PLANT FACT SHEET

Betula nigra L.

GENUS *Betula* **FAMILY** Betulaceae

COMMON NAMES River Birch, Red Birch, Tropical birch

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Bark, Sap

The sap contains sugar. It is used to make a drink. It can be boiled down to sugar. It is also fermented into birch beer.

DESCRIPTION

A deciduous tree. It grows 9-30 m high. It forks about 3-6 m above the ground to form a broad crown. The bark is dark and furrowed in older trees. The leaves are triangular with irregular teeth along the edge. They are 10 cm long. They taper at the base and are pointed to the tip. There are hairs on the veins underneath. The male and female flowers are on catkins on the same tree. Male catkins are 7.5 cm long and yellow-brown and hang down. Female catkins are green and upright. The fruit is a catkin which breaks up when ripe.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows naturally along river banks. It needs damp soils. It is frost resistant but damaged by drought. It suits hardiness zones 4-9. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed.

NOTES

There are about 60 Betula species. They grow in cool north temperate climates.

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