

Black/Sweet Birch

Genus/species	<i>Betula lenta</i>
Family	Betulaceae
Distribution	Eastern US S Maine southwestward to N Georgia and N Alabama N Alabama northward to SW Ohio SW Ohio northeastward through W New York to S Maine Restricted to mountains S of Pennsylvania

Comments This birch is one of a few having a distinct “wintergreen” scent to its twigs when broken, and birch beer was made from its sap. It grows in a variety of settings but is typically a medium-sized tree found on rich, moist well-drained soils, usually on mountain slopes in the southern part of its range. The bark ranges from reddish to almost black on young trees, becoming a dark gray on old trees. The thin pointed leaves range from 2 ½ to about 6 inches in length and nearly half as wide as long, with a double row of sharp teeth along the edges. The male catkins, which soon release their wind-blown pollen, can be seen hanging in the early spring just as the leaves are beginning to develop while the female “cones” mature later, then disintegrate to release their seeds.

