

RIVER BIRCH

Betula Nigra



Family:	Betulaceae
Native to:	Eastern United States
Hardiness Zones:	4 to 9
Bloom Time:	April to May
Height:	40 feet to 70 feet

DECIDUOUS TREE

Culture:

Easily grown average, medium to wet soils in full sun to part shade. River birch is perhaps the most culturally adaptable and heat tolerant of the birches. Prefers moist, acidic, fertile soils including semi-aquatic conditions, but also tolerates drier soils.

Multi-trunked trees form a more irregular crown. Salmon-pink to reddish brown bark exfoliates to reveal lighter inner bark. Leathery, diamond-shaped, medium to dark green leaves (1.5-3.5" long) with doubly toothed margins turn yellow in fall. Monoecious flowers appear in drooping, brownish male catkins and smaller, upright, greenish female catkins.

Did you know?

Native Americans used boiled sap of the River Birch as a sweetener to maple syrup and the inner bark was used as a survival food.

The river birch is not typically used in the commercial lumber industry, due to knotting, but its strong, closely grained wood is sometimes used for local furniture, woodenware, and fuel. Once used for ox yokes, wooden shoes and other products around the farm, they were rather disdained by loggers as knotty and spindly. Instead, they were often left to grow along the river bank to control erosion.

Many waterfowl use the cover for nesting sites, while the ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and song birds use the seeds as a food source.

This species can live to over 100 years.

