



European White Birch (*Betula pendula*)

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Summary

Foliage: Deciduous broadleaf

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Shape: Upright

European white birch is a small/medium fast-growing tree with showy white bark and pendulous branch tips (especially when bearing seed). Small, glossy-green summer foliage turns yellow in fall exposing ornamental white bark. This species is considered to be short lived due its susceptibility to pests.

Plant Needs

Zone: 3 to 6

Light: Partial shade to full sun

Moisture: Moist

Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay

pH Range: 3.7 to 6.5

Functions

Suggested uses for this plant include shade and specimen plant.

Planting Notes

Transplants readily.

Plant in spring.

More pH tolerant than River Birch.

Prefers moist, well-drained, sandy or loam soil.

Plant on the north or east side of a house (within shade pattern) so that trees are less apt to be stressed by high temperatures and dry soil. A cool moist site will most likely decrease the susceptibility to pests and thereby increase the life of this and other white barked birches (see Alternatives).

Care

A regular spray program is necessary to control the bronze birch borer.

Prune in summer or fall. Late winter or early spring pruning causes excessive bleeding of sap.

Problems

Most white barked birches are susceptible to the bronze birch borer, which can destroy a large tree in one season. They are also susceptible to birch leafminer and Japanese beetles.

Alternatives

Consult local garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

Cultivars of *Betula pendula*: 'Youngii' is a cultivar with a graceful weeping growth habit. 'Gracilis' is a pendulous form with a finely cut leaf.

Betula papyrifera and *B. populifolia* are two northern U.S. natives that also have showy white bark. These species are also prone to pests and are generally considered short lived trees.

Comments

The European white birch is a very graceful, relatively short-lived tree grown for its ornamental white bark. White barked birches are usually grown in clumps or "groves" and are especially showy when planted in front of a dark background such as a mass planting of pines or other dark leaved evergreens. Extra care such as irrigation during dry periods and pesticide applications, are necessary to have a long-lived tree.

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