

# River Birch

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## Tree Type

This tree is deciduous and will lose its foliage for the winter.

## Planting

Mulching is greatly recommended. This tree works well when planted on stream banks and keeps erosion in check. Refer to back for best planting practices for your bareroot.

## Watering

River Birch will tolerate some flooding and prefers consistently moist soil. If not planted in naturally soggy soil, even after being established, water the tree once a week. Refer to watering guidelines on back for specific watering directions.

## Pruning

If branches are rubbing together, remove one and prune branches that grow straight up from the trunk.

## Preferences

This tree prefers full sun to partial shade meaning it needs a minimum of 4 hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight per day. River Birch grows well in acidic, loamy, moist, sandy, well-drained, wet and clay soils. Cannot handle alkaline soils and may develop iron chlorosis if the pH is not in range.

## Attributes

River Birch grows to a height of 40 to 70 ft with a spread of 40 to 60 ft at maturity. It grows at a moderate to fast rate with height increases of 13 to more than 24 inches per year. The tree yields a large number of tiny nutlets after the female catkins mature. Once mature, the bark develops into a cinnamon color and peels attractively.

## Wildlife Value

The catkins of the River Birch are eaten by redpolls and pine siskins. The foliage is eaten by deer and other browsers. The small but plentiful seeds are appreciated by a wide range of songbirds.

When newly planted trees go without enough water, growth slows to a crawl. This delays establishment and may even lead to the death of leaves, branches, roots or the whole tree.

For the most part, trees can only take up water from soil that is in direct contact with roots. Even in the best conditions, newly transplanted trees use water from a relatively small volume of soil. To make matters worse, roots of bare root, balled & burlaped, and spaded trees are cut during transplanting.

Within two to three days after spring or summer planting, the soil around the roots of trees dries enough to impede root growth. Newly transplanted trees in the Midwest benefit from daily watering for the first one to two weeks. Apply 1 to 1½ gallons of water for each inch of trunk diameter. After that, water trees every two to three days for the next two to three months and then weekly until established. The more closely you match your watering frequency to the optimum, the quicker trees become established.

Reduce watering in cool, cloudy, or wet weather if the soil is poorly drained (soil drains less than 3/4 inches per hour). Eliminate daily irrigation in poorly drained soil.

After it rains, stop watering until the rainwater drains from the soil. Stop watering in the autumn once leaves fall from trees.

Mulch reduces evaporation and conserves water. An investment in frequent watering helps insure against tree death and the cost of replanting trees.

## BEFORE PLANTING

Select the correct tree for your site.  
Find help at [mndnr.gov/treecare](http://mndnr.gov/treecare).

Before digging, contact Gopher State One Call at 800-252-1155 or [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org) to check for underground lines.

## AFTER PLANTING

### Mulching

Applying mulch, such as wood chips, around a tree has many benefits, including:

- Improving growing conditions
- Retaining moisture
- Controlling weeds and grasses
- Adding nutrients
- Insulating soil
- Protecting trunk and roots

Mulch that is applied too deeply and against the tree is harmful. This "mulch volcano" can rot the tree's trunk, lead to insect and disease problems, and deprive roots of oxygen. Use the "3-3-3 Rule" for applying mulch: 3 feet in diameter, 3 inches deep, and 3 inches away from the trunk.

### Watering

Watering a tree is critical to its survival during the first three years. During any week in which less than 1 inch of rain falls, provide 15-25 gallons of water, until the ground freezes. After the first few years, continue to water trees during dry times. Tree water bags may make watering easier.

### Protecting

A plastic or metal mesh tree guard can be installed around the tree's trunk to protect it from animal, mower, and trimmer injury. The tree guard must be removed or replaced as the tree grows.

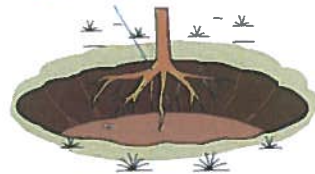


1 Keep roots moist at all times. Dry roots die.

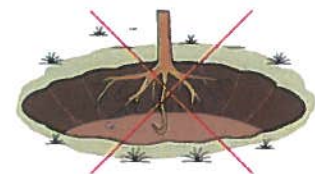
2 Dig a hole twice as wide as and slightly deeper than root length.

3 Place roots in hole so top of first woody root is within 1 inch of soil surface.

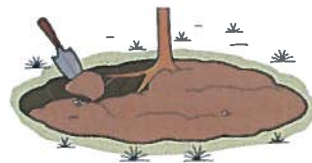
FIRST WOODY ROOT



4 Distribute roots evenly, making sure roots are straight and not doubled over or "J" rooted.



5 Keeping tree straight, backfill hole up to top of first woody root.



6 Heel in soil with foot over entire backfill area to remove air pockets from the soil.

7 Water entire backfill area.

8 Layer 3 inches of mulch over backfilled area, keeping mulch away from trunk.



DON'T CREATE A MULCH VOLCANO. IT CAN ROT YOUR TREE.