











# Betula nigra

## River Birch, Red Birch

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

Noted for beautiful, exfoliating bark, River Birch is an excellent food source for wildlife, supporting hundreds of species of butterflies, moths, and songbirds. It is commonly found in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of the Mid-Atlantic Region from Pennsylvania to Virginia.



Tree	Male and Female Flowers, Tree Forms, Bark	
Height: 50–70 feet	 	
Spread: 35–50 feet		
Bloom Color: Yellowish, green from April-May	 	
<b>Characteristics</b>		
Fast-growing, irregular-crowned, <a href="#">deciduous</a> tree cultivated with a single <a href="#">stem</a> or, commonly, in a clump with multiple stems (three or more trunks)	  	
<a href="#">Alternate</a> , <a href="#">pinnately-veined</a> , <a href="#">rhombic-ovate</a> 1–1½” long leaves with doubly-serrate margins		
Male flower: 2–3” long, gold-red pendulous catkin	  	
Female flower: light-green upright catkin becomes cone-like aggregate of <a href="#">samaras</a> w/ <a href="#">persistent</a> style		
Exfoliating <a href="#">bark</a> ages from smooth reddish color to papery multicolor to deeply furrowed gray w/ pink tints	<b>Growing and Maintenance Tips</b>	
<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Excellent Replacement for</b>	
Tolerates <a href="#">clay</a> soil, wet soil, drier soil, compacted sites, heat, and air pollution; intolerant of shade; greater pest and disease resistance than other birches; <a href="#">deer</a> rarely damage	<a href="#">Ailanthus altissima</a> - Tree of Heaven	
Attractive bark peels in layers to reveal multiple colors & <a href="#">lenticels</a> , providing interest in winter & snow	<a href="#">Alnus glutinosa</a> - European Alder	
Attracts birds to its seeds; <a href="#">larval</a> host to ~321 <a href="#">lepidopterans</a> including Mourning Cloak and Red-spotted Purple butterflies	<a href="#">Salix alba</a> , <a href="#">S. fragilis</a> - White Willow, Crack Willow	
<b>Growing and Maintenance Tips</b>	<a href="#">Salix babylonica</a> - Weeping Willow	
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : <a href="#">Humus</a> -rich, acidic soil	<a href="#">Ulmus parviflora</a> , <a href="#">U. pumila</a> - Elms, Chinese, Siberian	
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria</i>	
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, Wet	Images by Mary Free (catkins, bare tree) CT College Arboretum; by Elaine Mills, Fairlington Community Center, Green Spring Gardens, Rockville, MD, and Meadowlark Botanical Gardens; and by Christa Watters (bark, left), Alexandria, VA	
Use as a lawn tree, in rain gardens (larger than 150 sq ft) or on stream banks (to control erosion)		
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 4a–9b		