

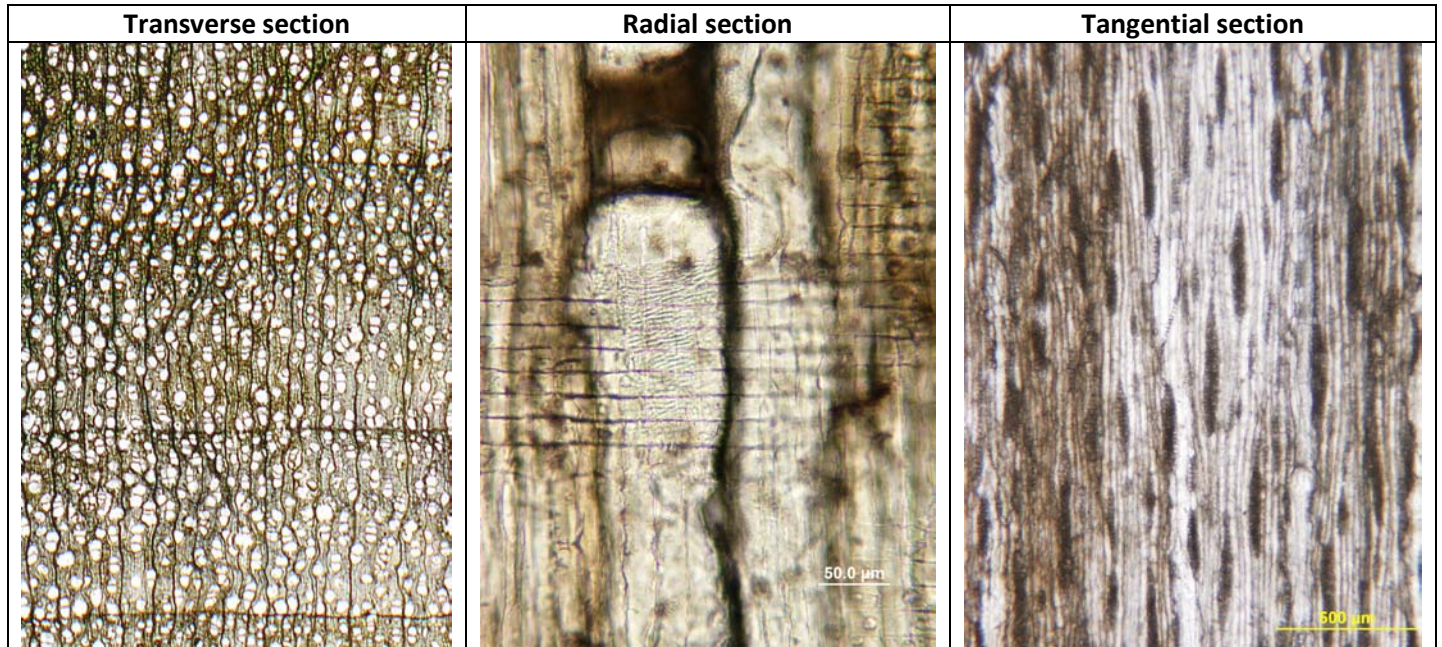
Betula scammonii (birch)

Family: Betulaceae

Synonyms: *Betuloxylon scammonii* Prakash 1968

Naming reference: Wheeler, E.A. & T.A. Dillhoff. 2009. The Middle Miocene wood flora of Vantage, Washington, USA. IAWA Journal, Supplement 7. 101p.

Additional reference: Prakash, U. 1968. Miocene fossil woods from the Columbia basalts of central Washington, Ill. Palaeontographica Bd. 122, 183-200



Photos courtesy Dr. E.A. Wheeler

Diagnostic features: Distinct growth rings and diffuse porous vessel arrangement. Vessels solitary and in radial multiples of 2-4; solitary vessels oval in outline. Perforation plates scalariform with 8-25 bars, avg. 13. Rays 1-4(5) seriate, fusiform to elongate in shape, homocellular. Axial parenchyma diffuse to diffuse in aggregate, 6-8 cells per strand.

Discussion: This wood is most often confused with the various maple species. Using a hand lens, one can see that the vessels of this birch are larger in diameter than the maples – in this type, the larger vessels are clearly wider than the widest rays, whereas the Vantage maples have vessels that are approximately the same size as the largest rays. Thin sections are required to be absolutely sure of identification. Birch wood is rare in the Columbia River Basalt wood deposits. Beck (1945) lists it as only being present in the Vantage assemblage, although the author also has seen samples that were collected from Yakima Canyon.

The birch genus has a long fossil history in the Pacific Northwest, and is still native today. It was a common element in the ~50 million year old Middle Eocene floras of British Columbia and northeastern Washington, and remained as part of the northwest forests up to the present day.



Betula leaf from the Miocene Clarkia locality of Idaho