

Silver Birch

Betula pendula

Plants · Deciduous tree · catkins Apr–May



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A slender, graceful deciduous tree with peeling silver-white bark that darkens and fissures into black diamonds at the base, and fine drooping twigs. The leaves are small, triangular and doubly toothed. Silver birch is common across the Dumfries area on light soils, heath edge, old industrial ground and woodland margin, and is often the first tree to colonise disturbed land.

BEHAVIOUR

Birch is a pioneer: it produces vast quantities of tiny winged seed that travels on the wind and germinates on bare ground, then grows fast, lives fast and is relatively short-lived, gradually shading itself out as slower trees follow. It supports a very large number of associated insects and fungi, and the sap was traditionally tapped in spring for birch wine.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Birches (Betulaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 30 m
STATUS	Native; a fast-colonising pioneer of light soils

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