

THE GUIDE TO CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE



ESSENTIAL NATIVE TREES *and* SHRUBS *for the* EASTERN UNITED STATES



TONY DOVE *and* GINGER WOOLRIDGE

Essential Native Trees and Shrubs



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A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE

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Bunker Hill Studio Books

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*For all the peanuts who continue to inspire me,
especially James, Mae, and Regan*

—TD

*For our readers and anyone who has the pleasure
and opportunity to improve the landscape*

—GW



Acer pensylvanicum

Striped Maple, Moosewood, Snakebark

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – The striped maple is a small, understory tree appreciated for its unique striped bark and good, although short-lived, autumn color. Use as a specimen, at the woodland edge, for naturalizing, rooftops or under utility lines.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

See
bark
photo

SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



FORM – The striped maple is a 15'–20' (40') deciduous large shrub or small tree. The open, vase-shaped branching pattern creates a rounded to irregular crown. It has a slower growth rate in cultivation than in a natural setting, and it is rather short-lived, to about 30 years.

COLOR – In spring, dangling pendant racemes, to 6" long, with small, 1/3" green-yellow flowers, appear below large, broad three-lobed leaves. The medium

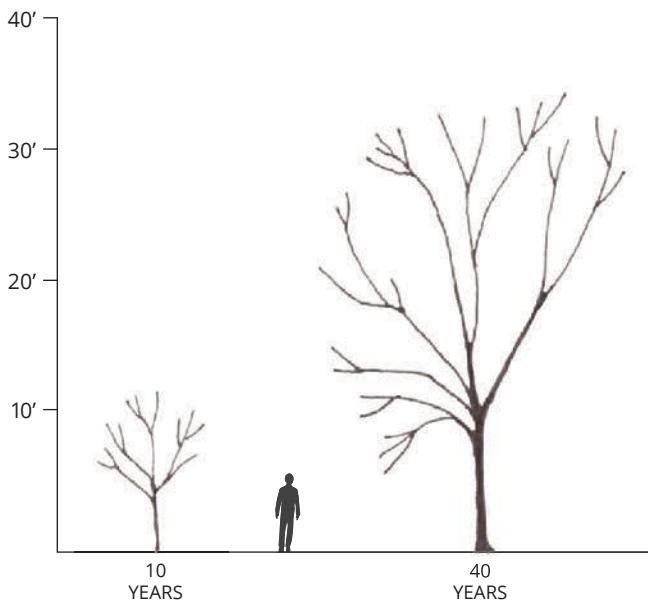
USDA Zones: 3-7		
SUN Part shade to shade	MOISTURE Moist	pH 5-7

green leaves, to 7" long, have distinct red petioles. The autumn foliage is a good yellow. The thin bark is green with a pattern of white longitudinal striations.

TEXTURE – Coarse in leaf, medium in winter.

CULTURE – The striped maple's natural range is cooler areas and higher elevations from Nova Scotia to Pennsylvania and south through the Appalachians to Georgia, where it grows in well-drained acid soils.

A site with moist, well-drained soil is important for healthy growth. The striped maple performs best in climates with cool summers. It is very tolerant



The distinctive bark of the striped maple.



Striped maple in autumn.

of shade but can tolerate more sun under cooler conditions. Protect bark from mechanical damage.

The striped maple does not tolerate flood, heat, salt, or drought. It transplants easily.

Spider mites and verticillium wilt can affect the tree but generally cause no serious damage. Moose love this maple, and deer may browse but less often. Leaves may scorch in full sun.

COMPANION PLANTS – In the wild, striped maple is associated with eastern white pine, American hornbeam, serviceberry, witch hazel, and sugar maple.

WILDLIFE – The seeds have a high value for birds, and the flowers provide nectar and pollen. The tree supports butterfly and moth larvae.

CULTIVATED VARIETIES – Choose for enhanced winter interest.

