

Station 6: Birch

Birch trees are very common in this part of New England. The two main species in this area are the black birch and the paper (also called white) birch. The black birch is distinguished from the paper by its longer leaves and the dark color of the bark on older trees. In both species, the bark becomes increasingly plate-like as the tree ages.

Locally, birches provide much of the vibrant yellow portion of our fall foliage, much like aspens, ginkgo, poplar and ash do in other regions. Birch sap, if collected and boiled down, yields a tasty syrup much like maple but with a unique flavor and spice.

Birches grow well around pines because they prefer more acidic soil, so they are often found between the northern coniferous (evergreen) and the southern deciduous (leafy green) forests which converge here.

Many birds and insects rely on the food and shelter provided by birch trees. The sap provides food for insects and sapsuckers, while other birds will eat these insects and the catkins containing the birch seeds.

