Downy Birch

Betula pubescens

Height: 50 feet

Spread: 30 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 2

Other Names: Moor Birch, Betula alba

Description:

This vigorous, multi-stemmed tree develops upright branches into a columnar shape, and presents spectacular peeling white bark; drought tolerant; an excellent screen or landscape accent tree, with great winter value



Downy Birch in winter
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Downy Birch has dark green deciduous foliage which emerges light green in spring on a tree with a columnar habit of growth. The fuzzy pointy leaves turn an outstanding yellow in the fall. The peeling white bark is extremely showy and adds significant winter interest.



Downy Birch foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Downy Birch is a multi-stemmed deciduous tree with a narrowly upright and columnar growth habit. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance tree, and should only be pruned in summer after the leaves have fully developed, as it may 'bleed' sap if pruned in late winter or early spring. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Insects

Downy Birch is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Shade

Planting & Growing

Downy Birch will grow to be about 50 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 30 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 2 feet from the ground, and should not be planted underneath power lines. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 70 years or more.

This tree does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant does not require much in the way of fertilizing once established. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in poor soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.



Downy Birch in winter
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder