



Paper Birch

Betula papyifera

Height: 15 m

Spread: 5-10 m

Native to: North America

Grows in: Forests, ravines and savannahs

Friends with: Often grows with Sugar Maple and Trembling Aspen

Paper Birch: Groundbreaking and Adventurous

- Paper Birch is one the first trees to grow on cleared land, making it an early successional species.
- This means they provide food and shelter for birds, animals and other plants as the land regenerates.

How to Identify

- Bark on young trees is reddish brown, while older trees have white bark that often sheds in paper-like sheets.
- Buds are long, slender and brown.
- Leaves are small, medium-green and have double toothed edges. They turn bright yellow in fall.
- Lookalikes: River Birch has brown peeling bark that looks like cinnamon sticks as it sheds.

You can identify Paper Birch by the rough, double toothed edges of its leaves!



Flowers and Seeds

- In spring, clusters of flowers called catkins appear. The female catkins turn into drooping, cone-like fruit made up of many small seeds in late summer to fall
- Seeds are greenish brown with little wings. They're small enough to be carried by wind over long distances.

Traditional and Historical Uses

- Indigenous communities used Paper Birch bark as waterproof coverings for traditional homes and canoes.
- Birch bark was used as a writing or painting surface, and is used in the beautiful traditional art of birch (bark) biting. Thin pieces of bark are folded into layers and then carefully bitten to create patterns - like folding and cutting paper to make snowflakes.

Toronto's Urban Forest

- Toronto's urban forest includes trees, shrubs and plants that help keep Toronto healthy, vibrant and full of life.
- These leafy companions support local wildlife, help many plants and animals live and grow, and protect our neighbourhoods from noise and rain.
- Trees clean the air we breathe and create shady places to gather, play and explore.



Paper Birch catkin
and bark



Vote Paper Birch for Tree of the Year!

Kids can vote for Toronto's 2027 Tree of the Year during Kids Vote Weekend, taking place at all 50 advance voting places on October 10 and 11.

By participating, kids will learn about the voting process and help support the City's goal of reaching a 40% tree canopy by 2050.



Fun Facts:

- Paper Birch is fast-growing, helping establish new forests quickly.
- Paper Birch has bright white, papery bark with dark lines that make it easy to recognize.
- Paper Birch has tiny seeds that can float long distances on the wind, helping new trees grow in different places.