‘**Erythrocladum**’ – Young stems are a bright red with white striations that are most noticeable after leaves have fallen. The habit is more upright and can be pruned to force new red shoots. The bark ages to a yellow brown. It is usually grafted.

Acer rubrum

Red Maple

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – The red maple is an attractive and popular shade tree, with brilliant autumn color. It makes a handsome specimen and is useful in many situations for lawns, rain gardens and bioretention areas, park plantings, golf courses, and so on. It is a good street tree where salt is not used, though its roots can lift sidewalks. It is an excellent plant for wildlife.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

SPRING

SUMMER

AUTUMN



FORM – The red maple is a large, fast-growing, upright tree, 40'–60' (10'). It is pyramidal or elliptical in youth. As it ages, its strong, ascending branches form a dense oval crown.



USDA Zones: 5-8		
SUN Sun to part shade	MOISTURE Dry to moist	pH 4.5-8

COLOR – The small, red, profuse flowers are easily viewed from a distance in late winter to mid-spring, depending on latitude and elevation. The emerging leaves are light green, changing to medium-dark green as the summer progresses. The autumn foliage is spectacular in most individuals, with colors ranging from red, yellow, and orange to combinations of each. Young twigs are reddish in color, while the bark on most small and intermediate-sized branches is a



A young 'October Glory' in autumn.

smooth light gray. The older trunk and branches will have a furrowed, dark brown bark.

TEXTURE – Medium.

CULTURE – The familiar red maple is native to most of the eastern half of the United States. It is usually most abundant along stream and bottomlands, where it grows rapidly to heights or spreads approaching 90'–100', but it adapts to a wide variety of conditions.

Red maple is one of the most tolerant native trees and grows very well, although more slowly, in upland locations that may be very dry. The species is tolerant of heavy clay to sandy soils, compacted soils, and a wide range of pH and air pollution. It is sensitive to salt.

Red maple grows best in full sun but is tolerant of moderate shade, especially when young. The autumn color is spectacular, particularly where there are large day to night temperature changes during autumn. The wood of red maple is relatively soft and brittle and can be damaged by heavy ice and snow loads. This problem can be exacerbated by improper pruning, including the failure to remove weak or crossing branches at an early age.

The roots are generally shallow, making the young red maple easy to transplant anytime during its dormancy. Trees should be chosen from local growers to assure cold hardiness.

There are many insects and diseases listed for red maple, including verticillium wilt, various canker diseases, leaf spots, leaf hoppers, and aphids. Usually these pests are of little concern, but when red maples are stressed, perhaps due to poor horticultural practices, the pest problem may become more severe. The introduced long-horned beetle may cause damage in areas affected by this insect. Where deer are an



'Brandywine' with dense summer foliage, as a street tree.

issue, they may browse on the foliage of seedlings and easy-to-reach branches. Young trees should be protected from deer.

COMPANION PLANTS – In nature, red maple associates with pine, sugar maple, river birch, common bald cypress, black gum, and sweet gum. The red maple produces a dense shade in maturity which, combined with shallow roots, makes it a difficult tree to grow grass or other ornamental plants beneath.

WILDLIFE – The leaves provide food for 300 species of caterpillars. Additionally, the red maple supports



The red maple's signature early-spring flowers.

pollinators and provides nectar. It also provides nesting and seeds (in female trees) for birds and small mammals.

CULTIVATED VARIETIES – There are many cultivated varieties and hybrids; some of the more well-known ones are listed below. Male clones have no seed litter. Choose for autumn color, cold hardiness, and form.

‘**Brandywine**’ – Consistent brilliant autumn color, scarlet turning to bright burgundy. Male.

‘**Karpick**’ – A narrow form 40'–50' tall, half as wide. Bright red twigs. Yellow or red autumn color. Male.

