

European White Birch

Betula pendula

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: European birch is graceful and ornamental with wonderful yellow fall color. The trunks of birches are covered with white or darkish, often papery bark. They flower when coming into leaf in the spring. Its drooping branch tips and dark, fissured bark at the base of its trunk can distinguish the European white birch.

HABIT AND SIZE: European birch grows rapidly, reaching a height of 35 – 75' with a spread of 15 – 25'. The crown is irregular and the shape can be oval, pyramidal or weeping.

LANDSCAPE VALUE: Although popular, the tree requires more care and spraying than other ornamental trees. Not a low maintenance tree. No significant litter problem.

LEAVES: Leaves are in a simple alternate arrangement with a double serrate margin. Ovoid or rhomboid shape longer than tip. About 2 – 4" inches in length and are less than 2" wide. Leaf color is green and changes to yellow in the fall.

FLOWERS: The small flowers are unisexual, the inflorescence a catkin-like, dense compound cyme.

FRUIT: Small, winged achene. Elongated compound structure of 1 to 3 inches long and 0.5 to 1 inch wide. Green when young, but quickly turns brown.

BUD: Narrowly tapering, rather small, brown.

DISEASES AND INSECTS: Susceptible to bronze birch borer, birch leaf miner, birch skeletonizer, and several fungi.

HARDINESS AND RANGE: Zones 3-6. Most of Europe, including Britain, south and east to Morocco, W. Siberia and central Asia.

CULTIVARS: *Dalecarlica*' - deeply lobed leaves on pendulous branches; *'Laciniata*' - cut leaves; *'Fastigiata*' - upright growth habit; *'Purple Splendor*' (*purpurea*), *'Scarlet Glory*' - purple leaves; *'Tristis*' - weeping habit; *'Youngii*' - weeping habit