

GRAY BIRCH

Betula populifolia



Family:	Birch
Native to:	Eastern North America
Hardiness Zones:	3 to 6
Height	20 feet to 40 feet
Spread:	10 feet to 20 feet
Bloom time:	April
Flower:	Male: Yellow-brown Female: Green

DESCIDUOUS TREE

Culture:

Gray birch is best grown in medium to wet, well-drained, sandy or rocky loams in full sun to part shade. It seems to tolerate drier soils and poorer soils in its native range. Performs best in cool northern climates where summer temperatures rarely exceed 75 degrees F. and where shallow root systems are generally covered with snow throughout the winter. Gray birch grows quickly to 20 to 30 feet tall and 15 inch trunk diameter, with an irregular open crown of slender branches. The tree often has multiple trunks branching out of an old stump.

Did you know:

This tree is noted for (1) its non-peeling chalky white bark with dark chevron trunk patches appearing below each branch base and (2) its long-pointed triangular green leaves, (each to 3" long) are double-toothed and shiny with tapered tips. Fall color is usually undistinguished. Tiny monoecious flowers appear in early spring in separate catkins on the same tree. Female flowers are followed by drooping cone-like fruits containing numerous small winged seeds that typically mature in late summer. Plants have rough-warty twigs.

Living only about 30 years, it is a commonly found in abandoned fields and burned areas.

The wood is medium hard and is used for high grade plywood, furniture, drum shells, spools and firewood.

Between about 1930 and 1950, many gray birch trees, along with yellow birch and paper birch were killed by birch dieback disease.

