

Maine Department of Conservation
Natural Areas Program

Betula pumila L.

Swamp Birch

Habitat: Bogs and wooded swamps. [Forested wetland; Open wetland, not coastal nor rivershore (non-forested, wetland)]

Range: Newfoundland to Ontario, south to Connecticut and west to Wisconsin.

Phenology: A perennial woody shrub; deciduous leaves. Flowers in May and June.

Family: Betulaceae

Aids to Identification: Swamp birch, also called dwarf or low birch, is a medium-sized shrub, 0.3-3 m high, with small, distinctively shaped leaves. The leaves, borne alternately on the dark twigs, are almost round in outline, with very coarse teeth around the leaf margin; they are lighter green or whitish beneath. The aments (elongate fruit clusters typical of birches) are borne upright and are about 2-3 cm in length.

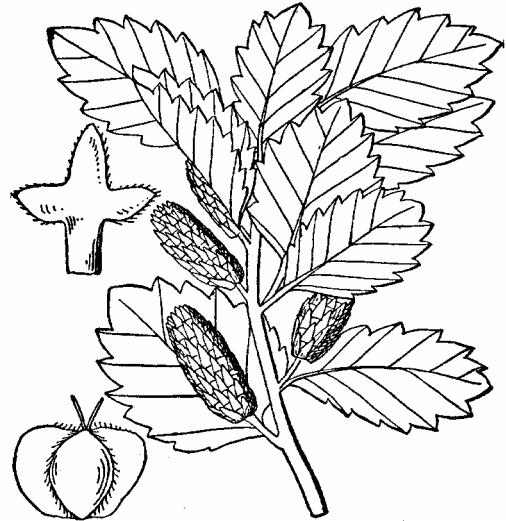


Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

Ecological characteristics: Little information is available on the ecology of *Betula pumila*. It is a highly variable species, both morphologically and ecologically; different varieties are found in habitats ranging from Coastal Plain bogs of New Jersey to tundra and alpine barrens of Labrador. In Maine, it is restricted to fen areas in bogs, or to similarly minerotrophic habitats on lake margins. It is sporadic in this part of its range.

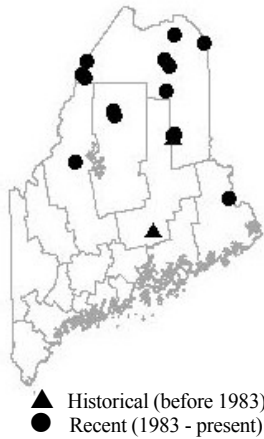
Synonyms: Formerly known as *Betula glandulosa* var. *glandulifera* (Regel.) Gleason, *Betula glandulifera* (Regel.) Butler, *Betula pumila* var. *reinifolia* Fern.

Rarity of *Betula pumila*

State Rank:	S2	Imperiled in Maine because of rarity or vulnerability to further decline.
New England Rank:	None	
Global Rank:	G5	Demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure globally.

Status of *Betula pumila*

Federal Status:	None	No Federal Status.
State Status:	Special Concern	
Proposed State Status:	Special Concern	Rare in Maine, based on available information, but not sufficiently rare to be considered Threatened or Endangered.



Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 14 town(s) in the following county(ies): Aroostook, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Washington.

Dates of documented observations are: 1902, 1961, 1983, 1984 (3), 1985 (5), 1989, 1991, 1992, 1999 (3), 2001, 2002 (2), 2003 (2)

Reason(s) for rarity:

Unclear; in Maine, scarcity of suitable calcareous habitat. Local in this eastern portion of range.

Conservation considerations:

Appears to be secure where it grows, except where hydrologic alterations favor invasion by other woody species.

The information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 05 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,
please contact the Natural Areas Program
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

