



European Alder, Black Alder. *Alnus glutinosa* Birch Family (*Betulaceae*)

Distribution: Europe, West Asia, North Africa.

Introduction: in Colonial times.

Height: 30-50 feet, occasionally taller.

Spread: 20-30 feet.

Shape: oval-pyramidal to irregular, often with picturesque horizontal branches; eventually flat-topped.

Texture: medium.

Trunks: often multiple; to 1½ feet in diameter individually.

Bark: dark gray to blackish, irregularly plated.

Twigs: slender, olive colored, marked with prominent lenticels.

Buds: alternately arranged, bluntly oval, scaly, reddish, borne on stalks.

Foliage: broadly-obovate, sometimes almost round; dark green; clings late without any color change.

Shade Density: light to medium.

Flowers: the slender, pendulous chocolate-brown male catkins usually borne 3-5 to a cluster are the most decorative; they open in March, expanding to a length of 2 to 4 inches; the smaller red female catkins are about ½ inch long and appear in groups of 3-7. After fertilization they develop into cone-like strobiles which persist for a year or longer.

Root System: fibrous, shallow, eventually becoming deep.

Exposure: sun.

Moisture Requirements: prefers a moist planting site, but is tolerant.

Soil: tolerant, except of sandy areas.

Wind Resistance: good.

Planting Time: spring (April), fall (October, November).

Maintenance: little.

Growth Rate: moderate to fast.

Hardiness: to and including Zone 4B (USDA plant hardiness map).

Availability: from nurseries specializing in unusual plants.

Area of Adaptability: suburban, rural.

Habitat: waterside association.

Uses: picturesque tree for specimen or group planting; naturally forms thickets; its decorative catkins provide one of the earliest spring effects (late March).

Location in Arboretum: along the DuPage River in Geographical Groups and elsewhere.

Other Alnus Representation in the Arboretum: The plant featured in each issue of the Quarterly is chosen on the basis of its excellence as an ornamental and its adaptability to the Chicago region. European alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), the current selection, is not only the outstanding arborescent species growing here, but also the most picturesque. Approximately twenty other species and varieties are included in the present Arboretum Alnus Collection. All are plants predominantly shrubby in character, moisture loving, and inhabitants of cool climates.