

PLANTING YOUR RIVER BIRCH

1- After unpacking your tree, carefully handle your tree and untangle roots. Soak the roots in a bucket of water for 3-6 hours. (Do not allow roots to dry out)

2- Dig a hole wide enough to cover the root system. You want the roots to be able to spread out without being crowded.

3- Plant the tree so that the swelling of the base is slightly above the soil.

4- Fill in the hole with soil. Do not cover live branches or foliage, or leave any roots exposed to the air.

5- Tamp soil firmly but it should not be tightly packed.

6- Give your tree plenty of water.

7- After the water has soaked in, spread protective mulch 2 inches deep in a 3-foot diameter area around the base.

8- Keep the soil and mulch around your tree moist.

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District

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River Birch *Betula nigra*





Caring for your River birch

Trees require nutrients, water and sunlight to thrive. To increase likelihood of survival, be sure to water tree every 7-10 days, especially in times of drought. As your tree ages and becomes more established you won't need to water it as frequently.

Deer might want to snack on your new tree, you might want to consider putting a cage/fence around your tree to keep the deer away.

Be sure to pull any weeds growing close to your tree to prevent competition.

DESCRIPTION

Habitat: As you might be able to tell by the name, river birches prefers to grow in wet places. You can find it growing by river sides, lakes, streams and wetlands. It enjoys deep rich soils.

Height: The river birch doesn't grow too tall, the height usually ranges between 40-70 feet.

Bark: The bark is one of the most recognizable feature. The bark has a light brownish-red tint that peels back like paper. Not to be confused with the paper birch which has white bark.

Leaves: Are smaller growing about 2-3 inches long in an alternate pattern. The edges of the leaves are coarsely toothed.

Flowers: River birches have monoecious flowers. This means the tree has both male and female flowers that are separate. The male flowers are yellowish-green that grow in clusters of 2-3 long hanging catkins, which is a cylindrical flower. The female flower grows alongside the leaves, which will grow upright, and are typically green.

ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

The river birch is widely used in conservation services like mine reclamation and erosion control. Where mining is prevalent, river birches are planted because they can handle acidic soils better than most hardwood species.

River birches are also planted and grow in riparian buffers to reduce erosion on stream banks. This results in the river birch protecting water quality and improving aquatic environments.



River birch bark