

# TREMBLING ASPEN

**SCIENTIFIC NAME: *POPULUS TREMULOIDES***



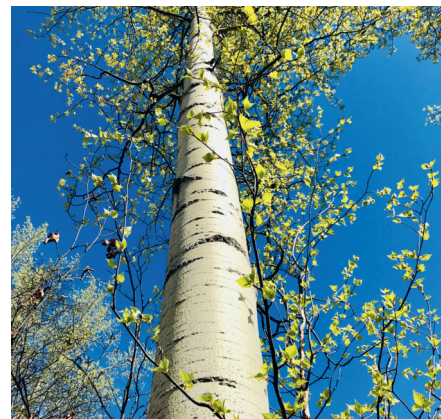
## SPECIES OVERVIEW

Trembling aspen, (also known as white poplar, aspen poplar, or quaking aspen), is the most widely distributed tree in North America. This species of tree is prevalent across the Boreal, Parkland, Grassland, and Foothill Natural Subregions. Trembling aspen provides important ecosystem contributions during both natural and man-made scenarios, such as promoting biodiversity, and sequestering carbon. As a fast-growing, early succession tree species, trembling aspen is able to provide shelter and protection to later-slow-growing successional species (such as spruce or pine trees) within the immediate area. This allows a safe space for late successional species to establish and allows the slower maturing tree species to thrive during the early stages of establishment and development.

The leaves of trembling aspen provide a high-quality forage supplement for a multitude of wildlife species such as deer, moose, black bears, and ruffed grouse as well as for domesticated livestock. During harsh Alberta winters, the thin photosynthetic layer lying beneath the bark of trembling aspen provides a nutritious forage material for ungulate species. Beavers utilize the branches and trunks of trembling aspen to create the foundation and to fortify their dams, which increases their security and has the unintentional benefit of providing diverse environmental benefits to its immediate surroundings. In Alberta, trembling aspen has been used to develop (albeit not limited to) consumer products such as matches, toothpicks, and chopsticks.

## CULTURAL VALUE

Trembling aspen holds profound traditional significance in diverse cultures throughout Alberta and is generally referred to as white poplar. Within the community of Paul First Nation, among the *îyârhe Nakoda* (Stoney Nakoda) and *Nêhiyaw* (Cree) peoples, the white poplar is revered in traditional ceremonies, including the sacred Sundance Ceremony.



The Sundance Ceremony represents renewal and greatly reveres the importance of white poplar within this nuanced and deep-rooted culture.

The Sundance Ceremony involves praying for the protection and well-being of the various tribes within the First Nations, where they use dance to honor white poplar and its important role alongside other life-giving aspects of nature.

This native tree species holds extensive cultural and spiritual significance to the Paul First Nations community. While sharing knowledge with a member of this community, a spiritually healing component was mentioned where members of their First Nations group often gain solace from white poplar while undergoing internal turmoil. A spiritual connection forged through prayer to the mighty white poplar, seeking inner strength within their community, is a tradition passed from parent to child for generations.

There have been other uses of white poplar throughout history in the First Nation communities of Turtle Island (which is the name many Indigenous peoples use to refer to the continent of North America). Rotten wood was occasionally used to line babies' cradles due to its soft and malleable nature. Foodstuffs were often produced from the smooth inner bark, which was sometimes roasted over the fire but could also be eaten raw. Bark tea was commonly made to aid with treatment of fevers, skin problems and diarrhea. Other medicinal purposes include the white poplar's coagulating nature, wherein the roots and bark could be chewed and vigorously applied to bleeding injuries to impede the flow. White poplar stands not only as a vital ecological cornerstone but also as a revered symbol deeply intertwined with the rich cultural heritage of Alberta's First Nations, thereby embodying resilience, sustenance, and spiritual connection across generations.



## REFERENCES

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