



Trees of BC

British Columbia's
Native Trees

Volume 2 • Broad Leaves

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Broad-leaf characteristics: (R to L, Top to Bottom) Green Rosettas, Debbie Ballentine, Eli Sagor, Don Loarie, Jon D. Anderson, Luke McGuff, Andrew Reding x2, Flora Orientalis Cascades

Parts of a broad-leafed tree: Denise Kitagawa, Kitte Ka'at

What are catkins: alder-com-2, Saturdaywalker

What are fruits: Wendy Cutler, epitree, Flora Orientalis Cascades

(The following are clockwise from top left)

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Paper Birch: InAweofGod'sCreation, Eli Sagor, F.D. Richards, Eli Sagor

Red Alder: Hamon David, Luke McGuff, Andrew Reding, Jon D. Anderson, Stones 55

Mountain Alder: Paul Slichter, mollsie, fossilcreeknursery, D Smith, Liam Rooney

Water Birch: Noel Gillette, pete veilleux, Andrey Zharkikh, Thayne Tuason

Trembling Aspen: The Tree Library, Flora Orientalis Cascades, Matt Lavin, Eli Sagor

Black Cottonwood: Angelo Mombert, Kate Poaster, born1945, Bart Jones, GlacierGuyMT

Balsam Poplar: Matt Lavin, Rafael Medina, Doug Waylett, Quinlaar, Chantal Gauthier

Pacific Dogwood: brewbooks, Chiara Coetzee, Lotus Johnson, The Tree Library, Manitoba Museum of Finds Art

Douglas Maple: Susan, The Tree Library, Mike Fitz x2, Paco Garin

Vine Maple: John Rusk, Thayne Tuason, Marcia and Mike Nelson Pedde, Wendy Cutler, Debbie Ballentine

Arbutus: M.E. Sanseverino, Bri Weldon, Lotus Johnson, Don Laurie, Andrew Reding

Black Hawthorn: Matt Lavin x3, Wendy Cutler, Kim Tilli

Cascara: Cory Raimond, USFWS - Pacific Region, Jon D. Anderson x2, The Tree Library

Garry Oak: A.Davey, Andrew Reding, Flora Orientalis Cascades x2, David Badke

Pacific Crab Apple: standhisround, pete veilleux, kkdemien, pete veilleux, Hamon David

Choke Cherry: mwms1916, Andrey Zharkikh, Matt Lavin, Laval Roy, Dan Keck

Pin Cherry: Siddarth Machado x2, Jamie Anderson, plantmandrew, Matt Lavin

Bitter Cherry: Thayne Tuason, Green Rosettas, Bart Jones, Dian Rose, Green Rosettas

Back cover: Paper Birch, Eli Sagor



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Broad-leaf characteristics

Position



alternate



opposite

Edge



toothed



smooth

Shape



oval



pointed oval



lobed



maple



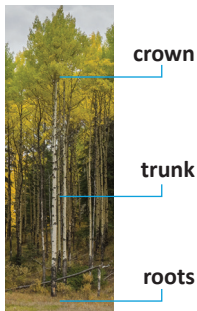
triangle

Parts of a broad-leaf tree

Generally speaking, trees are plants with **roots**, a woody central **trunk**, and a **crown** of branches covered in leaves.

Broad-leaf trees are a group of trees with wide, flat leaves. In colder climates, they are often *deciduous*, with leaves that drop in the autumn.

They are also members of a group of plants called *angiosperms* that produce flowers and fruits containing their seeds.



Why do some trees drop their leaves?

In climates where the weather is cold enough in winter to cause freezing, broad-leaf trees lose their leaves to protect themselves. The broad surfaces of leaves are perfect for catching the most sunshine, but they lose a lot of moisture and catch the wind and snow. In winter, water sources freeze up. Storms and heavy snow buildup could damage the tree.

So as day length shortens and temperatures drop, the tree begins the leaf-dropping process, called *abscission*. Chlorophyll production stops and its colour fades revealing showy reds and yellows that were masked by green. As the leaves fall, the tree enters dormancy, saving its energy to produce new leaves in spring.



