Layer

A thick tree canopy that creates shade year-round and soil rich in nutrients provides a great environment for a high variety of plants.

Bloodroot



Jewelweed



Stinging Nettle
Careful! Don't touch!



Trillium



Shrub layer

Herb layer (forest floor)