



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.