

WHITE BIRCH

Betula papyrifera

The white birch tree is a deciduous tree which gets its name from its distinctive white bark, which peels off in strips. It is a short-lived tree of about 60-70 years, with few trees living more than 140 years.

White birch trees are a medium sized tree. They can grow to be 50 to 70 feet tall. Their tree canopy is irregular in shape and can be 20 to 35 feet wide. The trunk is typically 1 to 2 feet in diameter.



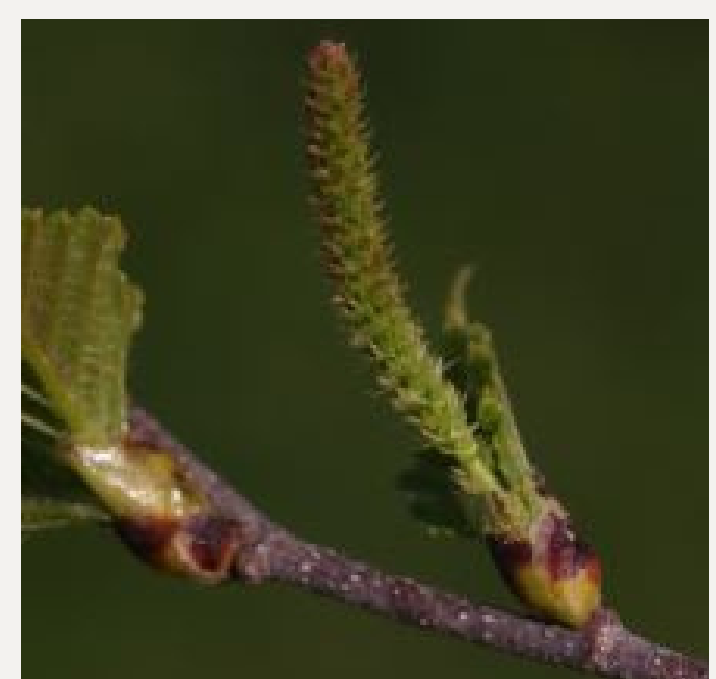
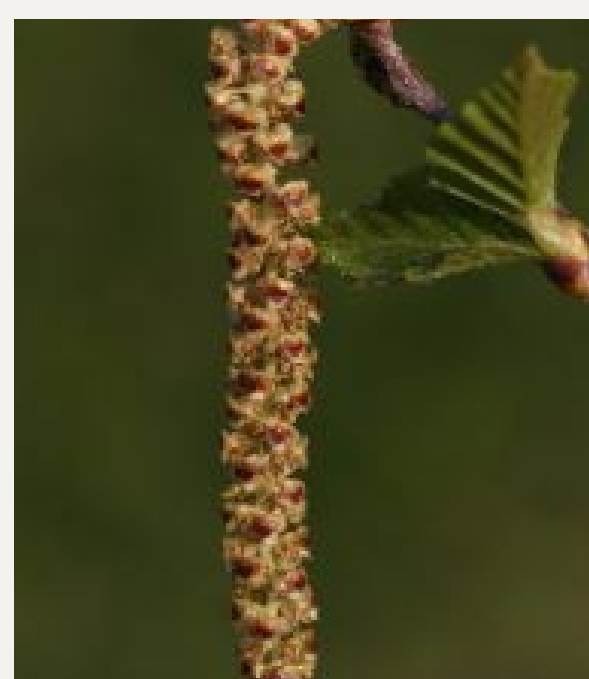
TREE IDENTIFICATION

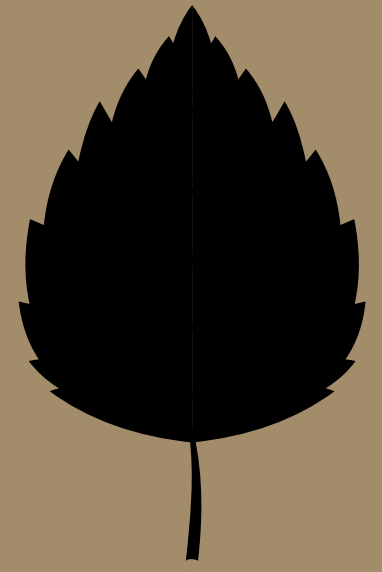
The white birch has distinctive white bark, which is paper-like when peeled.

The leaves are simple and alternate. They are ovate, coming to a point at the tip, have double serrated margins and 5-9 pairs of side veins. In the fall, the leaves turn a bright yellow colour.

The white birch flowers in late May to early June. Male catkins are yellow, long and droopy while the female catkins are green and more upright. The fruit is a winged nutlet that ripens in the fall.

The branches of young trees are mostly erect, becoming more drooping as they grow larger.





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HABITAT & RANGE

White birch is one of the most widely distributed trees in North America. It can grow in every region of Canada from coast to coast. It grows in a range of climates and can tolerate varying amounts of precipitation. White birch trees thrive in open land, rocky slopes and in young forests.



INTERESTING FACTS

Used by Native Americans to make canoes, buckets and baskets.

The branches are commonly browsed by snowshoes hare.

They are often planted as ornamental trees due to their attractive white bark.



References

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- Lincoln, M. (2002). United States Department of Agriculture Plant Guide: Paper Birch. Retrieved August 10, 2012, from http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_bepa.pdf
- Photos by Green Thumb Photography

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