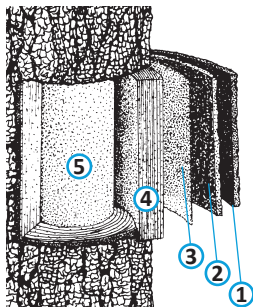
Leaves are where *photosynthesis* occurs. In this process, energy from the sun, carbon dioxide from the air, and water are recombined to form oxygen and sugars to fuel the tree.

Trunks have several layers:

① **Bark** protects the tree from fire, insects, extreme temperatures, and other external threats.

② **Inner bark (phloem)** is the layer that carries sugars from the leaves to the rest of the tree.

③ **Cambium** is the growing part of the trunk. Each year, the cambium produces new layers. Because less growing happens in winter, the difference between winter and summer growth can be seen in the tree's growth rings and shows the tree's age.



④ **Sapwood (xylem)** carries water and nutrients from the roots up to the leaves.

⑤ **Heartwood** is dead wood at the center of the trunk which gives the tree strength.

Roots anchor the tree to the earth. They absorb water and, with the help of fungi, extract mineral nutrients from the soil. Trees also use their roots to interact with other trees; exchanging nutrients and communicating signals, such as a distress warning in the case of disease or insect attack.

What are catkins?

Many types of broad-leaf trees have catkins, including birches, oaks, and poplars. Catkins are clusters of tiny flowers which often lack petals.

A catkin is either male or female. Depending on the species, a catkin-producing tree may have both male and female flowers on a single tree (*monoecious*) or on separate trees (*dioecious*).

In some tree species such as aspen, male and female flowers look similar. In others, they are quite different. In alders, the female catkins are woody, cone-like structures.

Wind carries pollen from male to female catkins. Pollinated catkins then develop seeds. These are often dispersed by the wind as well. The seeds of cottonwoods, for example, are covered in white, fluffy hairs that catch the breeze. Birch seeds are carried in small, winged structures called nutlets that are blown from the parent tree.



Left: Male red alder catkins with pollen **Right:** Female red alder catkins



Black poplar catkins

What are fruits?

Fruits go far beyond what you might put in a fruit salad! Botanically speaking, a fruit is the seed-bearing structure in a flowering plant that develops from the flower.

Many fruits have nutritional value. Berries (ex: currants), stonefruit (ex: cherries), and pomes (ex: apples) surround their seeds with fleshy coverings that become sweet when the seeds are mature. Animals eat the fruit and later pass the seeds, dispersing them to new locations.

Nuts

A nut is a fruit consisting of a tough shell protecting a kernel that is often edible. True nuts have a shell that does not open to release the seed (such as an acorn). Numerous tree species with catkins have tiny 'nutlets' that are dispersed by the wind.

Samaras

A samara is a simple dry fruit with a flattened wing of fibrous, papery tissue. The size and shape of the 'wing' allows the wind to catch it and disperse the seed over long distances. In maple species the samaras are paired with two seeds at the center.



Black hawthorn pomes



Paper birch nutlet



Garry oak acorns



Vine maple samaras



Bigleaf Maple

Acer macrophyllum



Where found: Grows at low and mid elevations in the southwest corner of BC, including on Vancouver Island. Often found growing near water in moist soil, but also found on drier sites disturbed by fire, clearing or logging.

Description: The largest species of maple in Canada, growing up to 35 m tall. Broad branches and trunk are often covered with mosses and ferns. **Bark:** Grey-brown, becoming grooved with age. **Leaves:** In opposite pairs. Large, green, measuring up to 30 cm across, with 5 lobes. Turning yellow in autumn. **Flowers:** Small, hanging in yellowish-green clusters. **Fruits:** Winged seeds (samaras) are paired in a V-shape, and fall from the tree in a whirling motion.

Notes:

- Traditional uses for maple wood include canoe paddles, utensils, tools, and spindle whorls.
- An attractive, rich wood, maple is used to create furniture, flooring, and musical instruments.
- Maple syrup can be derived from bigleaf maples but the process takes longer than with the sugar maples of eastern North America. This is due to the higher water content that needs to be boiled off from bigleaf maple sap.







Paper Birch

Betula papyrifera

Where found: Across most of BC's Interior and scattered along the coast. Paper birch is intolerant of shade and thrives on open slopes, wetland and floodplain margins, and in clearings resulting from disturbances such as wildfire and insect infestations.