‘**October Glory**’ – An oval to rounded form to 40' with vibrant red fall foliage. The glossy dark green summer foliage is late to color, and brilliant autumn leaves remain late into the season. Best for locations where early autumn freezes are uncommon. Female.

‘**Northwood**’ – Very cold tolerant. Shiny summer foliage, but autumn color is not consistent in the South.

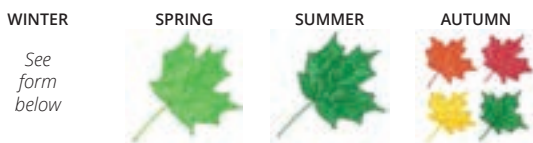
‘**Sun Valley**’ – Good symmetric oval crowned form. Brilliant red turning bright burgundy in late autumn. Male.

Acer saccharum

Sugar Maple, Rock Maple, Hard Maple

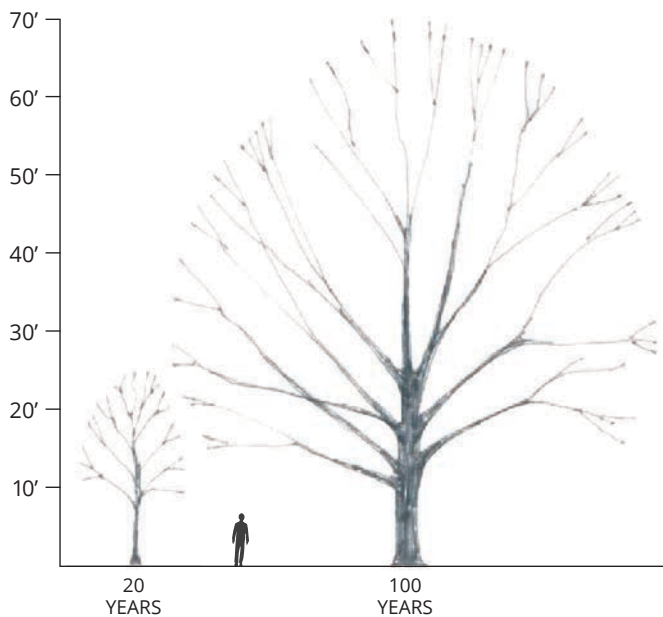
ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – The sugar maple’s exceptional autumn color is the outstanding feature of this handsome, large shade tree. It is used as a specimen or grouping for large residences, parks, golf courses, and campuses; and for naturalizing and the upper edge of bio retention areas. It is excellent for wildlife.

SEASONS OF INTEREST



WINTER
See form below

FORM – Sugar maple is a large deciduous tree reaching 60’–75’ (100’) and about 2/3 as wide. It is dense and upright. Oval in youth, it usually forms a rounded crown with age, but there can be considerable variation between individuals. The handsome habit is appealing in winter. The tree’s growth rate is medium when young and slow with maturity. It is a long-lived tree, to 200 years.



USDA Zones: 3-8		
SUN Full sun	MOISTURE Moist	pH 5.5–7.5

COLOR – The sugar maple leaf resembles the classic maple symbol of Canada. Palmate leaves are three to five lobed and 3”–6” long and across. They are a medium to dark green above and pale green below, both with a medium finish. The brilliant autumn colors range from bright yellow to orange to a seemingly fluorescent scarlet, sometimes on the same tree. Parts of the tree may change color ahead of other parts, but the coloring is good even in zones 7 and 8. The bark is variable. In young trees it is a smooth grayish brown. As it ages it develops



A sugar maple in early autumn.



A well-formed sugar maple in Maryland.

fissures, which ultimately deepen, so that dark gray (sometimes chalky), irregular, shaggy, longitudinal scales form. The branches can appear black against bright autumn foliage.

TEXTURE – Medium.

CULTURE – The sugar maple is an important component of rich northeastern hardwood forests. The natural range extends from Eastern Canada to Minnesota and south along the New England coast to New Jersey and west through West Virginia and the Appalachians into Tennessee.

