

Silver birch

Betula pendula



What to look for

Slender deciduous tree, up to 30m tall

Smooth, silvery-white bark that develops deep, dark fissures with age

Oval leaves have double-toothed serrations along edges

Male catkins are long, drooping and yellow

Female catkins are slender, green and are upright when flowering, drooping in fruit

Leaves turn yellow and then golden in autumn

The gherkin-shaped fruiting catkins turn brown in winter and, helped by birds, release tiny winged nutlets



Where found

Light sandy soils in woodland, heath and moor, also colonises wasteland

When to look

March/April for leaves and catkins

Leaves drop in November



Did you know?

The poet S T Coleridge referred to the silver birch as the 'Lady of the woods'

Silver birch is a genuine native tree, having colonised the UK at the end of the last Ice Age

Primroses, violets, wood anemones, bluebells and wood sorrel grow in birch woods

Birch leaf tea was traditionally used as a remedy for gout

The beautiful fly agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*) often grows in association with silver birch

The razorstrop fungus (*Piptoporus betulinus*), one of the fungi carried in the pouch of 'Ötzi the Iceman' who lived 5,300 years ago, grows on birch trunks and branches

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