Description: A small to medium tree growing up to 30 m tall. The trunk is slender with an oval or pyramid-shaped crown of branches. **Bark:** Papery, peeling in horizontal strips. Coppery when young, it becomes white with horizontal brown lines as the tree matures. **Leaves:** Oval with sharp-pointed tips and toothed edges. **Flowers:** Sausage-shaped catkins 2-4 cm long. **Fruits:** Nutlets with wings broader than the seed.

Notes:

- The bark is flexible and waterproof. Sheets of it are used to make traditional canoes and baskets.
- Birch bark is a staple food for moose in winter. It is also an important dietary component for white-tailed deer. Snowshoe hares browse paper birch seedlings, and porcupines and beavers feed on the inner bark.
- Because the wood has little odor or taste, it is used to make biodegradable food items such as popsicle sticks, toothpicks, and cutlery.







Red Alder

Alnus rubra

Where found: Common along the coast of BC, red alder is the most plentiful hardwood in the region. Occupies open sites quickly after a disturbance. Intolerant of shade.

Description: A medium-sized tree that grows up to 24 m. **Bark:** Thin and grey to whitish on mature trees, often covered with lichens. The inner bark turns deep reddish-orange when exposed to air. **Leaves:** Oval-shaped with pointed tips and coarsely toothed edges that tend to curl under. **Flowers:** Both male and female flowers. Pollen-producing male flowers are long and drooping catkins. Female flowers develop into small, egg-shaped, woody cones. **Fruits:** Narrow-winged nutlets.

Notes:

- The bark is a traditional dye for basket materials, wool, feathers, and human hair and skin. Depending on the techniques used, colours range from black to brown to orange-red.
- As a hardwood, red alder wood has no resin and is good for smoking meat and seafood. Its smoke is delicate, subtle and slightly sweet.
- Together with a symbiotic bacterial partner, red alders fix atmospheric nitrogen into the soil, supporting a lush undergrowth.







Mountain Alder

Alnus tenuifolia

Where found: Throughout BC east of the Coast and Cascade mountains. Found in mid to subalpine elevations with moist, rich soils, often along streams, lakes, and bogs.

Description: A small, deciduous tree growing to 10 m.

Bark: Smooth, green-grey with distinct oval-shaped slits

(lenticels). **Leaves:** Thin, oval-shaped, shallowly lobed

with toothed edges. Pale and hairy below. **Flowers:** Both

male and female flowers. Pollen-producing male flowers

are long and drooping catkins. Female flowers develop

into small, egg-shaped, woody cones. **Fruits:** narrow

winged nutlets.

Notes:

- Considered one of the best woods for smoking meat and fish because it has no pitch and doesn't flavour the food.
- Traditional mountain alder fishing nets are boiled along with the tree's bark to dye them black. This process makes the nets more difficult for fish to see.
- Alders are sometimes planted to enrich non-fertile soils, which it does by means of nitrogen-fixing bacteria in its root nodules.







Water Birch

Betula occidentalis

Where found: Widespread and locally common in southern BC, east of the Coast and Cascade mountains. Uncommon further north. Prefers damp to wet, nutrient-rich soils near water sources and forest openings.

Description: A deciduous shrub to small tree growing to 10 m. **Bark:** Thin, shiny, dark reddish-brown with white, horizontal slits (lenticels). **Leaves:** Oval-shaped tapering to pointed tips. Shiny green above, lighter below with doubly-toothed edges. **Flowers:** Male catkins drooping, female catkins erect. **Fruits:** Tiny hairy nutlets with wings broader than the seed.

Notes:

- Provides important nesting and sheltering habitat for birds and mammals near water sources. Because it often overhangs streams, water birch provides important shade for fish. It is also a highly important winter forage for moose.
- The sap can be harvested as a sweet traditional beverage.
- Compounds in birch bark and sap makes the wood highly flammable. As a result, it is often burned as fuel.







Trembling Aspen

Populus tremuloides

Where found: Found throughout BC east of the Coast ranges, especially common in the northeast. A small population is scattered around the Salish Sea. This tree prefers moist, well-drained, calcium-rich soils. Intolerant of shade.