The best autumn color, form, and growth rate are exhibited in full sun. The sugar maple is very tolerant of different soils and sites but grows best in deep, moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soils. Transplant in spring.

Among the maples, it has the strongest wood and is tolerant of snow, ice, and wind.

The sugar maple has been used as a street tree, but its shallow, sidewalk-lifting roots and its intolerance of pollution, salt, and compacted soils usually make it unsuitable. This being said, its roots are not as shallow and competitive as those of the red or silver maples. The sugar maple is moderately tolerant of drought, but intolerant of long-term flooding and chlorine. Its intolerance of chlorine may restrict its use near swimming pools.

The sugar maple produces maple syrup and high-quality wood and is the primary contributor to the autumn color in New England.

A naturally occurring subspecies or similar species is *A. barbatum* (*A. saccharum* subsp. *floridanum*). The southern sugar maple or Florida maple is a smaller tree, 25'–50' tall and half as wide with smaller foliage. It is native to rich, well-drained woods in the Piedmont and coastal plains of the southeast, zones 7–9. It is more heat tolerant than *A. saccharum*.

If it becomes established in North America, the Asian long-horned beetle will be a serious problem in maples. Young trees should be protected from deer.

COMPANION PLANTS – In nature, sugar maple associates with white oak, American hophornbeam, striped maple and others. The heavy shade and shallow root system can create a challenge for plants grown beneath a maple. Ground cover possibilities include ferns, ginger, and moss.

WILDLIFE – Sugar maple provides pollen and nectar for hummingbirds and insects. It supports 300 species of caterpillar. In addition to providing this protein source for birds, the female sugar maples provide seed for birds and small mammals through the winter. It is a good tree for nesting and shelter when in leaf.

CULTIVATED VARIETIES – There are many varieties. Consider for choice of autumn foliage color, form, size, accelerated growth, and heat tolerance. The narrow varieties are good for allées. Among the better varieties are the following:

'Green Mountain' – Rapid growth rate, straight central leader with a narrow oval form. Large, thick, but deeply cut dark green leaves give it a finer texture. Good bright yellow to orange and red autumn color. Hardy.

'Legacy' – Heat and drought tolerant, performs well in the South as well as in cold temperatures. Thick, glossy, dark green foliage turning to good yellow and orange in autumn. Dense branching for a uniform, tight oval form. Popular and vigorous.

'Sweet Shadow' – 50' × 50'. Large dark green leaves with somewhat drooping, deeply cut lobes for a fine, lacy texture. Autumn color is yellow to orange. Vigorous.

'Temple's Upright' (**'Monumentale'**) – Narrow, upright, columnar habit, 40'–50' × 15' wide. It has a central leader with ascending branches, creating an elliptical form. Leathery leaves have wavy margins.

Aesculus pavia

Red Buckeye

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – The red buckeye is a small tree or multi-stemmed shrub with showy spring flowers after early spring leaf out. It has attractive early spring and summer foliage. It may be used as a specimen, street tree, at the woodland edge, and in a rain garden for residential and park projects.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

SPRING

SUMMER

AUTUMN



FORM – The red buckeye grows to about 10'–20' (35') tall × 10'–15' wide or more. Whether a small tree or large shrub, it usually has an irregular and open form with a rounded crown.

COLOR – Very early leaves emerge in spring followed by showy, profuse red flowers in early spring, following new leaves. The flowers are arranged on erect to

