

River Birch

Betula nigra

Betulaceae “Birch Family”



River Birch outside of the **Miami University Shriver Center**



Characteristics of the River Birch

Height: Most commonly between 30ft. and 50ft. tall however, can reach heights of 100ft. in southern regions of the United States

Trunk: Most trunks have a diameter of 1ft. to 2ft. but that is often distorted because the division of the trunks at the base of the tree. The trunk is flaky with paper thin bark that peels off.

Range: River Birch Trees range from Massachusetts to Minnesota in the north and from Florida to Eastern Texas in the south however they can be found all over the country due to their aesthetic appeal in residential areas and ability to survive in almost all of the continental United States climates .

Soil type: River Birches ideally like to grow in a wet acidic soil. They excel best in swampy bottomlands that have the tendency to flood on the occasion. However, they do not need this type of soil to survive just that there root systems stay reasonably damp which can be accomplished by mulching or watering the tree.

Needs: The River Birch does particularly well when it is placed in areas where it receives lots of sunlight throughout the day and as mentioned before all cultivated River Birches should be mulched in order to have a healthy tree, otherwise it is low maintenance

Identification: It is easy to identify a River Birch because of its trunks that flake and expose different colors visible in the picture to the right. Also, the leaves are alternating 1 ¼ to 4 inches long, sharply serrated, ovate, with eight to nine pairs of veins.



River Birch can be grown in zones 4-9 illustrated here as green but performs best in zone 6 which is primarily the South East United States

Facts about River Birch

River Birches are a popular ornamental tree that many people put in parks and residential homes all over the country. They are not only a very decorative plant but also can grow upwards of two to three feet a year which landscapers and new home owners use often to fill space. River Birches are used very successfully in erosion control in stream banks and floodplains. They are the most common Birch tree in the Southern United States but, offer little commercial value other than in the furniture and woodenware industries. Their fruit called strobili is a cone like structure that, like all trees in the birch family, does not mature until the spring after flowering. The seeds are then dispersed through the wind carried by small wings. The river birch is more tolerant to diseases and insects than other trees in its family, and is really only susceptible to leaf blight which only causes summer leaf drop