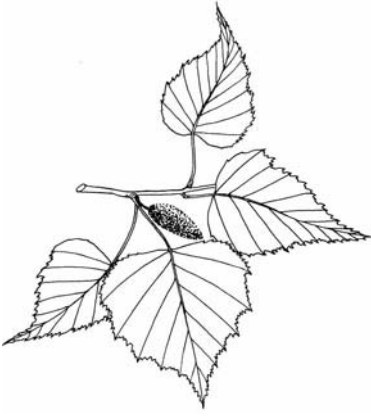


GRAY BIRCH

Betula populifolia Marsh.

Gray birch is a short-lived and not a 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 which commonly reaches 20 - 30 feet in height and 4 - 8 inches in diameter. It usually occurs in clumps and often leans. The branches are sho

rt, slender, and frequently pendulous and contorted. These 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. Those which appear in the fall are of the male sex and are usually solitary. They open in early spring before the leaves. The **twigs** are the finest of our native hardwoods. They are tough and wiry, dull gray or brown, hairless, and have a rough, warty surface. The **wood** is light, soft, often coarse-grained, and decays rapidly when exposed. It is used primarily for pulpwood.