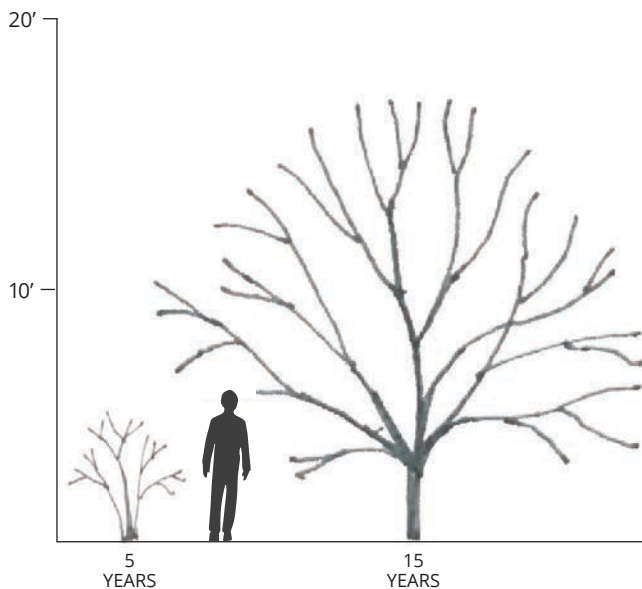
USDA Zones: 4-8		
SUN Full sun to part shade	MOISTURE Moist	pH 5.5–7.5

drooping terminal panicles in clusters, 3"–6" long. The palmately compound leaves have five (seven) 3"–6" long leaflets plus a 2"–5" long petiole. The leaves can be very glossy green. They emerge bronze, turning to a medium to dark green above and pubescent gray below. Leaves drop early in autumn, often by September, with no appreciable autumn coloration.

TEXTURE – Medium coarse summer and winter.



The showy, profuse, early-spring flowers of red buckeye.





The coarse mid-autumn (sometimes earlier) to winter habit of the red buckeye.

CULTURE – The red buckeye is native to Piedmont and coastal woodlands from Virginia to Florida and from Illinois to Texas, up to 1,500' in elevation.

The red buckeye flowers best in rich soils and full sun with moist, well-drained soil. It will flower in shade, but the habit becomes rangy with less sunlight. Red buckeye will tolerate clay and sandy soil, and is moderately tolerant of salt. It also tolerates some drought, but foliage may scorch.

Another naturally occurring variety is *A. pavia* var. *flavescens*, a usually yellow-flowering understory shrub. Naturally occurring crosses of *A. pavia* and *A. pavia* var. *flavescens* are known as *Aesculus* × *hybrid* and may have red and yellow blooms. *Aesculus sylvatica*, the painted buckeye, has flowers that are yellow, pink, or both colors.



A red buckeye grown in full sun.

The fruit has little ornamental value. Seeds, bark, and foliage are quite toxic to humans and livestock.

Red buckeye is tolerant of pollution. It is rarely bothered seriously by insect pests, disease, or deer.

COMPANION PLANTS – The red buckeye combines well with native azaleas, croton, fothergilla, smooth hydrangea, inkberry, Virginia sweetspire, and many others.

WILDLIFE – It is a good source of early-spring nectar for migrating hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees.

Amelanchier spp.

Downy, Shadbush, Allegheny, and Apple Serviceberries

Note to the reader: The serviceberry species listed below are very similar and can be difficult to distinguish, botanically, from one another. We have grouped them together here.

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – The serviceberries are a beautiful, very early-flowering group of small trees or large shrubs with usually good autumn coloring and ornamental gray bark. They are effective as specimens, in groupings, rain gardens, rooftops, the understory, at the woodland edge, near streams and ponds, and as a street tree. They are especially effective when planted against dark backgrounds. The serviceberries are stunning in flower in very early spring. They are excellent for wildlife.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

