

# Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

**Common Name:** Quaking Aspen (Trembling Aspen, Golden Aspen, Mountain Aspen, Popple, Poplar, and Trembling Poplar)

**Botanical Name:** *Populus tremuloides*

**Tree Type:** Deciduous

## **Physical Description:**

**Growth Habit:** Quaking aspen is a fast-growing, short-lived tree that grows on many soil types, especially sandy and gravelly slopes. The bark on young trees is smooth and greenish white to cream colored. In maturity the bark is dark brown or gray and roughened by horizontal lines of wart-like outgrowths. The leaves are alternate, simple, 1 ½ - 3 inches wide, somewhat triangular in shape with a rounded base and serrate margins. The flattened stem allows the slightest breeze to flutter the leaves, from which the name “quaking aspen” is derived.

**Height:** The quaking aspen reaches a height of 60 – 75 feet with a trunk diameter of 10-16 inches. This species is hardy to Zone 1.

**Shape:** Quaking aspen is a graceful tree with slender branches far apart and often contorted. The head is round and narrow.

## **Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:**

The flowers are in catkins, which appear before the leaves. The fruit is a capsule, which ripens in June. The seeds are very small, light and cottony, and are carried long distances by the wind. The buds are dark brown, have a varnished appearance, and may be slightly sticky. Flower buds are usually larger than the leaf buds.

## **Range within Maine:**

Quaking aspen is found statewide.

## **Distinguishing Features:**

The leaf margins have tiny teeth and the twigs are shiny.

## **Interesting Features:**

The wood is close-grained, soft, and rots easily. It is used for trim, lumber, pallets, wafer board, landscape ties, plywood, wooden matches, sauna benches and pulp.



## **Relationship to Wildlife:**

Meadow mice and snowshoe hares girdle the stems at or near ground level. White-tailed deer and moose frequently seriously damage reproduction by browsing and rubbing their antlers against the stems. Beaver feed on the young tender bark and shoots of aspen and often cut down large number of trees near their colonies. Porcupines can greatly damage tree crowns by feeding on them. The red-breasted and yellow-bellied sapsuckers may seriously sear trees with drill holes. Several woodland birds also feed on the buds.

## **Landscape Use:**

This species does not make a good landscape tree mainly due to a variety of disease and pest problems.

## **Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:**

Aspen is susceptible to a large number of diseases including shoot blight, leaf spot, leaf rust fungi, and powdery mildew. A variety of insects have also been known to cause a lot of damage including aspen leaf miner, aspen blotch miners, leaf mining sawfly, aspen leaf beetle, cottonwood leaf beetle, gray willow leaf beetle, American aspen beetle, and the poplar borer.

## **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.

*Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Dirr, Michael A. Publishing L.L.C. 1998.

*United States Dept. of Agriculture: Silvics of North America:*

[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics\\_manual/volume\\_2/populus/tremuloides.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/populus/tremuloides.htm)

