PLANT FACT SHEET

Betula lenta L.

GENUS *Betula* **FAMILY** Betulaceae

COMMON NAMES Sweet birch, Black birch

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Sap, Bark, Leaves - tea, Twigs - oil

The inner bark is eaten fresh or dried for later use. It is also used for tea.
The leaves and twigs have an oil and they are used to brew a tea. The leaves are dried and used for tea.
The sap is also drunk. It can also be converted into vinegar. It is fermented into beer.
An essential oil distilled from the twigs and bark is used as a wintergreen flavouring in soft drinks and desserts and puddings.

DESCRIPTION

A deciduous tree. It grows 15 m tall and spreads 12 m wide. It can be 20-25 m high. The bark is red-brown with pale lenticels across is. The bark becomes dark and furrowed. The leaves are oval and 12 cm long by 6 cm wide. They taper to the tip and have sharp teeth. They are glossy and dark green above and paler with silky hairs underneath. They turn yellow in autumn. The buds are mostly without hairs. The male and female flowers are in separate catkins. Male ones are 7.5 cm long and yellow and drooping. The female ones are green and upright. They occur separately on the same plant. The fruit is a catkin which breaks up when ripe.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to North America. It grows in moist woods and the altitude decreases with distance from the equator. It is resistant to drought and frost. It suits hardiness zones 3-9. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. Plants can be grafted.

Harvesting and Seed Production

For tapping the sap a hole is made just as the sap begins to rise. The sap flows best on sunny days after a frost.

NOTES

There are about 60 Betula species. They grow in cool north temperate climates. Wintergreen for medicine is extracted from the bark.

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