See bark photo

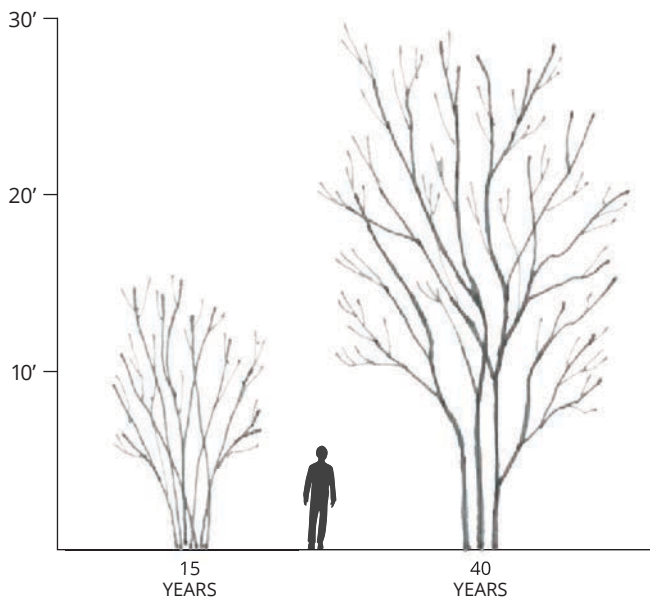
SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



USDA Zones: 4–8 (9)		
SUN Full sun to part shade	MOISTURE Dry to wet	pH 5.5–6.5

Amelanchier arborea var. *arborea* – The downy serviceberry or common serviceberry is the largest of the *Amelanchiers*. It is a small, graceful, short-trunked or multi-stemmed tree or large shrub. The multi-stemmed plant is vase shaped with an open branch structure. At 12'–20' (30'), it can be wider than tall. Its 1"–3" long, lanceolate to obovoid leaves are lightly serrated and emerge silvery, becoming a medium green in summer. The ¼"–½" green to red to purple fruit mature in hanging clusters in late summer to early autumn.



The very early spring flowers of a multi-stemmed shadbush.

Amelanchier canadensis – The shadbush or shadblow serviceberry grows to about 25'–30' by half as wide and spreads by suckering. It grows in the Piedmont and coastal wetlands along the East Coast. The shadblow has an upright, dense habit with a narrow crown, 1"–3" leaves, upright flower clusters, and red to purple berries that ripen to black.

Amelanchier laevis – The Allegheny serviceberry grows to about 15'–25' (40') by the same width and is usually multi-stemmed. Its leaves, 1½"–3", begin bronze in color. The red fruit ripens to purple or black and is sweeter and juicier than shadbush. This plant is less likely to sucker and has superior autumn color to the shadbush.

Amelanchier × *grandiflora* – The apple serviceberry, 15'–25' × 12'–15', is a cross between *A. arborea* and *A. laevis*.

The serviceberries have a medium growth rate and relatively short life span, 30–40 years.

COLOR – Showy, profuse, pendulous 2"–4" racemes of small white flowers emerge in very early spring before the leaves. They are lightly fragrant. The duration of bloom is dependent on weather but is usually five to seven days. The autumn leaf color can be a yellow to orange to red, but it is quite variable and can sometimes be nondescript, especially if the foliage has been damaged by spider mites. The cultivated varieties (hybrids) listed below offer a more consistent fall coloration than seed-grown plants. The handsome gray bark is smooth with vertical striations in youth, and develops shallow furrows with maturity.

TEXTURE – Fine in winter, medium to fine in leaf.

CULTURE – The native range is most of the East



A serviceberry in autumn.

Coast with the exception of the coastal areas of the Carolinas south through Florida.

Serviceberry tolerates a wide range of soils, including clay, but performs best in slightly acidic, moist soils in full sun. Drier soils are tolerated with more shade and cooler temperatures. It is one of the earliest trees to bloom in the spring.

All of the serviceberries have some issues when in a challenging environment, but we felt their attributes warranted them a place on our primary list. They are tolerant of salt, soil compaction, drought, and heat but somewhat intolerant of pollution.



The attractive, smooth, light gray bark of serviceberries.

As members of the rose family, they can be susceptible to occasional rust diseases. Most of the rust diseases affecting rose family members have an alternate host in junipers. If there are no species of juniper within a radius of several miles, there will be no rust problems. However, this is rarely the case, so some method of control may need to be used. Spider mites can affect the appearance when grown in a hot, dry location. Deer occasionally browse the foliage.

