



BLANDIN FOUNDATION™



Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative



ECS Specialist
MN DNR, Division of Forestry
Resource Assessment Program
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
218-327-4449

Birch Family Key

Genus Key				Species	Growth form	Bark	Twigs	Fruit	Leaf veins	Lower leaf surface	Leaf margin	Habitat
Female flowers with leaf-like bracts. Shrubs with smooth bark with inconspicuous lenticels or tree-like with brown stringy bark.	Single-stemmed; leaves elliptic, finely serrate, on slender new twigs.	Bark brown, stringy.	Ironwood	Ironwood <i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	small tree	grayish-brown flakey	in spring pilose, later glabrescent	Flatish nut at the bottom of an inflated sac.	11-15 veins	soft down beneath	sharply toothed	Common in the deeply shaded understory of mesic hardwood forests, W to MW, fine-textured soil on till.
		Bark grey, smooth.	Blue Beech	Blue Beech <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	small tree	grey; smooth with muscle like ridges	slender hairy; no true terminal bud	Small ribbed nut at the base of a 3-lobed leaf-like structure.	9-12 veins	tuft of hairs on veins	sharply and often doubly serrate	Tufts of hair on veins. Sharply and often doubly serrate. Habitat as for Ironwood but rare; possibly restricted to riparian zones of very large lakes in N.
	Multiple-stemmed; leaves ovate, coarsely doubly serrate, on stout new twigs.	Hazel		Beaked Hazel <i>Corylus cornuta</i>	shrub	grey	soft with ascending hairs	Nut with a densely bristly shell prolonged into a beak.	6-8 veins	± pubescent on veins and vein axils	coarsely doubly serrate	Widespread in logged forests, shade intolerant. EX to SWP drained soils of any texture and landform.
		Hazel		American Hazel <i>Corylus americana</i>	shrub	grey	with stiff gland-tipped hairs	Nut with a pubescent shell not prolonged into a beak.	5-7 veins	paler and ± pubescent	finely doubly serrate	Occasional in heavily disturbed forests on W drained fine-textured soils or open forests on MW to SWP drained sandy soils.
Female flowers cone-like. Trees with papery bark or shrubs with tight bark and obvious lenticels.	Pistillate cones woody and persistent; buds with 2(3) scales.	Alder		Rough Alder <i>Alnus incana</i> spp. <i>rugosa</i>	shrub	reddish-brown with obvious lenticels; smooth	glabrous or sparsely pubescent	Small seeds in persistent woody cones with long pedicels.	8-14 veins	pale and glaucous	doubly serrate	Common on wet-mineral or shallow muck soils of any texture of landform.
		Alder		Green Alder <i>Alnus viridis</i> spp. <i>crispa</i>	shrub	grayish-brown smooth	glabrous or sparsely pubescent	Small seeds in persistent woody cones with short pedicels.	6-9 veins	glutinous	doubly serrate	Infrequent in red or jack pine forests. SWEX to MW drained sandy soils.
	Without persistent, woody, female cones; buds with multiple scales.	Birch		Paper Birch <i>Betula papyrifera</i>	tree	white papery, with lenticels	reddish brown with white lenticels	Small seeds in flexible peduncled catkins that shatter in the summer.	≤ 9 veins extend to teeth	hairy on veins	singly serrate	Widespread in early successional forests on all mineral-soil types and landforms. Occasional as seedlings or saplings in minerotrophic peatlands.
		Birch		Yellow Birch <i>Betula allegheniensis</i>	tree	bronze papery, with lenticels	flavor of wintergreen when crushed	Small seeds in nearly sessile, stout catkins that shatter in winter.	≥ 12 veins	soft down at midrib	doubly serrate	Occasional in mesic hardwood forests. W to SWP drained fine-textured soils on till, especially on till capped with loess.
		Birch		Bog Birch <i>Betula glandulifera</i>	tree	close brown	dotted with resin glands	Small seeds in nearly sessile catkins that shatter slowly throughout the following season.	3-8 pair of lateral veins	dotted with resin glands	roundly toothed	Common in open peatlands with slightly acid <i>Sphagnum</i> peat to minerotrophic peat.