

Birch, Silver - *betula pendula*



Silver Birch is very recognisable at all times of year because of its silver bark and feathery foliage. The trunks are most visible in the winter when surrounding trees are not in leaf.

Although there are Silver Birches throughout the Wood they are most concentrated in the southerly third around the Gorses (see below, East Gorse 23/3/12). The tree is very distinctive with silver bark and feathery twigs in the upper branches. The bark is often dotted with black knobby bumps and there are usually rough black patches at the base of the trunk. Downy Birch *betula pubescens* can be found in the same area. This has a more rounded leaf, reddish bark and hairy stems and leaf stalks but is not easy to distinguish from the more common Silver Birch.



The leaf is small and triangular or heart shaped with double teeth along the straight edges. The flowers are separate male and female catkins, borne in late spring (below 30/4/12)). The more stubby female catkins ripen to a woody cone-like structure releasing small, winged seeds that blow off in the wind.



This felled Silver Birch in Middle Gorse (below 25/3/12) was wet and sticky with white sap rising in the year after it was felled because it was broken and leaning dangerously across the path. Contractors carried out this work for Croydon Council after the Friends of Selsdon Wood had reported the problem.



Take a winter walk around the Gorse Area. Spot the Silver Birches by their bark and note the feathery upper branches. Find the group of Silver Birches beside the dog walker in the photograph above. One of these trees has something attached to the trunk. What is it?

Birch is widespread throughout Selsdon Wood.
The map shows the locations of the specimens mentioned overleaf.

