

TREMBLING ASPEN (*Populus tremuloides*)



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| A. Identification: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaves--smooth, round to triangular shaped leaves with a flattened stalk --dark green above, paler underneath and turn golden yellow/red in the fall |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flowers--born in male and female catkins on separate trees --seeds ripen in 4 to 6 weeks after flowering and good seed crops occur every 4 to 5 years |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit-----tiny capsules covered with cottony down |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bark-----smooth and waxy appearance -----pale green to an almost white when young and it becomes darker with long, flat-topped ridges when older -----sometimes have diamond shaped marks and white chalk-like blooms on the south side of the trunk |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wood-----is light, soft, and low in strength with its color as white to white gray |
| B. Distribution / Location: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most widely distributed tree species in North America and grows from Alaska across NWT to Quebec and Newfoundland |
| C. Habitat: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occurs in a variety of soils but prefers sheltered areas and often grows in pure stands especially as young trees • mixed with white and black spruce, balsam fir, white birch, balsam poplar and jack pine • considered a “nurse crop” because other broadleaf and conifers species enter a pure stand and eventually replace the aspen |
| D. Growing characteristics: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium-sized trees are up to 25 m high and 40 cm in diameter and 80 years old • trunk is long, round, smooth, with little taper and is branch free in the lower part through self pruning • crown is short, rounded and the root system is shallow and very wide spreading |
| E. Reproduction: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces new trees via sexual and asexual reproduction because conditions have to be just right for seeds to germinate and survive • the female and male flowers are on different plants of the same species • seeds are in catkins and are pollinated by wind where seeds are dispersed by wind and scattered by water if in an aquatic environment • a single aspen can produce 1.6 million seeds each year • seeds can only survive with suitable temperatures, nutrition, rich soil, and plenty of water |

- extensive root system sends up shoots /suckers where there is an area of sunlight and are known to survive for hundreds or even thousands of years

F. Uses:

- **traditional**--aspen branches boiled in water make a cleanser for guns, traps and buckskin
--hunters also washed themselves in this solution to remove human odor
- **modern**---for decades was treated as a weed, the forest industry now values it especially for pulp, wafer board
---also used to make plywood, particle board, pallets, crates, excelsior and matches

G. Fun Facts:

- is exported for use in the chopstick industry
- other names include “quaking aspen” or “quivering aspen”
- is the most widely distributed tree in North America
- in several native languages the name translates as “woman’s tongue” or “noisy leaf”
- if you roll the leaf stalk between your fingers to feel the flat stalk you will understand why it can tremble with the slightest breeze

Bibliography:

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