Description: Slender, small to medium tree, growing to 30 m. **Bark:** Smooth, greenish-grey to white. Becoming darker and furrowed at the base with age. Doesn't peel like paper birch. **Leaves:** Smooth, round to triangular with a long, flattened stalk. Turning yellow in autumn. **Flowers:** Trees have either small, short male catkins or larger, longer female catkins. **Fruits:** Tiny capsules covered with cotton-like fluff.

Notes:

- Individual aspen stems are fairly short-lived (~ 50 years), however, they are able to reproduce as clones from root suckers. Considering a grove of clones to be the same organism, they can be considered to be very long-lived. Some clonal groves are estimated to be over 5,000 years old and cover several hectares.
- Water in which aspen branches have been boiled is a traditional cleanser used by hunters to remove human scent.
- The rotten trunks of old aspens make excellent homes for cavity-nesting birds.







Black Cottonwood

Populus balsamifera ssp. trichocarpa

Where found: In BC, it is mostly found west of the Rocky Mountains. Widespread and common on moist to wet lowlands to mid elevations. Grows well in the rich soils of floodplains, along rivers, and near other water sources.

Description: Tall, deciduous tree, grows to 50 m.

Bark: Smooth, greenish-grey when young, becoming deeply furrowed and grey with time. **Leaves:** Emerging from sticky, sweet-scented buds in spring. Triangular to heart-shaped with a fine, round-toothed margin. Dark green and shiny on top, pale below and often marked with brown.

Flowers: Male and female catkins on separate trees.

Fruits: The hairy seed capsules of female trees release seeds in white, cottony fluff.

Notes:

- The aromatic gum of the buds has antiseptic qualities and is used in traditional salves and treatments for sore throats, coughs, and lung ailments. It also makes a strong glue used to attach arrowheads and to waterproof containers.
- Where their ranges overlap, black cottonwood will hybridize with balsam poplar, a smaller but otherwise similar species.
- Cottonwood is a popular traditional material for dugout canoes, especially among Interior Peoples.







Balsam Poplar

Populus balsamifera ssp. balsamifera

Where found: In BC, it is most common in the north of the province from the Peace River to the Yukon. Widespread and common on the rich, moist to wet soils of floodplains, along rivers, and near other water sources.

Description: Medium-sized and deciduous, grows to 25 m. **Bark:** Smooth, greenish-grey when young, becoming deeply furrowed and grey with time. **Leaves:** Emerging from sticky, sweet-scented buds in spring. Triangular to heart-shaped with a fine, round-toothed margin. Dark green and shiny on top, pale below and often marked with brown. Thinner than those of black cottonwood. **Flowers:** Male and female catkins on separate trees. **Fruits:** The smooth seed capsules of female trees release seeds in white, cottony fluff.

Notes:

- As with the black cottonwood, the aromatic gum of the buds has antiseptic qualities and is used to treat skin and respiratory ailments.
- Where their ranges overlap, balsam poplar will hybridize with black cottonwood, a larger but otherwise similar species.
- Balsam poplar ash is used in traditional soap-making, and can be used to clean hair and clothing.





Pacific Dogwood (Western Flowering Dogwood)

Cornus nuttallii



Where found: Grows in deep, coarse, well-drained soils along the southern coast and on Vancouver Island. Often found along streams. Shade tolerant.

Description: A small, much branched, deciduous tree up to 20 m tall. **Bark:** Smooth, grey-black bark becoming finely ridged with age. **Leaves:** In opposite pairs. Oval-shaped tips, with a finely toothed edge. Dark green, turning orange in autumn. **Flowers:** Small, greenish-white clusters, tipped with purple. These are circled by what appear to be large, white petals, but are actually modified leaves (bracts). **Fruits:** Clusters of bright red berry-like fruit.

Notes:

- The Pacific dogwood is the floral emblem of BC and is specifically protected by legislation from being harmed on land belonging to the province and municipalities.
- The fruits are eaten by birds, including woodpeckers, quail, pigeons, grosbeaks, thrushes, and waxwings, as well as by bears, mice, voles, and beavers.
- The hard, fine-grained wood is used to make traditional bows, arrows, and knitting needles.
- The name 'dogwood' is thought to come from the word *dag*, meaning sharp object (ie: dagger, skewer, arrow) and has nothing to do with dogs.







