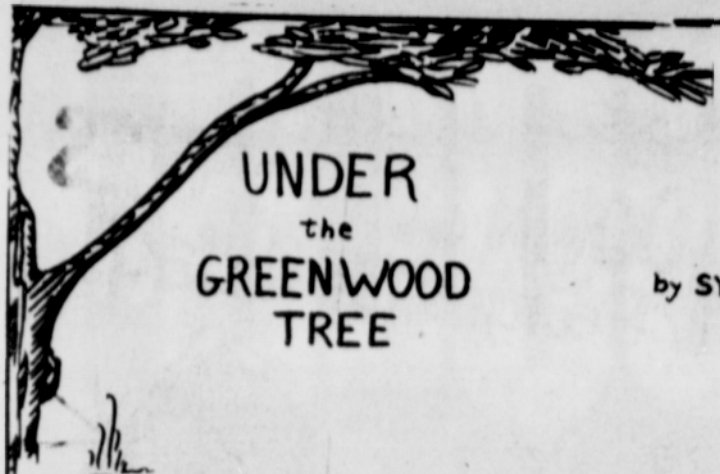




UNDER the GREENWOOD TREE

by SYLVAN HORTUS

The birch family of trees, betulaceae, contains five genera: betula, the true birches; alnus, the alders; carpinus, the hornbeams; corylus, the hophornbeams; and fraxinus, the ash. All five of these genera are to be found somewhere in the North American continent.

The birches are plentiful on the East Coast with one representative in Oregon. The alders are primarily a west coast genus. The hornbeams have species on both coasts. The hophornbeam and ironwood are both inhabitants of the Eastern hardwood forest.

This is a monoecious family, that is both male and female flowers are to be found on the same tree even though the male and female parts are carried in separate flowers. The male flowers or aments are catkins which are usually formed in winter. These are long slender and usually smooth. The brown catkins are found on or near the branch tips. On the alders and birches, the seeds are carried

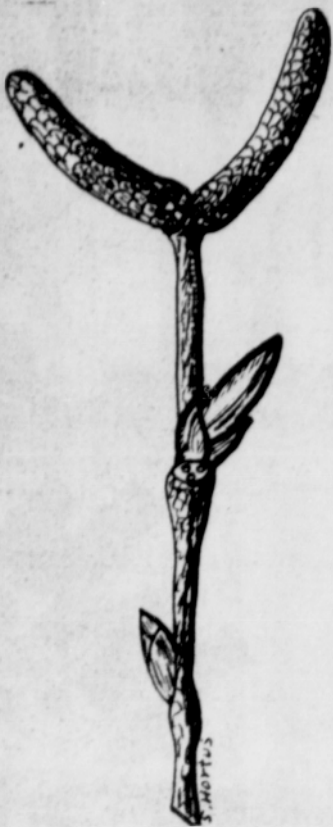
which is continuously peeling and curling in narrow horizontal shreds exposing the brightly colored new bark beneath. The yellow birch is a good sized tree whose wood is familiar to all of us. It produces a hard, yellowish wood with a durable surface and good strength. Much of it is made into plywood. This is the familiar birch so widely used in kitchen cabinetry. Yellow birch is one of the three dominant trees in the Birch-Beech-Maple forest ecology. The other two dominant members of this trio are the American Beech and the Sugar Maple.

The paper birch is the hardiest of the eastern birches. Its range extends way North in Eastern Canada, where it associates with the balsam poplar. This is the tree that made possible the birch bark canoes of the American Indians. Today its fame is in the quality of the paper that can be produced from its pulp. Its associate the balsam poplar is another good paper making wood. This birch, along with

their accent value in landscaping. The grey birch, betula populifolia, is a white barked birch with black smudges here and there. A small, short lived tree, it is usually planted in clumps. In nature, it also occurs in clumps quite often, much like our red alder does. The leaf of the grey birch is distinctive. The sharp toothed leaf is drawn out in to a long tapering tip.

Oregon's most popular birch is a native of Europe. Here, the European White Birch, betula pendula, is budded on grey birch seedlings by the wholesale tree nurserymen for sale all over the United States.

Many are sold right here. As the name implies, most are weeping. Some forms have deeply cut leaves, and the weeping, cutleaved form is the most popular. The general outline of the European birch leaf is shorter than the grey birch leaf form, but still has the tapered tip. The mountain birch leaf is round tipped. The winter buds of the birch are slender and pointed. They are much smaller than the beech buds, and birches retain no leaves through the winter. The white bark of the grey and European Birches is sufficient in itself as a winter identification.



