

# Leaves, Limbs, Needles and Boughs

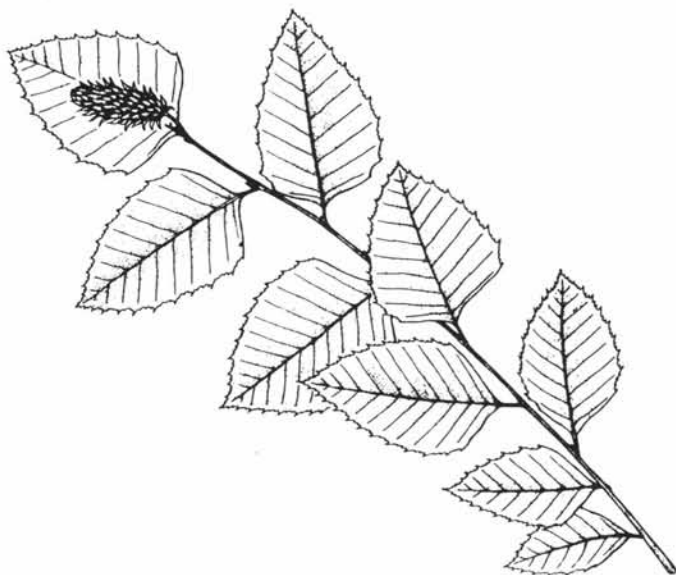
by Fred D. Opperman

Last month I highlighted the Redbud since it is a spring blooming plant and needs to be planted in the spring. This month is also a spring planted tree. It is classified as an ornamental in most nursery catalogs, but don't let that deceive you as to its size. With the proper environment it can and does reach a height of up to 75 feet.

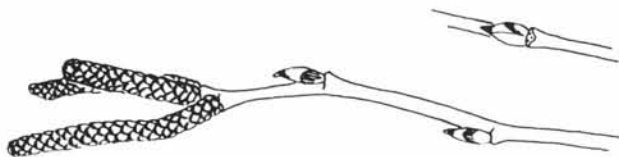
This month's selection is the River Birch, (*Betula nigra*).

**Bark:** It's most distinguishing feature and why it is planted so much. Curling, shredding, brownish-pink to reddish-brown. Young trunks and branches thin, shining, light reddish brown to cinnamon brown, peeling freely.

**Size:** 40 to 70 feet in height and with a spread of 40 to 60 feet.



**Leaves:** Alternate, simple; blades rhombic (rhombic means somewhat between an egg and diamond shape) to ovate, coarsely doubly toothed, pale and densely hairy on the lower surface, up to 3 inches long, acute at the tip, truncate or tapering to the base, the leafstalks are wooly.



**Twigs:** Slender, reddish-brown, with several short hairs, leaf scars alternate, half-elliptical with 3 bundle traces.

**Culture:** Transplants well in the spring, best adapted to moist soils and in the wild is found in the bottom lands and along stream banks. This is the tree that is taking the place of the white birch.

This tree looks especially good when planted as a multi-stem plant. The nurseries are growing them in clumps of 3, 4 and 5 stem groupings.

Credit: **Manual of Woody Landscape Plants** by Michael A. Dirr and **Forest Trees of Illinois**.

"Ya know that new Scott's ProTurf product actually encourages bentgrass to move in here."

"Yeah. My mother-in-law will be here next."

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