

Choosing the Right Tree for the Right Place

River Birch



Latin name: <i>Betula nigra</i>	Texture: Medium
Common name: River Birch	Growth rate: Fast, long-lived
Zones: 3-9	Light: Full sun to part shade
Height & Width: 40-50'h x 40-50'w	Moisture: Medium, drought sensitive
Type: Deciduous	Soil: Acid, pH 5.0-6.5*
Habit: Usually multi-stemmed, sometimes single stemmed, pyramidal in youth, rounded when mature	Origin: Eastern United States

Features: Showy exfoliating (peeling) bark exposes attractive reddish-brown or cinnamon-brown or gray-brown inner bark colors. Multi-stemmed trunks with lightly arcing branches create an open graceful appearance. Bright green leaves turn attractive yellow in autumn in the South. Many desirable cultivars exist including 'Dura-Heat' and 'Heritage'.

Siting: River birch requires ample above and below ground space. Place in an area with at least 100 to 200 square feet of total planting area; in a planting strip at least 4-7' wide; or place at least 4' from pavement or wall. Roots require acidic soils and moisture. Plants are drought sensitive and may defoliate if moisture is withheld. River birch are ideal for moist areas such as stream banks, storm water retention basins, irrigated urban areas, and in the tree and shrub border.

Care: Transplants easily. Plant so root flare is visible in loose soil high in organic matter. Deep soil, plenty of sun, and moisture during establishment are ideal. At planting, water the root ball daily with two gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter for two weeks, every other day for two months, and then weekly until established. Do not over water or saturate the soil. Apply 3" of mulch over the planted area. Do not allow mulch to touch the trunk. Perform structural pruning in late summer / early fall to avoid excessive sap flow or "bleeding."

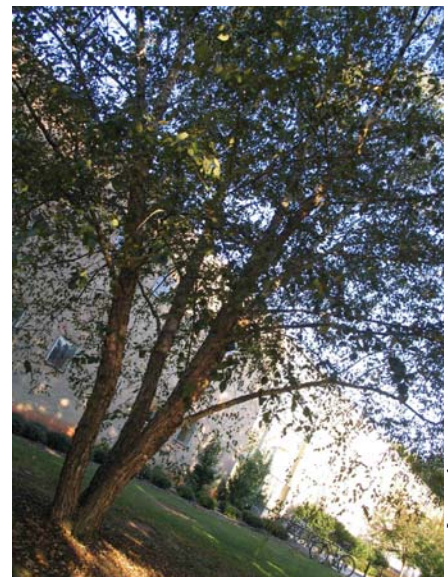
Pests: Plants are relatively pest resistant if cultural preferences are met. Chlorosis is commonly caused by high soil pH. Drought stress may cause yellow leaves and defoliation. Aphids and resulting "honeydew", a sooty mold fungus, are sometimes present.

Contact the SC Urban and Community Forestry Council at www.scurbanforestry.org for membership and additional information.

Tree selected from the *South Carolina Urban Tree Species Guide: Choosing the Right Tree for the Right Place*.

*Soil pH is determined using a professional soil test. Contact your Clemson University County Extension service for assistance www.clemson.edu/extension/. Click on "local offices".

Author and Photographer: Ellen Vincent, Clemson University Reviewers: Elizabeth Gilland, SC Forestry Commission & Kathryn Basha, AICP, Land Use Planner.



Clemson University Campus