Grey Birch (Winter) with Pollen Cones

Forest fires increase

Last year's forest fire record showed an increase in both man-caused and lightning fires on all lands coming under the jurisdiction of the Oregon State forestry Department and the U.S. Forest Service according to the Keep Oregon Green Association.

There were 1,737 man-caused fires and 1,501 lightning fires making a total of 3,238 fires. Acreage burned during the past year was a total of only 7,592 acres. This was considerable less acreage than the 1971 season when 2,280 fires burned 13,657 acres. Prompt reports of these fires by a rising awareness on the part of the public of fire danger throughout the state made it possible for fire suppression

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Capybaras are the world's largest living rodents, sometimes exceeding 110 pounds. They are found in Central and South America.

crews to quickly extinguish the fires while small.

A stepped-up Fire Prevention program is being undertaken this year by the Keep Oregon Green Association according to Albert Wiesendanger, Executive Secretary. He also gave loggers in Jackson County a pat on the back for their fine fire prevention record. Jackson County reported 155 fires caused by activity of man but

not a single one by logging or other forest industry activity.

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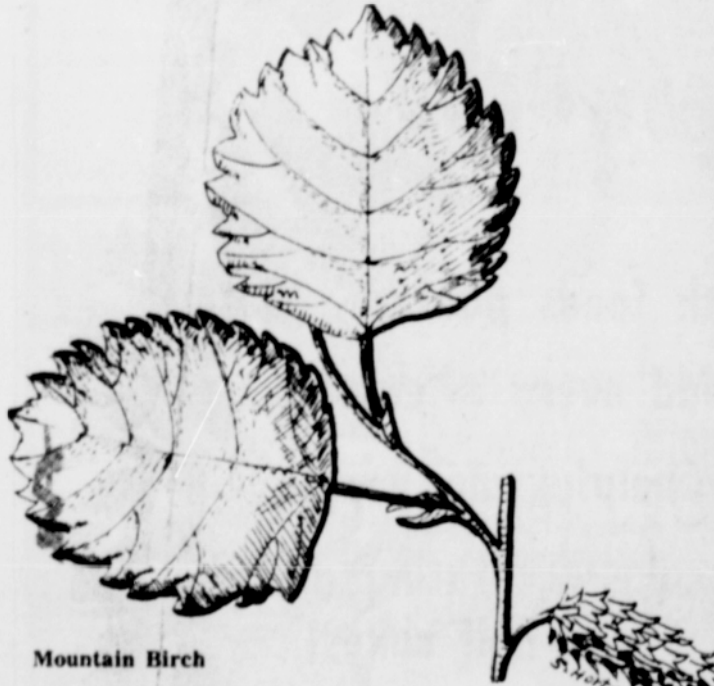
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Grey Birch (Summer) with seed cone. Betula populifolia



Mountain Birch

Betula Fontinalis

in cone like structures called strobiles. Strobiles of the alders are hard and woody, while those of the birch are soft and disintegrate before falling. Hazelnut seeds are the familiar hazelnut. The hornbeam and the hophornbeam have very peculiar seed formations which will be discussed and illustrated later.

The roll call of the true birches, betula, sounds like the reading of a color chart. The eastern hardwood forest is full of birches; grey birch, black birch, red birch, yellow birch, and white birch. The white birch is now more generally known as paper birch as its wood is the finest paper making wood of all the hardwoods.

Oregon has but the one native birch and most Oregonians are unaware of its existence as its range is confined to some of the mountains of Northeastern Oregon. Idaho and Montana have much more of this birch. Betula fontinalis is called both mountain birch and water birch. It is very like the black birch of the East coast. The bark is dark and tight with prominent lenticels. It looks more like a cherry than a birch when the leaves are shed.

The eastern birches all get their name from their bark color. Three of them; the yellow, red, and paper birch; have a characteristic outer transparent layer of the bark

two lesser known Alaskan species are the hardiest of all hardwood trees. No other hardwood genus produces specimens of tree size as far north as this trio of birches.

With the possible exception of the red birch, which is a river bottom tree, all the birches choose to grow where the winters are severe. The habitat of Oregon's mountain birch will attest to that. This is the major reason so few Oregonians even know of the tree's existence.

Much more familiar are the two exotics introduced to the state by nurserymen because of

Traffic increases

Traffic volume on most of Oregon's highways showed an increase in vehicular traffic in October, 1972, compared to October, 1971, according to the monthly report compiled by the Oregon State Highway Division.

A summary of traffic recorder data for rural and urban state highways showed an increase of 5.7 percent in vehicular traffic in October, 1972, compared to October, 1971.

The first 10 months of 1972 showed an increase of 7.4 percent in vehicular traffic compared to the first 10 months of 1971.

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