COMPANION PLANTS – Serviceberries exist in nature and combine well with sugar maple, hornbeam, flowering dogwood, sourwood, black gum, Virginia sweetspire, spicebush, winterberry, and inkberry.

WILDLIFE – The flowers provide pollen and food for hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. The serviceberries host hundreds of species of caterpillar. Birds love the berries.

CULTIVATED VARIETIES – Choose cultivated varieties for size, autumn color, heat and drought tolerance, and disease and insect resistance.

Amelanchier × *grandiflora* ‘Autumn Brilliance’ – 20'–25'. Grows quickly. Leaves tend to remain healthy through the summer on well-sited plants. Excellent red autumn color.

Amelanchier × *grandiflora* ‘Princess Diana’ – 25' × 15'–20'. Leaves tend to remain healthy through the summer on well-sited plants. Excellent red autumn color. Very hardy.

Betula lenta

Sweet Birch, Black Birch, Cherry Birch

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – Sweet birch is an attractive, medium-sized canopy tree notable for its excellent yellow autumn color and appealing bark. It is effective as a specimen and in groupings for parks, bioretention areas, golf courses, highways, and large residences. It is an excellent plant for wildlife.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

See
form
below

SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



FORM – Sweet birch is a single-trunked tree, 40'–50' (90') and spreading 35'–45'. It grows fast in youth, when it is conical in shape. In maturity, growth becomes more moderate, and it develops an oval to rounded shape, with ascending limbs and slightly pendulous branchlets. Sweet birch has a medium lifespan, to 100 years and more.



USDA Zones: 3-7

SUN	MOISTURE	pH
Full sun to very light shade	Moist to wet	4.8–6.8

COLOR – The leaf is a simple, ovate, serrated (or doubly serrated) shape, shiny, dark green on the upper surface in summer, 2½"–6" long and 1½"–3½" wide. Foliage is lighter green at leaf out in late spring and a reliably golden yellow in autumn. Sweet birch flowers are small, tan catkins in spring. In youth the bark is thin and red brown with horizontal lenticels like a young cherry. Older bark remains gray, with vertical, scaly plates, unusual in birches.



A mature sweet birch grown in full sun.



ABOVE: *Sweet birch mature bark texture.*



RIGHT: *The smooth cherrylike bark of a young sweet birch.*

TEXTURE – Medium in leaf. In winter, sweet birch has an attractive, fine, uniform texture with shiny, tan twigs.

CULTURE – Sweet birch is native from Maine to Pennsylvania and south through the Appalachians to northern Georgia and Alabama, often along small streams and rivers.

It prefers moist, well-drained soils, but will tolerate drier soils. It will grow in a wide range of soils from sandy to moderately heavy clay. While found commonly on limestone soils, it also tolerates moderately acidic soils and salt. It performs best in cooler climates.

Sweet birch is moderately resistant to ice storm damage, more so than the river birch or red maple. If pruning is required, it should be done in the summer, when their sap is not flowing. In fact, birch sap is used as syrup, like maple sap, particularly for birch beer. The bark smells and tastes of wintergreen. *B. allegheniensis*, yellow birch, is a similar species with less interesting young bark.

Like river birch, sweet birch is resistant to bronze birch borer. But sweet birch grows best in climates

with cool summer nights, unlike river birch, which tolerates the heat and humidity of the southeastern coastal plain. Sweet birch is deer resistant.

COMPANION PLANTS – Sweet birch combines well with our native azaleas and hydrangeas, fothergilla, summersweet, Virginia sweetspire, and ferns.

WILDLIFE – According to Darke and Tallamy, birches support more than 400 species of caterpillars as well as providing food for migrating birds in spring and autumn. The seeds appeal to songbirds and upland ground birds. The catkins provide pollen for bees and other insects.



