



# 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)