

Bigtooth Aspen

Populus grandidentata

Common name:

Bigtooth Aspen, Canadian Aspen, White Poplar

Pronunciation:

pop-U-lus gran-di-den-TA-ta

Family:

Salicaceae

Genus:

Populus

The Bigtooth Aspen is a common companion of the Quaking Aspen, and the leaves "tremble" on both trees in the slightest breeze.

The Bigtooth Aspen grows frequently from roots in disturbed ground so a stand of Bigtooth Aspen is likely to be clonal. However, this tree also reproduces from seeds, and a mature tree may produce over 1 million seeds per year.

Quick ID Tips

- Leaves slightly triangular to nearly round with large blunt teeth on upper 2/3 of leaf and underside is pale green
- Leaves emerge late in spring and are silky whitish
- Light colored bark even in older trees above the trunk midpoint

Details

- Broadleaf deciduous tree that grows rapidly to 50-70 ft tall and 20-40 ft wide. Pyramidal when young, becoming oval, open and irregular with age.
- Very shade intolerant. So, while the Bigtooth Aspen may be the first to sprout in a disturbed area (burned over or clear cut), it will not survive when the other hardwoods eventually grow and plunge it into shade. Prefers drier upland sites.
- Bark in younger trees is thin, light, and gray-tinged olive green; on older trees, the bark becomes fissured and dark gray-brown at the base of the tree.
- Leaves alternate, simple, broad-ovate to elliptic, 4" long, tip sharp pointed, base truncated to broad wedge-shaped, lower margin entire, upper part has coarse, dentate teeth, upper surface dark green, lower surface gray pubescent; petiole 1-2.5" long.

- Male flowers (brown and red) and female flowers (green) occur in hanging, 2-3" long downy catkins; the flowers appear before the leaves in early spring.
- Fruits are a string of green, downy capsules which release cottony seeds.
- Prefers sun to part shade and grows fast in moist, well-drained soil.
- Hardy in USDA Zone 1-6. Native across northern U.S. from Nova Scotia to Ontario and Minnesota, south to Virginia, Tennessee, Illinois, and Iowa.



tree bark



younger tree bark



leaf upper surface and margin



leaf, underside



catkins and cottony seeds

Sources:

- Oregon State University Landscape Plants,
<https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/plants/ulmus-americanana>
- David Sibley, *The Sibley Guide to Trees* (Knopf 2009)