



North West GA Fall Leaf Report

Date: 10-04-2023

Name: Blake Lovell

Please describe the colors of each species of understory and overstory trees. Summarize the coloration in the mountains at higher and lower elevations, and in the river corridors.

It is still very early in the season; therefore, overlooks and ridges are predominately green with a few streaks of brown and an occasional patch of red or yellow. Maple, poplar, and hickory are among the first overstory species to show signs of vivid color. There are currently only a few rare specimens throughout the area that have faintly begun the transition from green to light shades of red and yellow. Oak species including chestnut oak, white oak, and red oak are primarily responsible for the small patches of brown. Lack of rain throughout the following weeks may have influenced the increase in brown colors currently shown by oak species.

While overall color change is low within the overstory; some understory species are beginning to show vivid signs of color. A low percentage of understory species such as sourwood, beech, sassafras, and dogwood are shifting to colors of red, orange, maroon, and yellow. While these changes can be seen sporadically across all of Northwest Georgia, it is more notable above 1500 feet of elevation.

Aside from dropping leaves, the only notable change that can be seen so far include spots within vistas that have begun shifting from dark green to light green with an occasional patch of yellow or brown. Overall color change is less than 5%.

Consider these species in your descriptions:

Dogwood	Green with hints of red and maroon	Birch	Green
Yellow-poplar	Green with faint hints of yellow and brown	Sourwood	Shifting from green to red
Sumac	Green	Maple	Green with hints of red and yellow
Beech	Green or yellow	Oak	Green with hints of brown
Blackgum	Green	Sassafras	Green with hints of orange
Sweetgum	Green with occasional maroon or yellow	Hickory	Green with hints of brown
Redbud	Green		

Estimate percentage of color change from green to date: 4 % above 3000'; 2 % below 3000'.

Is a good season expected? Why? When is "peak" expected this year?

Overall forest health and rainfall in NW GA has been good for a majority of the 2023 season; however, there has been very little rainfall over the past month. Conditions are currently very dry; however, this is a somewhat common occurrence for this time of year so I would expect a normal peak season around the first week of November.

Describe any impact of rain, wind, drought or frost on leaf color this week and/or this season in general?

Overall color vividness and continuity will be largely determined on future weather events within the season. Rainfall and wind intensity in the following months will be the determining factor in how good of season we can expect. If multiple moderate to severe storms occur, it will lead to premature leaf fall and less overall color.

Suggest a nice, scenic weekend drive for a good look at current fall color. Include specific information about highway numbers, historic markers, notable overlooks, weekend events, etc. Please attach photos/video from these locations or of representative fall color.

Route 1: Take Hwy 136 from i75 to Hwy 341. Turn left on Hwy 341 / Hog Jawl Road. Continue on Hog Jawl through Mountain Cove Farms and up Daughtery Gap to Hwy 157. Turn right on Hwy 157. Turn right on Scenic Hwy 189 (or continue on Hwy 136 to Cloudland Canyon State Park). Follow Hwy 189 to Sunset Rock, Point Park, or Rock City. Drop down into Chattanooga via Ochs Hwy / 58. Turn right on Hwy 193 to get back to Hwy 136.

For the best route in current traffic visit <https://maps.app.goo.gl/zTYdn6a9Ve6EhPW58>

Route 2: Take Hwy 52 from Chatsworth to Ellijay (this route passes Fort Mountain State Park). From Ellijay, head West on Hwy 76 back to Hwy 411 (or head North on Hwy 76 into Blue Ridge).