

## 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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