

Paper Birch

Betula papyrifera



Paper birch (also known as silver birch, white birch, and canoe birch) is most recognizable for its white, papery bark that naturally peels off the trunk in curls. This tree is native to Aitkin County. Paper birch has 2"-3" serrated, heart-shaped leaves, and bears 1"-1½" catkins in the fall.

The wood of paper birch can be used for veneer and pulpwood, while birch tops and bark are utilized in decorative displays and crafts. Native Americans famously used the wood and bark from these trees to create canoes, wigwams, baskets, and bags.

Height: 60' to 75'

Under favorable conditions, young paper birch grows rapidly, often growing more than 1 foot per year. Paper birch is a relatively short-lived tree that matures around 60-70 years of age.

Planting environment:

Soil composition: Sandy loam, loam soils

Soil moisture: Well-drained, moist but not wet

Sunlight: Shade intolerant (4-6 hours of sun per day)

Paper birch does best when there is no other vegetation. Paper birch is a pioneer tree species that naturally colonizes burned lands. Clearing vegetation and tilling soil before planting will help provide a suitable environment for paper birch growth.

If planting seedlings, be sure to protect the seedlings from girdling by rodents and deer browsing.

Maintenance:

Paper birch may require gradual thinning over the stand's average lifetime of 70 years. No thinning may result in poorly-formed trees that struggle for resources. Too heavy thinning will cause many of the remaining trees to die.

Top diseases/pests:

1. Bronze birch borer
2. Stem cankers
3. Forest tent caterpillar

