

# COPPER BEECH

*Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea*

Copper Beech, also known as Purple Beech, is a cultivar of Common Beech or European Beech. It is similar to the American Beech in shape and form; however, the leaves develop into a rich russet brown to a purplish color. The 'copper' is a cultivar that gives the leaf the purplish brown color. It prefers moist well drained soil in full sunlight. It grows 50-75 feet high (but can reach over 100', depending upon location). It has a 40-60 foot crown spread and a trunk diameter of 10 feet. The shape is a dense oval to pyramidal shape. It has a life span of 150-200 years, and does not reach full maturity until 30 years. The bark is persistently smooth; the trunk is clean and buttressed, the roots often are exposed by erosion. The leaves unfold red or brownish-pink, but become a heavy shade of purple-green. The leaves are alternate, simple, and entire or with a slightly crenate margin, 2-4" long and 1-1/2 to 3-1/2" broad, with 6-7 veins on each side of the leaf. The buds are long and slender, 1/2 to 1-1/4 inches long, and .079 - .118 inches thick. The leaves often remain on the tree through the winter. In April or May, the Copper Beech's tassel-like male catkins hang from long stalks at the end of twigs, while the female flowers grow in pairs, surrounded by a cup or cupule. Once wind pollinated, the cup becomes woody, and encloses one or two reddish brown beech nuts, known as beechmast. The nuts are small and triangular, .59-.79 inches long, and .28-.39 inches wide at the base. There are two nuts in each cupule which matures in the autumn, 5-6 months after pollination. The American Beech is the same in height as the European Beech; however, its leaves are larger, with more veins, a pointed tip, and many teeth. The American Beech trunk bark is lighter in color. Its fruit husk has hooked prickles.



The Charles Baber Cemetery has one mature Copper Beech. It is located on Mt. Laurel Avenue, to the east of the chapel. Its trunk is not in good health. There also was a Copper Beech at the Donaldson plot catty-cornered to the chapel, but its trunk was deteriorating: and it had to be cut down in 2012. To preserve this beautiful tree species, two other Copper Beeches were planted as part of the Arbor Day tree planting program. One was planted in 2014, near the Pott plot across from the one that was cut down. The second one was planted in 2015 on the east side of Sec. EE, down from the mature one on east Mt Laurel Avenue. Copper Beech are not easy to find and when a nursery carries them, they are expensive to purchase.

