

Betula pubescens

[Synonyms : *Betula alba*, *Betula alba* var. *pubescens*, *Betula callosa*, *Betula carpatica*, *Betula glutinosa*, *Betula odorata*, *Betula pubescens* subsp. *carpatica*, *Betula pubescens* subsp. *tortuosa*, *Betula tortuosa*]

DOWNY BIRCH is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Europe, it has yellowish catkins and leaves that turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as *Ängsbjörk* (Swedish), *Bedwen Gyffredin* (Welsh), *Bereza* (Italian), *Betulo mola* (Esperanto), *Birch*, *Birke* (German), *Bouleau* (French), *Breza plstnatá* (Slovak), *Bříza pýřitá* (Czech), Common birch, Common white birch, Cut-leaved birch, European birch, *Fjällbjörk* (Swedish), *Glasbjörk* (Swedish), *Haarbirke* (German), Hairy birch, *Kärrbjörk* (Finnish), *Lundbjörk* (Swedish), *Moorbirke* (German), Ribbon tree, *Vanlig glasbjörk* (Swedish), White birch, and White birch of Europe.

The oil, known as ‘birch tar’, is extracted from the bark.

Pubescens means ‘hairy or downy’.

Downy birch has been used in the manufacture of asphyxiating gases, and of gunpowder. The twigs have been employed in the manufacture of cloth. The inner bark has been used as a substitute for oiled paper.

Then in Europe the sugary sap, which emerges from a wounded stem, has been an ingredient in making beer, spirits, vinegar and wine.

Today the wood is used commercially like that of silver birch. In addition it is used to make snow shoes, wooden nails and broom handles. The stems are used for making bridges, garden furniture and thatching.