

River Birch *Betula nigra*

RIVER BIRCH, one of the 12 Birch species that extend southward from the Arctic Circle and the only one that grows naturally at low elevations in the southeastern part of the United States. Mud is a natural bed for the seedlings and the tree is excellent for holding stream banks and thus helping to keep erosion in check. Most borer resistant birch and tolerant of wet soils.



BARK: Cinnamon-colored, exfoliating bark of the young River Birch is spectacular in the winter.



PLANTING: Well-suited for planting along stream banks where it is native and in other areas which are inundated for weeks. Tolerates low soil oxygen, flooding, and clay soil but prefers moist conditions. Requires an acid soil, otherwise it becomes chlorotic. River birch can be easily trained with one central leader or as a multi-trunk tree. Some nurseries plant two or three trees together to form a clump, but these trunks will not fuse into one strong trunk. Should be grown more as a single-trunked specimen. Branches droop particularly when they are wet, so regular pruning in the early years will be required to remove lower branches when they are located close to areas where clearance is needed for vehicular traffic.



FORM: A medium to large ornamental or shade tree reaching 40-70' in height with a spread of about 40-60' at full maturity. Medium to fast growth rate 1.5-3' per year. Preferring full sun to partial shade. Normally grows with a central leader and small-diameter, dark-colored lateral branches. It has a narrow, oval to pyramidal crown when young, spreading wider with age as several branches become dominant. Forms a symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms.



FRUITS: The fruit is elongated, hard, 1 to 3 inches long, and not particularly attractive to wildlife

FLOWERS: Flowers are brown or green, blooming from April-May.



ROOTS: Shallow surface roots (min. 20" deep) are usually not a problem.

LEAVES: 1.5-3" long and 1-2" wide with tiny hairs on stem and the underside of a stout midrib. Leaves alternate, simple, ovate with doubly toothed margins.

