



## AMERICAN BEECH *Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh.



*American beech nuts are sweet and are an important food source for wildlife.*

**A**merican beech occurs statewide, growing up to 70 feet in height and 1–3 feet in diameter. Although it grows best on rich upland soil, beech is common and sometimes forms nearly pure stands, with shoots often springing up from the trees' roots. Beech bark disease causes significant mortality in Maine. The disease results when bark, attacked and altered by the beech scale insect, *Cryptococcus fagisuga* is invaded and killed by fungi, primarily *Nectria coccinea* var. *faginata*.

The **bark** is light gray and smooth unless affected by beech bark disease. The bark of trees affected by the disease is rough and pockmarked with small cankers.





The **leaves** are alternate, 3–5 inches long, elliptic, acutely pointed, with coarse and hooked teeth. The margin between the teeth is nearly straight. Dead leaves are light tan and tend to remain on trees into winter.

The **fruit** consists of a bur, which usually contains 2 triangular edible nuts. These nuts are sweet and are an important food source for wildlife. Trees that bears have climbed to eat beech nuts show claw marks on the bark. The **winter buds** are long, slender, many scaled, and sharp-pointed.

The **wood** is strong, hard and tough, but not durable. Current uses include for pulp, pallet stock and firewood. In the past, it was used for clothespins, furniture, handles, woodenware, railroad ties, dowels and flooring.

European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), Purple (*Fagus sylvatica* var. *atropunicea* Weston) and Copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* var. *cuprea* L.) are species of European origin planted in southern and central Maine as ornamentals.

*Smooth barked beech (left) have become a rarity in Maine. The bark of most trees (right) is roughened by cankers caused by beech bark disease.*



**MAINE REGISTER OF BIG TREES 2008**  
**American Beech**  
**Circumference:** 104"  
**Height:** 87'  
**Crown Spread:** 58'  
**Location:** Hallowell

