

YELLOW BIRCH

Betula alleghaniensis Britt.

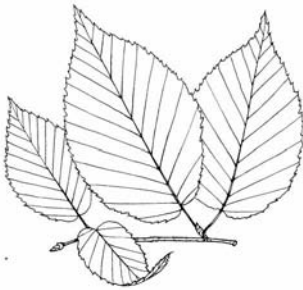
Yellow birch is the largest of the native birches, growing to a diameter of three feet and a height of 70-85 feet. The spreading branches are somewhat pendulous, and form a broad, round-topped head in the open, but irregular in the woods. It grows well statewide on cool, moist sites, and is frequently mixed with beech and sugar maple, or with hemlock.

The **bark** on the branches and on the stems of young trees is very shiny, silvery gray or yellowish brown in color, separating into loose, thin, often ribbon-like layers. On old trees it is divided into large thin plates and is colored a dull gray or black. The young twigs are aromatic like the black birch, although to a lesser degree. Both the buds and twigs have a pronounced wintergreen taste.

The **leaves** are ovate or nearly oblong, alternate, the edges doubly toothed, the upper side dull, dark green, hairy and 3 - 4½ inches long.

The **flowers** are in catkins. In winter there are 3 - 4

pre-formed staminate catkins on the shoots, but not in clusters. They open in the early spring.



The **twigs** are yellowish to dark brown, with a wintergreen taste and are somewhat hairy.

The **wood** is hard, strong, heavy, and will take a good polish. It is close grained and evenly textured. The heartwood, which makes up the bulk of the wood, has a very pleasing reddish color. It takes stains easily, makes excellent veneer wood, and does not easily warp. It is also used for furniture, flooring, woodenware, lumber for interior finish, plywood, railroad ties, pallets, pulp, gunstocks, and dowels. The yellow birch is one of our most valuable timber trees.