

River Birch: *Betula nigra*

Leaves: 1½ - 4 in. long, 1½-2½ in. wide, alternate, simple, pinnately veined, rhombic, sharply and doubly serrate, dark green above, whitish and fuzzy below, attached to slender stems/twigs
Flowers: monoecious, male: drooping 2-3 in. long, form in fall mature in spring, female: upright 1/5-1/2 in. long
Fruits: aggregate nutlet 1-1½ in. long, tiny 3 winged seeds within, spread by wind or stream, not produced in the fall

Description:

Deciduous Tree
Medium size 40-70' high, 25-60' wide
Divided Trunk
Young trees have smooth salmon–rust colored bark, peels in thin papery layers
Older trees have silver-grey bark and drooping lower branches
Grows best in wet soils, along streams
Thrives in acidic soils
Does not tolerate shade

Uses: Mostly ornamental, shade or street trees, planted to prevent soil erosion, and aide strip mine reclamation, food for birds, deer and wildlife, cheap furniture, basket hoops, turned pieces, mixed with hardwoods to make pulpwood, artificial limbs, children's toys

Medicines: treatment for eczema and skin irritations, leaf tonic used for gout, kidney stones and rheumatism, birch tea reduces fevers

Pests: Hot dry soil, heavy floods and floating ice, Anthracnose leaf blight, Christmas mistletoe, no threatening insect pests, minor leafminer and leaf spot problems, resistant to bronze birch borers

Question: True or False?

Only old river birches have bark that peels off in papery layers.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Native Geographical Range: Eastern north to south North America
- Not found in mountainous areas or streams with fast currents

http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/betula/nigra.htm

<http://www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=13>

http://forestry.about.com/od/treeplanting/p/good_rbirch.htm

<http://www.gardenguides.com/92829-river-birch-tree.html>

Grimm, William Carey, John T. Kartesz, and William Carey Grimm. *The Illustrated Book of Trees: the Comprehensive Field Guide to More than 250 Trees of Eastern North America*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2002.