

# WINTER KEY TO THE WISCONSIN *ALNUS* (Mill.) AND *BETULA* (L.)

By

DONALD M. REED

Twigs slender and round to somewhat 3-sided; leaf scars alternate with 3 bundle traces; solitary, sessile buds (except *Alnus incana*) with 2 – 3 visible bud scales; horizontally elongated lenticels on bark (similar to cherry); persistent staminate and pistillate catkins through the winter.

1A. Trees; bark peeling, shredding, or scaly:

2A. Twigs greenish-brown to silvery grey or light orange with a somewhat wintergreen (sweet) fragrance when crushed; Bark of older trunks peeling (short) and bronze in color.....  
.....Yellow birch, *Betula alleghaniensis* (Brit.) (syn: *B. lutea* (Michx.f.))

2B. Twigs reddish – brown to nearly black without a wintergreen (sweet) fragrance when crushed; bark of older trunks scaly to peeling (long), not bronze in color:

3A. Twigs reddish – brown and hairy; scaly bark, light reddish – brown to silvery grey..... River birch, *Betula nigra* (L.)

3B. Twigs nearly black and usually glabrous; peeling (long) bark chalky white...  
.....Paper (White) birch, *Betula papyrifera*(Marsh.)

1B. Shrubs to small trees (occasionally); bark not as above:

4A. Twigs and pith round; persistent erect cylindrical (pistillate) catkins; dark reddish-brown bark:

5A. Conspicuous resin-glands present on branches.....  
.....Bog birch, *Betula glandulosa* (Michx.)

5B. Resin-glands absent from branches.....  
.....Swamp birch, *Betula pumila* (L.)

4B. Twigs and pith somewhat 3-sided; persistent hard cone-like (pistillate) catkins; bark not as above:

6A. Winter buds stalked; branches glabrous; staminate catkins fully exposed during winter; conspicuous whitish linear lenticels on trunk; grayish-brown bark.....  
...Speckled (Tag) alder, *Alnus incana* (L.) Moench (syn. *A. rugosa* (Du Roi) Spreng.)

6B. Winter buds sessile; branches glabrous to sparsely pubescent; staminate catkins concealed in the buds during winter; lenticles pale; yellowish-brown bark.....  
.....Green alder, *Alnus viridis* (Vill.) DC. (syn. *A. crispa* (Aiton) Pursh)