

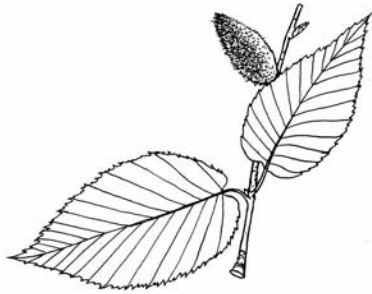
## SWEET BIRCH

*Betula lenta* L.

Sweet, black, or cherry birch is found, though uncommonly, in the southern one-third of the state. It inhabits the banks of streams or moist, rich upland soil. It is a handsome tree with a tall dark stem, spreading, slender, horizontal branches, pendulous at the ends. It has a graceful, open, narrow head, which in full sun becomes round and symmetrical. It grows to a height of 60 - 70 feet and a diameter of 1 - 2 feet.

The **bark** on the trunk of old trees is dark to almost black, and separates into large, thick, irregular plates. On young trees and branches it is smooth, shiny, dark brown tinged with red, aromatic, and has a very pronounced wintergreen flavor.

The **leaves** are alternate, 3 - 5 inches long, aromatic, ovate or somewhat oblong, sharply toothed; upper surface dark green, dull; lower surface light yellow-green.



The **flowers** are produced in catkins. The winter shoots support three to four staminate catkins. They open just before the leaves unfold in the spring.

The **wood** is hard, heavy, strong, and can be beautifully polished. It is very much prized for use in the manufacture of furniture. Limited amounts are used as pulpwood. An oil having some medicinal value can be obtained from the branches and bark by distillation, and is generally known as wintergreen oil.

The name "cherry birch" is applied to this tree because of the resemblance of the bark on old trunks to that of the black cherry.