A mature sweet birch grown among younger trees.

Betula nigra

River Birch

ATTRIBUTES/USE IN LANDSCAPE – River birch is a popular, large shade tree with exceptionally attractive bark, interesting form, and rapid growth. It is effective as a specimen, shade tree, and in small groupings along streams and ponds. It is used in parks, estates, campuses, golf courses, and other large sites. See the cultivated varieties below for plants suitable to smaller-scale projects including rain gardens. River birch has good wildlife value.

SEASONS OF INTEREST

WINTER

See
bark
photo

SPRING



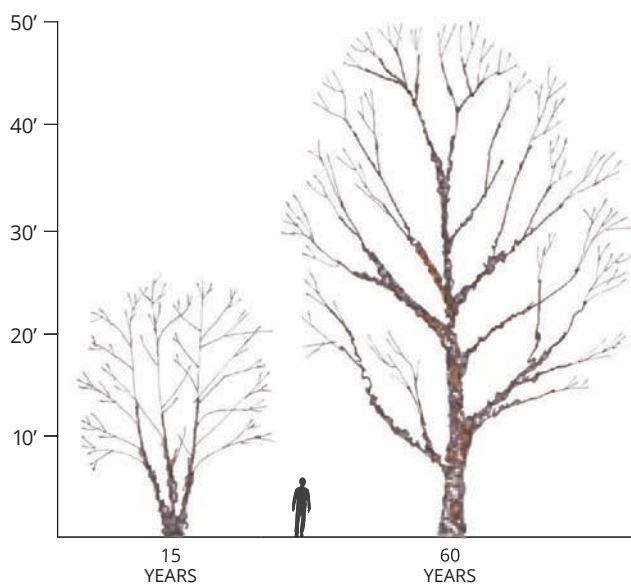
SUMMER



AUTUMN



FORM – River birch is a single-trunked or, often preferred, multi-trunked tree. It grows 40'–50' (70') and taller in cultivation with a spread of 40'–60'. The multi-trunked forms tend to be shorter than the single-trunked tree. In youth it is pyramidal



USDA Zones: 3-9		
SUN Full sun to part shade	MOISTURE Moist to wet	pH 4-6

with arching branches. As it ages, it develops a more rounded shape. River birch is a vigorous, fast-growing tree. Birches are generally relatively short-lived, but a properly placed tree may be enjoyed for more than 100 years.

COLOR – The bark of the river birch is its exceptional and distinguishing feature. The thin, curling as they peel, dark gray-brown to tan patches reveal



The showy bark of 'Cully' ('Heritage').



- 🌿 A comprehensive guide for choosing the best native trees and shrubs for sustainable landscapes in the temperate area east of the Mississippi River.
- 🌿 Selections based on proven performance, aesthetic appeal, and a wide range of adaptability.
- 🌿 Organized for fast, confident tree and shrub selection for specific landscape applications.
- 🌿 Includes graphs, photographs, and text defined by decades of horticultural experience.



“Essential Native Trees and Shrubs introduces an important new tool to our native plant libraries; it conveniently separates sure winners from plants that are good but can have problems in the planted landscape. Beautifully illustrated, even the well-informed gardener will find this a valuable reference.”

—Doug Tallamy, author of Bringing Nature Home, co-author of The Living Landscape, and Chair and Professor, Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware

“Few books give such well-researched detail into where and how to utilize both common and sorely underutilized native trees and shrubs in the landscape. This book should be a required reference for nurserymen and landscape designers.”

—Mark Weathington, Director, JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University

“FINALLY! In a thoughtful, organized, and simple format, this book illustrates how to build better landscapes, gardens, and environmentally sensitive ecologies. This is a long overdue book, and it has my absolute endorsement.”

—Eric D. Groft, Principal/Vice President, Oehme van Sweden, Landscape Architecture

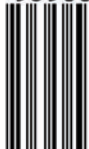


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