

Himalayan Birch scientific name *Betula utilis* var. '*jacquemontii*'

In its native habitat, *Betula. utilis* tends to form forests, growing as a shrub or tree reaching up to 20 m (66 ft) tall. It frequently grows among scattered conifers, with an undergrowth of shrubs that typically includes evergreen *Rhododendron*. The tree depends on moisture from snowmelt, rather than from the monsoon rains. They often have very bent growth due to the pressure of the deep winter snow in the Himalaya.

Leaves are ovate, 5 to 10 cm long, with serrated margins, and slightly hairy. Flowering occurs from May–July, with only a few male catkins, and short, single (sometimes paired) female catkins. The perianth has four parts in male flowers, and is absent in the female flowers. Fruits ripen in September–October. The thin, papery bark is very shiny, reddish brown, reddish white, or white, with horizontal lenticels. The bark peels off in broad, horizontal belts, making it very usable for creating even large pages for texts.

The wood is very hard and heavy, and quite brittle. The heartwood is pink or light reddish brown.

The bark of Himalayan birch was used centuries ago in India as paper for writing lengthy scriptures and texts in Sanskrit and other scripts, particularly in historical Kashmir. Its use as paper for books is mentioned by early Sanskrit writers. In the late 19th century, Kashmiri pandits reported all of their books were written on Himalayan birch bark until Akbar introduced paper in the 16th century.

This attractive stand of Himalayan Birch on the miniature golf course is probably 10 to 15 years old.

Information provided by Wikipedia and Harrogate Borough Council.