



YELLOW BIRCH *Betula alleghaniensis* Britt.



The yellow birch is one of our most valuable timber trees and makes excellent firewood.

Yellow birch is the largest of the native birches, growing to a diameter of 3 feet and a height of 70–85 feet. The spreading branches are somewhat pendulous; they form a broad, round-topped head in the open, but an irregular head in the woods. It grows well statewide on cool, moist sites, and is frequently mixed with beech and sugar maple, or with hemlock.

The **bark** on the branches and on the stems of young trees is very shiny, silvery-gray or yellowish-brown, separating into loose, thin, horizontal, often ribbon-like layers. On old trees, it is divided into large thin plates and is dull gray or black.

The **leaves** are 3–4½ inches long, ovate or nearly oblong, alternate; the edges are doubly toothed, the upper





Yellow birch's bark peels in small curls. Very old trees have platy bark.

side dull, dark green and hairy. Leaves closely resemble those of eastern hophornbeam.

The **flowers** are in catkins. In winter there are 3–4 pre-formed staminate catkins on the shoots, but not in clusters. They open in the early spring.

The twigs are yellowish to dark brown and somewhat hairy. The young twigs are aromatic like sweet birch, although to a lesser degree. Both the buds and twigs have a pronounced wintergreen taste.

The **wood** is hard, strong, heavy and will take a good polish. It is close-grained and evenly textured. The

heartwood, which makes up the bulk of the wood, has a pleasing reddish color; this is why it is sometimes called red birch. It takes stains easily, makes excellent veneer wood, and does not easily warp. It is also used for furniture, flooring, woodenware, lumber for interior finish, plywood, railroad ties, pallets, pulp, gunstocks and dowels. The yellow birch is one of our most valuable timber trees and makes excellent firewood. As with sweet birch, wintergreen oil was formerly distilled from twigs and branches.



MAINE REGISTER OF BIG TREES 2008
Yellow Birch Circumference: 200" Height: 48' Crown Spread: 91'
Location: Deer Isle

