

Black Birch

Who am I?

Black Birch (*Betula lenta*), also commonly referred to as Sweet Birch or Cherry Birch, was at one time the only source of oil of wintergreen. It is the aroma of wintergreen emanating from crushed leaves and broken twigs to which this birch owes its name, sweet. Its specific name, *lenta*, is derived from the tough yet flexible twigs that characterize the species. The wood is also unique. When exposed to air it darkens to a color resembling mahogany and, in times past, was used as an inexpensive substitute for the more valued tropical wood.

Where can you find me?

Black Birch is primarily a tree of the northeastern United States. It grows from southern Maine westward in southern Quebec, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and southeastern Ontario to eastern Ohio; and south in Pennsylvania through the Appalachian Mountains to northern Alabama and Georgia. Forest survey data indicate that sweet birch is most abundant in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. It grows best on moist, well-drained soils but is also found on a variety of less favorable sites with rocky coarse-textured or shallow soils.

What Ecological Services do I provide?

Black Birch provides food and shelter for various wildlife, including birds and mammals. The seeds, buds, and catkins of black birch are eaten by a variety of birds and small mammals. Beavers and porcupines love to chew on the bark and wood. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers feed on the sap and Ruffed grouse have a preference to eat their catkins, buds, and seeds.

Black Birch is used for furniture, cabinets, boxes, woodenware, handles, and millwork, such as interior finish and flush doors. Paper pulp made from Black Birch is used in various amounts with other pulps to produce such products as boxboards, book and newsprint paper, paper toweling, and corrugated paper. Birch oil has been produced commercially from sweet birch bark.

My name is
Fladrif. You can
find me on the
Perimeter Trail

