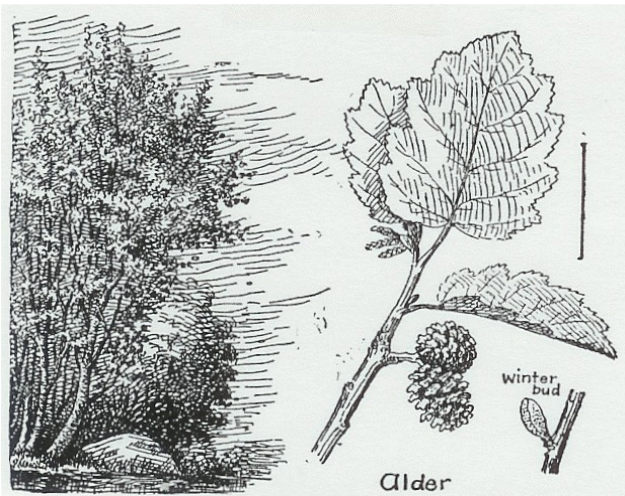


Thinleaf or Mountain Alder



Thinleaf or mountain alder is a common large shrub, or occasionally a tree, widespread on the banks of streams and on hillsides in the foothills and in the montane forests to 10,000 feet (3000 m) elevation, and along streams in the southwestern mesa country.

Alder has distinctive woody "cones" that resemble miniature pine cones, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (12 mm) long. Typically alder has many stems starting together at ground level. Alder may reach 40 feet (12 m) high, though usually it is about 10 to 15 feet (3 to 5 m) high; the trunk diameter grows to 7 inches (18 cm).

Identifying the Mountain Alder

Leaves: 1 to 4 inches (2.5 to 10 cm) long; doubly toothed; to 2.5 inches (6 cm) wide and wrinkled. Leaves alternate but so close together as to appear opposite, and often in clumps of 2 or 3 at end of twigs. Six to nine parallel veins are noticeable. *Leaf size is usually about twice water birch leaf size, often near 2 inches long.*

Stems and twigs soft reddish brown; pith with a triangular cross-section. Thicker than birch twigs. Buds reddish on a short stalk, with two scales.

Fruit $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (18 mm) long; rounded woody "cones"; green most of new year's growth, and dark brown when mature and the next year. These little "cones," which of course are not the same as pine cones, are a sure sign of alder. Some stay on all year. Flowers from April to August. Male catkins and female cones (with seeds) grow on separate plants, so some alders have no cones.

Bark: smooth and thin; usually pale gray, and paler than water birch bark. Whitish or gray horizontal ridges or marks on branches (lenticels or breathing pores) are often common or obvious. The lenticels may form warty bumps on the bark. The bark may have a silvery, greenish, or grayish cast over brown, or can be pale brown or even dark brown, but not so dark as water birch bark.





Alder

Deer, elk and moose make moderate use of the twigs and leaves for food, as do muskrats, beavers, and cottontail rabbits. Beavers eat the bark and use limbs for dam-building. Seeds and buds are a winter food source for many birds. The wood was once preferred by outdoorsmen for firewood. The largest recorded thinleaf alder grows in Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico; it was 59 feet high with a trunk about a foot in diameter. The scientific name is *Alnus incana ssp. tenuifolia*.

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