

Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

Common Names: **White Birch** (American White Birch, Paper Birch, Canoe Birch, Marsh Birch)

Botanical name: *Betula papyrifera*

Tree Type: Deciduous

Physical Description:

Growth Habit: White birch tree grows in all parts of Maine and mostly northern regions in hardiness zones 1-5. It is seen in open woods and cutover areas, along streams, lakes, ponds, and swamps. It thrives in rich, moist soils. It can maintain itself on higher slopes of mountains.

Height: White birch grows 60-80 feet and has a trunk diameter of 12-24 inches.

Shape: The tree can form an open, narrow and round-topped head.

Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:

White birch flowers in the spring before the leaves open and the flowers are in catkins. The fruit of white birch is a cone-like structure, 1 inch long, 1/3 inch thick, usually pendent rather than erect. The nutlets and bracts fall in late autumn and winter as with other birches.

Range within Maine:

The white birch is common in all parts of the state.

Distinguishing Features:

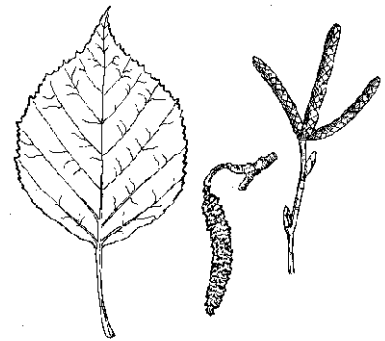
Distinguishing features of the white birch include white bark that peels in papery layers in older trees. The bark is reddish-brown in saplings. The leaves are ovate and doubly toothed. The buds of white birch are sticky when squeezed.

Interesting Facts:

Spools, clothespins, woodenware, shoe lasts, wood pulp, and fuel wood are made from the white birch's light, strong, tough, hard, light brown wood. Birch lumber is used in cabinet making and for interior finishing. Native Americans used the bark to make canoes and wigwam coverings.

Relationship to Wildlife:

Grouse eat the seeds and buds from white birch. Twigs are browsed by deer, moose and snowshoe hare.



Landscape Use:

The white birch is the most popular of the birches for ornamental use and it is less susceptible to severe attacks of the birch borer than European birch.

Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:

Pests of the white birch include leafminers, aphids, bronze birch borers, and the birch skeletonizer. A disease known as “dieback” is caused by fungi that attacks birch trees weakened by drought.

References:

Forest Trees of Maine, Twelfth Edition. Maine Forest Service/Department of Conservation. 1995.

Know Your Trees. Cope, J.A. and F.E. Winch. Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1992.

A Field Guide to Eastern Trees, Peterson Field Guides, George Petrides, Houghton Mifflin Company 1988



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