# *Betula nigra*
# River birch, Black birch, Water birch, Red birch



*Betula nigra* (river birch) is native to the southeastern United States, where it naturally occurs along riverbanks, moist soils and wet woodlands together with species such as *Carpinus caroliniana*, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Nyssa sylvatica* and *Quercus bicolor*. It is a medium sized to large tree that reaches a height of twelve to twenty meters in cultivation, and sometimes even higher under ideal conditions. Its width ranges from seven to ten meters. The tree grows narrowly upright when young but develops into a broad, loosely ascending and often irregular to vase shaped crown with elegant overhanging branches as it matures. *Betula nigra* often grows as a multi stemmed tree, which enhances its ornamental character.

The most distinctive feature of this species is its peeling bark. When young, the bark is orange brown to cinnamon colored with hints of pink, and exfoliates in large curls. With age, the bark becomes darker gray brown. Young twigs are reddish brown and fine in texture. The leaves are dark green above and lighter green beneath, diamond shaped to ovate, with a doubly serrated margin. They turn a beautiful golden yellow in autumn. In April, the tree flowers with inconspicuous catkins. The male catkins are long and pendulous, while the female catkins are shorter and upright. The fruits are small nutlets grouped in short, erect catkins.

*Betula nigra* is a highly decorative and characterful tree that fits beautifully in parks, gardens, bioswales and natural riparian zones. Its striking bark and open habit make it popular both as a solitary specimen and in group plantings. It is particularly well suited to moist to wet soils but surprisingly also tolerates dry to moderately dry conditions once established. Additionally, it is very winter hardy and tolerant of air pollution, making it suitable for urban environments. In short, *Betula nigra* is a robust tree that adds strong aesthetic value to a wide range of landscapes.

**SEASONAL COLOURS**

jan feb mar apr mei jun jul aug sep okt nov dec

**TYPES OF PLANTING**

**Tree types**: standard trees, feathered trees, multi-stemmed trees, trees for climbing, characteristic trees | **Topiary on stem**: multi-stem umbrella

**USE**

**Location**: avenue, park, central reservation, roof garden, large garden, cemetery, traffic areas, industrial zones, countryside, bioswale | **Pavement**: none, open | **Planting concepts**: Landscape planting

**CHARACTERISTICS**

**Crown shape**: vase-shaped | **Crown structure**: semi-open | **Height**: 18 - 20 m | **Width**: 7 - 10 m | **Winter hardiness zone**: 4A - 9B

**ASPECTS**

**Wind**: tolerant to wind, slightly tolerant to coastal wind | **Soil**: loess, sabulous clay, peaty, heavy clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil, all soils | **Nutrient level**: low in nutrients, moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level**: dry, moist, wet, very wet | **Light requirements**: sun | **pH range**: acidic, neutral | **Host plant/forage plant**: butterflies | **Extreme environments**: tolerates air pollution, tolerates heat, tolerant to short-term flooding

**PLANTKENMERKEN**

**Flowers**: catkins, striking, pendulous | **Flower colour**: pale yellow | **Flowering period**: March - April | **Leaf colour**: dark green, underside grey-green | **Leaves**: deciduous, ovate, polished, rough, doubly serrate, lobate | **Autumn colour**: golden yellow | **Fruits**: catkins | **Fruit colour**: brown | **Bark colour**: cream, pale brown, dark brown | **Bark**: peeling | **Twig colour**: red-brown | **Twigs**: with lenticels, polished, pendulous, finely branched | **Root system**: shallow, slightly branched, many hair roots, central root, roots push up surface

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