

# 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. The leaves are serrated heart-shaped and are about 2" – 3". They also have fruit that are known as Catkins, that they drop in the fall. This tree is native to Aitkin County.

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 thrive when there is no other vegetation. These trees are pioneer species that naturally colonize burned lands. Clearing vegetation and working up the soil before planting will help provide a suitable environment for paper birch growth.

When 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

