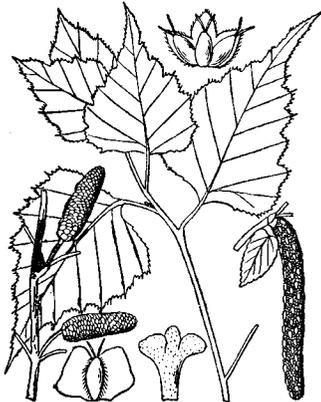




GRAY BIRCH *Betula populifolia* Marsh.



Gray birch is a short-lived and not particularly valuable tree. It occurs to some extent statewide, but is only abundant in the southern and eastern sections of the state. It is frequently found in old fields, burns and heavily-cut areas. This is a small tree that commonly reaches 20–30 feet in height and 4–8 inches in

Gray birch is a short-lived and not particularly valuable tree that is used primarily for pulp and firewood.





BIRCH

diameter. It usually occurs in clumps and often leans. The branches are short, slender, frequently pendulous and contorted, and bend toward the ground when the tree is not crowded. The head is long, narrow, pointed and open.

The **bark** is close and firm, and does not easily separate into thin layers. The outer part is dull grayish-white or chalky. The inner portion is orange.

The **leaves** are 2½–3 inches in length, thin, long-pointed, triangular, alternate and doubly toothed. The upper surface is dark green and glossy. The slightest breeze causes them to flutter like those of the poplars, hence the scientific name *Betula populifolia* which means “birch with poplar leaves.”

The **flowers** are produced in catkins. They open in early spring before the leaves. Those that appear in fall are male and usually solitary.

Gray birch has single or paired catkins in winter and spring.

The **twigs** are the most slender of our native hardwoods. They are tough and wiry, dull gray or brown, hairless, and have a rough, warty surface. Dead twigs tend to stay attached to the trunk. This, plus the dirty appearance of the bark, makes this tree easy to recognize.

The **wood** is light, soft, often coarse-grained, and decays rapidly when exposed. It is occasionally used for pulp and firewood; in the past it was used for paper roll plugs.

MAINE REGISTER OF
BIG TREES 2008

Gray Birch

Circumference: 71"

Height: 65'

Crown Spread: 27'

Location: Richmond

