## Betula nígra Ríver Bírch, Red Bírch

Tried and True Native Plant Selections for the Mid-Atlantic

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Noted for beautiful, exfoliating bark and multiple trunks, River Birch is an excellent food source for wildlife, supporting hundreds of species of moths, butterflies, and songbirds. It is commonly found in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of the Mid-Atlantic Region from Pennsylvania to Virginia.



## Tree Male and Female Flowers, Tree Forms, Bark Height: 50-70 feet Spread: 35-50 feet Bloom Color: Yellowish, green from April-May Characteristics Fast-growing, deciduous tree with single trunk or multi-stemmed (more desirable), irregular crown <u>Alternate, pinnately-veined,</u> oval or triangular 1– 13/3" long leaves with doubly-serrate margins Male flower: 2–3" long, gold-red pendulous catkin Female flower: light-green upright catkin becomes cone-like aggregate of samaras w/ persistent style Exfoliating bark ages from smooth reddish color to papery multicolor to deeply furrowed gray w/ pink tints Attributes Tolerates <u>clay</u> soil, wet soil, drier soil, compacted sites, heat, and air pollution; intolerant of shade Greater pest and disease resistance than other birches; deer rarely damage Attractive bark peels in layers to reveal multiple colors & lenticels, providing interest in winter & snow Attracts birds to its seeds; larval host of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Red-spotted Purple butterflies and numerous moth species **Growing and Maintenance Tips Excellent Replacement for** Soil Requirements: Humus-rich, acidic soil Ailanthus altissima - Tree of Heaven Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade Alnus glutinosa - European Alder Water Requirements: Moist, Wet Salix alba, S. fragilis - White Willow, Crack Willow Use as a lawn tree, in rain gardens (larger than Salix babylonica - Weeping Willow 150 sq ft) or on stream banks (to control erosion) Hardiness: USDA Zones 4-9 <u>Ulmus parviflora, U. pumila</u> - Elms, Chinese, Siberian

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Mary Free (catkins, bare tree) CT College Arboretum; by Elaine Mills, Fairlington Community Center, Green Spring Gardens, Rockville, MD, and Meadowlark Botanical Gardens; and by Christa Watters (bark, left), Alexandria, VA



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