

Aspen

(Quaking Aspen)



Willow Family

Populus tremuloides

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RELATIVES

Willows, Cottonwoods

EASY IDENTIFICATION

Light colored bark; branches toward the treetop; "eyes" on the bark; heart-shaped leaves



Leaves Leaves are nearly heart-shaped with bright veins.

CLONES Aspen trees produce seeds, but they usually reproduce from their roots. As roots extend out from the parent tree, *root suckers* shoot up above ground and new trees grow. Sometimes thousands of trees growing side-by-side in one grove are all formed from the same root, all respond to fall color changes at the same time, all begin growing leaves at the same time in spring and all are genetically the same. Plants that are identical are called *clones*.

SUN LOVER Aspen trees allow sunshine to reach the ground so that young saplings can grow. The leaves of adult plants dangle in the breeze allowing sunlight to pass through and the lower branches fall off so that they don't shade the forest floor.

SUCCESSION Aspen trees are the first trees to grow into avalanche clearings. They love sunshine, grow very fast, and produce new trees quickly from *root suckers* allowing them to colonize easily in newly formed meadows. As they grow taller, they shade the ground slightly, encouraging other plants to grow. Evergreen seeds may land in a shady spot beneath a bush and begin to germinate. As the evergreen grows, it shades the ground which encourages more evergreens to grow. As the evergreens spread, they shade out the sun-loving plants and, within a hundred years or so, the sunny, old grove is a dark, shady forest again.

AGING

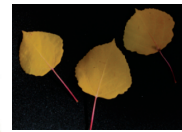
Aspen tree trunks range in color from bright white to tan and are very smooth, but grow rougher with age. Aspen trees are fast growing and short-lived, rarely surviving more than 100 years.

EYES

The "eyes" on aspen trunks are scars from old branches which have fallen off. As a tree grows taller, the lower branches fall off the tree allowing more sunlight to reach the forest floor.

WILDLIFE

Black bear, deer, beaver, porcupine, elk, moose, small mammals such as mice, voles, shrews, chipmunks, and rabbits and many birds live and feed in fertile aspen forests.



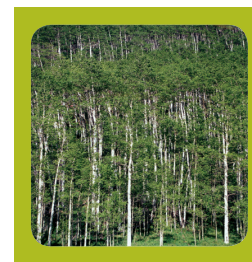
FALL COLORS

LEAVES

Aspen leaves dangle in the wind allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor.

SEEDS

Catkins form in spring.



Summer Aspen grove



Fall Aspen grove



Winter Aspen grove