

26 Birch Tree Uses: Utilize the Bark, Wood and Leaves

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Being prepared for a natural disaster is one thing, but true survival, in my mind, means living off the earth. If you end up somewhere where the birch tree grows, you'll have a much better chance of doing that.

We've touched on some of the uses of birch trees in previous articles. It cropped up when we asked, can you eat tree bark? It also featured in our piece on the seven most useful trees for survivalists and preppers and again when we explored several ways to boil water without a pot.

We were only scratching the surface then. Now it's time to uncover all the secrets of the birch tree so, make sure you're sitting comfortably because the list is long.

11 Medicinal Uses of the Birch Tree

The Birch tree is a veritable treasure trove in terms of providing natural first aid. Although there is little scientific evidence to support its usefulness or efficacy, various parts of the birch have been used to treat:

1. Pain and inflammation
2. Infections of the urinary tract
3. Kidney stones
4. Arthritis
5. Skin conditions, including eczema and fungal and parasitic conditions
6. Cuts, scratches, and minor wounds
7. Rheumatism
8. Heartburn
9. Stomach ulcers
10. Sinus congestion
11. Headaches

To get the most out of the Birch tree's medicinal qualities, you can make tea from the leaves or sap or simply drink the sap itself.

An infusion is better for treating skin issues and can be made by steeping dried leaves in either water or apple cider vinegar. This can then be used as a soothing and healing wash.

7 Things You Can Do with Birch Wood

Birch wood is straight-grained, heavy, and versatile. Over the years, it's been used to construct everything from baby's cradles to wigwams. For a survivalist, some of the Birch trees most significant uses are:

1 Containers for Food Storage

Birch bark is waterproof and airtight. It also contains betulin which has fungicidal properties that help preserve the food stored inside.



2 Start a Fire

The papery outer bark has a high oil content, making it an extremely effective survival fire starter.

3 Build a Birch Wood Canoe

When the water's rising and you need to flee, a birch contains everything you need to construct a canoe. Don't expect it to be as easy to make as a birch bark bowl but, after 12 hours of hard work, you should have something river-worthy at least.



4 Write your Memoirs

Given its papery texture, it's hardly surprising that people have been using birch bark to record their thoughts and ideas since the 3rd century. Admittedly, you'd have to be stuck in a wood for a long time before you resorted to making paper but, should that happen...



5 Make a Birch Bark Bowl

Birch bark is waterproof, which makes it ideal for collecting and boiling water if you don't have a container to hand.



6 Build a Survival Shelter

While the tipi provided temporary accommodation for the Native Americans in the Plains, many other tribes used birch to build more permanent structures known as wigwams.

With saplings forming the main structure, birch bark was used to insulate and waterproof the hut. It can similarly be used to build an emergency survival shelter.

7 Make Cordage

The strong inner bark can be stripped into long sections and then twisted together to create a string or rope.

5 Foods You Can Get From Birch Trees

The inner layer of birch bark makes for surprisingly versatile survival food. It's high in starch and is said to taste a little like wintergreen.

1 Bread

The Native Americans used the inner bark to make a type of survival bread that would see them through times of famine. The high starch content makes it a good source of energy and, when made into flour, contains around 600 calories per pound.

2 Fresh Greens

The leaves of the Birch tree can be eaten fresh or cooked, like spinach. They have a rather bitter taste, however, so are something of an acquired taste – a little like Brussels sprouts or broccoli!

3 Noodles

Cut the inner bark into thin strips and boil them up as though they were instant noodles.

4 Soups and Stews

Ground into a type of meal, the inner bark of the Birch tree can be used to add texture and thicken soups and stews.

5 Flavor Enhancer

Dried, powdered Birch leaves can be added to almost anything to add flavor and spice up your survival foods.

Three Ways to Drink Birch Sap

1 Beer

While beer is by no means a survival food, it is food for the soul, and Americans have been enjoying this particular variety since the 1600s.

#\2 Tea

You don't have to ferment the sap of the birch tree to enjoy its benefits. You can make a refreshing tea that's high in vitamin C by combining the sap from the Birch tree with a few small strips of the inner bark and some boiling water. Read more about foraging for tea.

3 Birch Water

Birch water or sap is low in calories but high in essential nutrients like magnesium, which supports our muscle and nerve function and helps us produce energy. It's also said to have a rich electrolyte profile, making it ideal as a post-activity recovery drink.

Conclusion

The Birch is a survivalist's dream, capable of providing shelter, medicine, food, and water. It can be used to store food, make mats and baskets, be woven into ropes, and used to treat a wide range of health issues. It's little wonder it's been used by hunter-gathers across the world for generations.

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