Douglas Maple

Acer glabrum

Where found: Widespread at low and mid elevations throughout most of BC, except for Haida Gwaii and northern BC. Grows in dry to moist open forest, clearings, shorelines, and avalanche areas.

Description: A small-sized tree or shrub growing to 10 m. **Bark:** Thin, smooth, and reddish-brown. Becoming rougher and greying on older trunks.

Leaves: In opposite pairs. Green leaves with typical maple-leaf shape. Coarsely toothed with 3-5 lobes, turning bright red-orange in autumn. **Flowers:** In clusters of about 10, small, yellow-green. Male and female flowers are often found on separate plants.

Fruits: Winged seeds (samaras) joined in pairs at a V-shaped angle.

Notes:

- Douglas maple is suitable as an ornamental in the garden and is particularly attractive in the autumn.
- Because the wood is tough and pliable, it is traditionally used for many items that require a bent shape including snowshoes, fish traps, bows, cradles, saddle frames, headdresses, and baskets.
- Also known as Rocky Mountain maple.





Vine Maple

Acer circinatum



Where found: On the southern coast, west of the Coast Mountains, rare further inland and on Vancouver Island. Grows most frequently in moist areas along streams. One of the first trees to establish after landslides.

Description: A multi-stemmed shrub or small tree growing to 8 m. **Bark:** Thin and green, becoming reddish-brown. **Leaves:** In opposite pairs. Typical maple-leaf shape with 7-9 lobes and toothed edges. Bright green leaves turning golden to bright red in autumn. **Flowers:** Small clusters of white flowers at the end of branches. **Fruits:** Winged seeds (samaras) joined in pairs, widely spread. Initially green, becoming reddish.

Notes:

- The vine maple is the only type of maple capable of *layering*, in which a branch touching the ground sprouts its own roots and grows as another tree.
- Like Douglas maple, the wood is hard and dense but flexible when fresh. Drum hoops, snowshoe frames and fish traps are among the items traditionally made from vine maple.
- Vine maple is closely related to Japanese maple. Both are grown ornamentally and prized for their colourful fall displays.







Arbutus

Arbutus menziesii

Where found: Limited to a narrow band along the Salish Sea area of the south coast, Vancouver Island, and the Gulf Islands. Generally occurring within 8 km of the ocean. Grows frequently on drier sites with rocky soils. Prefers full sun.

Description: A broad-leaf evergreen growing to 30 m. Often gnarled, leaning with several large branches forming the crown. **Bark:** Thin and smooth. Green when young, becoming reddish-brown. Peeling strips of the papery bark curl back to expose a yellow-green layer below. **Leaves:** Alternate. Oval-shaped, leathery, with dark green above and pale green below. **Flowers:** Clusters of small, white, waxy, bell-shaped flowers. **Fruits:** Bright orange-red clusters of berry-like fruit with a textured surface.

Notes:

- The fruits are eaten by many bird species as well as mammals such as bears, deer, and raccoons. Many arbutus trees have hollow areas which benefit cavity-nesting animals.
- In a Straits Salish story, the people survived a great flood by anchoring their canoes to an arbutus at the top of a mountain. Out of respect, the Saanich People do not burn arbutus wood.
- Unlike many broad-leaf trees, arbutus trees do not lose their leaves in winter.





Black Hawthorn

Crataegus douglasii



Where found: Found from sea level to mid elevations throughout BC south of Fort St. John. Requires full sunlight to grow to tree size. Prefers moist areas along streams, lakes, and forest edges.

Description: A shrubby tree growing to 8 m tall. **Bark:** Grey, rough, and scaly with stout straight thorns 3 cm long.

Leaves: Alternate. Oval, thick, and leathery, with 5-9 serrated lobes at the top. Dark green above, paler below.

Flowers: Flat-topped clusters of white, 5-petaled flowers at the tip of branches. **Fruits:** Small, shiny, black, and apple-shaped.

Notes:

- The strong, hard, wood of black hawthorn is used in the making of traditional tools such as digging sticks, axe handles, clubs, and yokes.
- The common name 'hawthorn' comes from the Anglo-Saxon *haguthorn*, meaning 'a fence with thorns', as hawthorns were used to make hedges.
- Black hawthorn thickets make safe sites for small birds and other animals to nest and shelter as the thorns make them impenetrable to larger animals.







