The vegetation of the Canadian Prairie Provinces
IV. The woody vegetation, Part 2
Wetland shrubbery

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with 6 photos and 9 tables

Abstract. In this paper shrubbery occurring on soils with the water table close to the surface, or permanently wet, is described. Two main types of wetland shrubbery can be distinguished. The one type is characterised by the dominance, or codominance, of *Salix* spp., and can be classified with Eurasian willow communities in a class-group *Betulo-Salicetea*. Two classes, three orders, 5 alliances, 11 associations, and 10 variants are described in the willow communities.

The second wetland shrubbery is dominated by ericaceous shrubs, and can be placed in the class *Oxyccoco-Sphagneteeae*, with the order *Sphagnetea fuscii* (Tx. 1955) em. 1970, and the two alliances *Ledopaeus-Sphagnion fuscii* in western North America, and *Kalmio-Sphagnion fuscii* in eastern Canada. Three associations are described for the Prairie Provinces, and their ecology and distribution are discussed.

Introduction

As has been mentioned elsewhere (LOOMAN 1983a), the term wetland is somewhat arbitrary, as the substrate of wetland shrubbery is not necessarily permanently wet. The term as used here refers to a condition that prevails in spring for several weeks, often lasting into early summer. In some types of wetland shrubbery the wet conditions are semi-permanent. The surface dries only superficially, and after each significant rainfall water remains on the surface for several days.

In all wetland shrubbery the groundwater table is within 50 cm of the surface most of the time, and never more than 100 cm deep. JEGLUM (1971) found only one species of *Salix* on soils with a depth to groundwater of 80 cm or more.

In most of the wetland shrubbery *Salix* spp. are very important, and in the Prairie zone *Salix* spp. are the only shrubs of importance, with other genera contributing only small amounts to the cover. Farther north, in the Parklands and the Boreal forest zone as well as in the Rocky Mountains, other shrubby species become more or less important constituents of the shrubbery, including *Alnus, Betula*, and *Potentilla fruticosa*. 