



Washington Association Of Conservation Districts

## PLANT MATERIAL CENTER

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### **PAPER BIRCH** *Betula papyrifera*

**Distribution:** Paper Birch is found predominantly in the northern half of Washington State, from the San Juan Islands east through the inter-mountain region. Paper Birch is located at low to mid elevations.

**Growth Habit:** Paper Birch is a large, fast growing upright deciduous tree. Mature trees can grow to over 70 feet tall, with a few specimens over 100 feet. Trunk diameters can range from 8 inches in a 30 year old tree to over 30 inches in some older, mature specimens.

**Adaptability:** Paper Birch is a true pioneer species in every sense of the word, in a wide range of sites. And like many other pioneer species, this one is not very shade-tolerant. In a well exposed site however, they can be established on all but the driest of sites. And even though Paper Birch has shown the ability to grow directly on mine spoils, it does best on sites that do not dry out too soon or too much during the summer. Supplemental irrigation does benefit seedlings if they dry out.

**Comments:** It could be argued that Paper Birch is one of the most under used conservation species, especially when its conservation values are listed. They include being broadly adaptable to a wide range of sites, in particular exposed distributed areas. They establish and grow vigorously. Established stands provide shade and erosion control for streams, seed and shelter for birds, and browse for some foragers. The wood is valued for fuel, pulp, veneer and in some cases, dimensional lumber. It is also a valuable ornamental species with bright, white bark developing with age. The fall color is always attractive.