Cascara

Frangula purshiana

Where found: Most common on the southern part of the coast and on Vancouver Island. Also scattered through the Columbia Valley of the Interior. Favours rich, moist, shady sites.

Description: A small, erect tree growing to 10 m tall. **Bark:** Thin, smooth, silver-grey. Inner bark is bright yellow, darkening to brown upon exposure to the air.

Leaves: Alternate. Deciduous, however young plants may keep their leaves over mild winters. Oval-shaped and glossy dark green with prominent parallel veins.

Flowers: Small clusters of greenish-yellow with 5 petals.

Fruits: Purplish-black berries, 5-8 mm across.

Notes:

- The bark can be peeled and steeped in water to make a traditional laxative tea. It was harvested commercially in large quantities, until a synthetic source was developed. Honey made from cascara flower nectar can also have a slight laxative effect.
- Because of its bitter flavour, cascara extract is sometimes applied to fingernails to discourage nail-biting.







Garry Oak

Quercus garryana

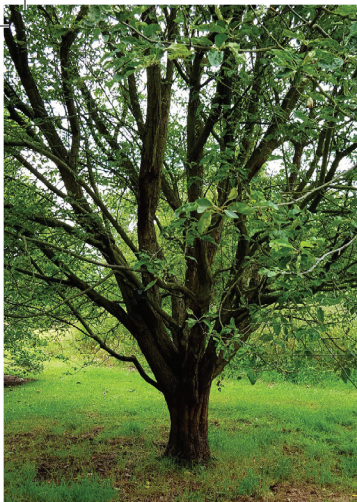
Where found: In BC, it is found on southeastern Vancouver Island, on the Gulf Islands, and in small areas of the lower Fraser Valley. Grows on dry, rocky bluffs as well as in the rich soil of well-drained meadows.

Description: Depending on the richness of the soil, this tree can present as small and gnarled or as a robust, heavy-limbed tree growing to 25 m tall. **Bark:** Light grey with thick, darker furrows and ridges. **Leaves:** Alternate. Deeply lobed with a glossy green top and paler, hairy underside. **Flowers:** Separate male and female flowers on the same tree. Male flowers are hanging catkins and female flowers are tiny red-tipped clusters **Fruits:** Acorns 2-3 cm long with a shallow, rough cap. Green turning to brown at maturity.

Notes:

- Garry oak woodland ecosystems, of which the tree is a keystone species, support more species of plants than any other terrestrial ecosystem in BC. They are critical habitats to rare species such as the Western bluebird and the sharp-tailed snake. On Vancouver Island, 90% of this habitat has been lost to development.
- Before colonization, Indigenous Peoples maintained open Garry oak habitat rich in plants and game animals through controlled burning.







Pacific Crab Apple

Malus fusca

Where found: Found all along the coast of BC, as well as on Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. Grows from sea level to mid elevation along streams, lakes, and in moist, open woodlands.

Description: A small, shrub-like tree growing to 12 m. Branches armed with thorn-like spur-shoots. **Bark:** Brown, rough, shredding, deeply fissured with age.

Leaves: Alternate. Deep green, turning red or orange-yellow in the fall. Oval-shaped with toothed edges along irregular lobes. **Flowers:** Clusters of fragrant white to pink blossoms. **Fruits:** Clusters of yellow to purple-red apples hang on long stems. Fruit is 2 cm long and turns soft and brown after a frost.

Notes:

- This is the only species of apple native to BC.
- An important traditional food along the coast. The tart fruit can be eaten raw or stored in water, where it becomes softer and sweeter over time. Because of its high acidity, it does not need further preservation to keep all winter.
- Like all apples, its fruit is high in pectin and can be added to other fruits to thicken jams and jellies.





Choke Cherry

Prunus virginiana



Where found: Common throughout southern BC, especially east of the Coast and Cascade ranges. Becomes less common further north. On the coast it can be found on southern Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland. It grows in dry grasslands, rocky outcrops, and open forests.

Description: A shrubby, deciduous tree growing to 4 m.

Bark: Smooth, dark reddish to grey-brown, without prominent horizontal slits (lenticels). **Leaves:** Alternate.

