

River Birch

(*Betula nigra* — includes cultivars like 'Heritage,' 'Dura-Heat,' and clump forms)

River Birch is one of the **best birches for Colorado**, thanks to its heat tolerance, drought resilience once established, and resistance to bronze birch borer. It thrives near water but adapts well to irrigated landscapes. Common issues include **leaf spot, iron chlorosis, aphids, mites**, and **environmental stress** in alkaline or compacted soils.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: Spring | Summer | Fall | Winter

Problem	Type	Active Season	Icons
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Fall	
Spider mites	Mite	Summer (hot/dry)	

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Leaf spot (Septoria & others)	Fungus	Spring–Summer	 
Iron chlorosis	Abiotic	Spring–Summer	 
Environmental stress (heat, drought, alkaline soils)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 
Canker diseases	Fungus	Spring–Fall	  
Bronze birch borer (rare on River Birch)	Insect/borer	Summer	

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew & sooty mold • Leaf curling • Ants climbing tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-rinse leaves • Encourage predators (lady beetles) • Systemic treatment if severe
Spider Mites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stippled or bronzed leaves • Fine webbing • More common in hot, dry summers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-spray canopy weekly in dry heat • Deep watering • Professional miticide if needed
Leaf Spot (Septoria, others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown/black leaf spots • Early leaf drop mid-summer • More common in wet springs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rake & remove fallen leaves • Improve airflow • Fungicide rarely required

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Iron Chlorosis (Common in CO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellow leaves with green veins Stunted growth Upper canopy thins first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil or trunk-applied iron treatments Reduce alkaline irrigation sources Improve drainage & soil aeration
Environmental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scorch on leaf edges Early fall color Drooping or curling leaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep water every 2–3 weeks in summer Maintain 2–4" mulch ring Avoid planting in extremely alkaline soils
Canker Diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunken areas on bark Oozing sap Branch dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune out infected limbs Sanitize tools Reduce stress—no chemical cure
Bronze Birch Borer (LOW risk for River Birch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D-shaped exit holes Thinning from top downward Dieback in stressed birches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain vigor—River Birch is naturally resistant Deep watering during drought Pro preventive spray only if confirmed nearby

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Severe chlorosis causing branch dieback
- Multiple cankers appearing on trunk or major limbs
- Major mite infestations bronzing entire canopy
- Repeated mid-summer defoliation affecting tree vigor
- Top-down dieback (rare but could signal borer or root issues)

These situations may require **professional diagnosis**.

● **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- Light leaf spotting in spring/summer
- Minor aphid or mite activity
- Early fall color during heat or drought
- Occasional small dead twigs
- Slight leaf curl from temporary water stress

River Birch generally rebounds well with **consistent watering and mulching**.