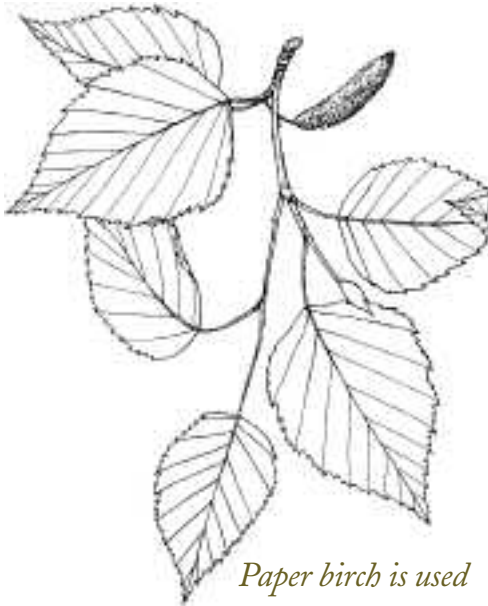




## PAPER BIRCH *Betula papyrifera* Marsh.



*Paper birch is used to make toothpicks and golf tees.*

**P**aper, white or canoe birch is a common tree in all parts of the state; it occurs in pure stands or in mixture with other species. It reaches 60–70 feet in height and 1–2 feet in diameter. It grows along streams and on the borders of lakes and ponds, thriving best in a rich, moist soil.

When young, the branches are short, slender, spreading, somewhat drooping, and form a narrow, regular head. In the forest, the trunk is free from branches well up from the ground; and the tree forms an open, narrow and round-topped head.

The **bark** is a protective layer and should never be removed from living trees. On the trunk and limbs, it separates freely and easily into thin, papery sheets. The outer surface is white, the inner part bright orange. Seedlings or





very young trees have a darker colored bark, which gradually changes to a creamy-white.

The **leaves** are alternate, ovate, short-pointed, 2–4 inches long, thicker than those of gray birch, doubly-toothed, with the upper surface dark green and dull.

The **flowers** are in catkins. They open in early spring before the leaves. Those appearing in fall are dormant, staminate catkins and occur mostly in clusters of three.

The **twigs** are usually hairy and, unlike yellow birch, without a winter-green taste. The buds are slightly sticky.

The **wood** is close-grained, moderately hard, and strong. It is used for woodenware, flatware and turned products including toys, dowels, furniture parts, pulp and firewood.

The tree gets the name of “paper birch” from how the bark was used by early settlers, and that of “canoe birch” because the bark was used to

*Paper birch bark will peel off in large sheets, but it should never be removed from living trees.*

make canoes. In the early spring paper birch sap contains considerable sugar. Historically paper birch was one of the most valuable tree species in Maine. In the past, the wood was used to make shoe pegs (used instead of nails in the manufacture of shoes) as well as a number of products that used to be made in Maine, but are now manufactured off-shore. These include clothespins, yarn spools, toothpicks, paper roll plugs and plywood.

MAINE REGISTER OF  
BIG TREES 2008  
**Paper Birch**  
Circumference: 148"  
Height: 72'  
Crown Spread: 22'  
Location: Alton



AREA OF OCCURRENCE

