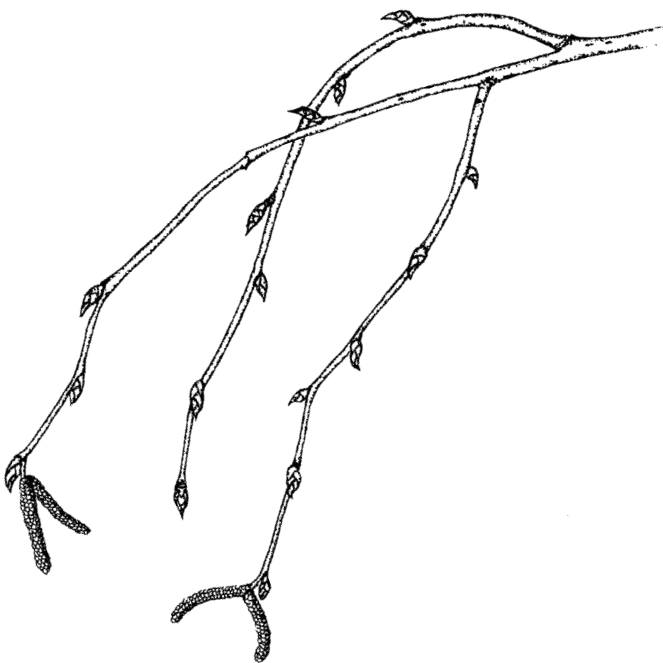


Fascinating facts about silver birch (*Betula pendula*)

1. Silver birch is a deciduous, relatively fast growing tree, reaching maturity at about 40 years of age, compared to an oak tree that might take hundreds of years.
2. When the trees are young, they have a white papery bark hence the name silver birch. The bark develops dark fissures as the tree matures and bears catkins in the spring.
3. The birch can grow almost anywhere, from old building sites to mountain tops. It is called a 'pioneer' species because it is one of the first trees to colonise an open area.
4. The twigs can be bound together to make besoms, which are traditional brooms and reputedly flown by witches! Also, the bark is waterproof and is therefore used in tanning, including the production of birch tar used to make leather waterproof. Charcoal made from the Silver birch was used as gunpowder. The sap of the birch tree makes a good wine, which was believed to have medicinal properties. Less pleasant, 'the birch' was used in many schools to beat children!



MYTHS AND FOLKLORE

The silver birch is known as the "Lady of the woods". It is thought to be constant and friendly – a tree of enchantment.