Broad, oval-shaped leaves tapering at both ends. Thin, with a finely toothed edge. Dull green leaves, turning red in autumn.

Flowers: Elongated clusters of more than 10 small, white flowers. **Fruits:** Shiny clusters of dark red to black cherries.

Notes:

- The dried fruit is frequently added to pemmican, a traditional staple food consisting of tallow, dried meat, and dried berries. This high-energy food was also adopted by Europeans in the fur trade and by polar explorers.
- The name 'choke cherry' refers to the bitter, astringent taste of the fruit. However, it is often sweetened and made into jelly or syrup.
- The leaves are a food source for the larvae of many types of butterflies and moths including the tiger swallowtail butterfly and the polyphemus moth.







Pin Cherry

Prunus pensylvanica

Where found: Common in the southern to central Interior of BC, east of the Coast and Cascade mountains. Grows at low to mid elevations in open, dry to moist forests. Abundant after wildfire.

Description: A small shrubby tree growing to 12 m.

Bark: Dark reddish-brown with large, widely-spaced orange horizontal slits (lenticels), peels in horizontal strips.

Leaves: Alternate. Thin, lance-shaped, with round-toothed edges.

Flowers: Clusters of 5-7 small, white flowers.

Fruits: Small clusters of bright red cherries, 5 mm in diameter.

Notes:

- Like those of other *Prunus* species, the cherry stones and leaves contain toxic cyanide, however the cherry flesh does not. Birds eat the cherries in abundance, leading to its other common name, 'bird cherry'. Birds pass the seeds without digesting the toxins, helping to disperse the seeds away from the parent tree.
- Following a fire or other disturbance, seeds that may have been dormant for years will germinate rapidly. Combined with the rapid initial growth of seedlings, pin cherry thickets are able to dominate the landscape after wildfire.





Bitter Cherry

Prunus emarginata



Where found: Abundant throughout southern BC, except for the drier areas of the Interior. Grows in moist forests and clearings, often along watercourses. One of the first to return after logging and wildfire.

Description: A shrubby, deciduous tree growing to 15 m.

Bark: Reddish to grey with widely spaced, orange, horizontal slits (lenticels). Peels horizontally in wide strips

Leaves: Alternate. Oval-shaped, with a rounded tip and finely toothed edges.

Flowers: Clusters of 5-10 white or pinkish blossoms.

Fruits: Clusters of small, spherical, red cherries.

Notes:

- The tough, shiny bark is traditionally used to decorate woven baskets and other items such as archery bows and pipe stems. The waterproof, rot-resistant strips may be dyed black with rich, peaty soil, or red with alder bark.
- As the name suggests, the fruit of the bitter cherry are not edible by humans. However, they are consumed by birds, especially Cedar waxwings and Evening grosbeaks.
- The larvae of numerous butterflies and moths feed on the leaves, including the twin-spotted sphinx moth and the Lorquin's admiral butterfly.





Terminology

Angiosperm: Plants which have flowers and produce their seeds enclosed within a fruit.

Catkin: A slim, cylindrical flower cluster, with tiny or no petals, arranged closely along a central stem that is often drooping.

Chlorophyll: The chemical that makes leaves green. It is found inside the tree's cells where chloroplasts absorb the sun's energy for photosynthesis.

Crown (tree context): The branches, leaves, and reproductive structures extending from the trunk. Crown shapes are highly variable and can help to identify species.

Deciduous: A tree that loses its leaves at the end of its growing season.

Lenticel: A line of raised pores in the bark of a tree that allows gas exchange between the atmosphere and the internal tissues. Lenticels look like horizontal slashes and are often a different colour than the bark.

Native plant: A plant occurring naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat without human introduction.

Photosynthesis: The process by which green plants and some other organisms use sunlight to create foods from carbon dioxide and water. Photosynthesis in plants involves chlorophyll and generates oxygen as a byproduct.

Samara: A fruit in which a flattened wing of fibrous, papery tissue develops from the ovary wall of the flower. The shape of a samara enables the wind to carry the seed and disperse it further.

Sap: A translucent, thin, watery, slightly amber coloured substance that develops within the conductive tissues of the tree. The sap transports nutrients throughout the tree, including hormones, sugar, and minerals.

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1cm



Cards are waterproof
and washable!



Recycle as paper



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