

Kwantlen Polytechnic University – Surrey Campus Building Name Descriptions

Arbutus (was building A)

What we call the arbutus tree is named the madrone in the United States and the strawberry tree in Europe. The Latin name is *Arbutus menziesii*, once again a reference to Archibald Menzies and the voyage of George Vancouver. The arbutus is Canada's only broad-leafed evergreen tree, and historically has been used by the Coast Salish peoples in medicine and mythology. The arbutus is an elegant and powerful tree, with its layered bark shimmering like copper and its vibrant leaves reaching out from craggy cliffs along the coast. The arbutus is a tree of storms, and of courage, and of the implacable spirit of endurance

Birch (was Building B)

The name *birch* is an ancient European word meaning "bright white and shining." Indeed, the birch tree shines with its parchment bark and delicate foliage. The bark is suffused with plant oils and is almost imperishable. This is the reason birch has been used historically by many cultures in the making of canoes and many other cultural tools. In myth and legend, the birch is symbolic of nature itself, of the turning of the seasons, of the slow slumbers of winter and the cracking ice of spring. Birch also has many medicinal uses, and like the spruce is a favored wood for musical instruments. In India, birch wood was once used to make paper. The Sanskrit term for birch is *bhoorj patra*: *bhoorj* is the name of the tree, and *patra* means paper. Birch is a versatile, symbolic tree. It stands, white and shining, as a witness to millennia of human inquiry and exploration.

Fir (was Building D)

The Latin name for the Douglas Fir tree -- the most commercially important tree in Western North America -- is *pseudotsuga menziesii*. The first term -- *pseudotsuga* -- refers to the fact that the Douglas Fir is not a true fir. The second of the two terms -- *menziesii* -- refers to Archibald Menzies, the naturalist who sailed with George Vancouver in 1790. Menzies first studied what we now call the Douglas Fir (named for another, later naturalist) after coming ashore on what is probably Bowen Island, in Georgia Strait a few kilometers west of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. We tend to think of the giant Sequoias of California as the largest trees of all. But a Douglas Fir measuring 420 feet was once felled just across the Fraser River from Kwantlen's Langley campus. The colossal firs are gone now -- felled and sawn into planks long ago -- but they once covered this landscape, towering the highest of all landborne creatures. The Douglas Fir is a mighty, persistent, and magnificent tree.

Spruce (was Building E)

Spruce is a versatile wood with many uses and associations. It is used widely in the manufacture of paper, as Christmas trees, and in musical instruments such as mandolins, guitars, and cellos. These musical uses derive from the wood's distinctive resonant qualities. The sound boards of pianos are usually made of spruce, as were the violins of Stradivarius. But the spruce is also a sacred tree -- to the Haida, in particular, who revere the Golden Spruce. And spruce has played a role in various historical moments: the Wright Brothers' first airplane was made of spruce. With such a variety of uses and roles, the spruce has long earned a place of honour in human culture.

Yew (was Building F)

The hardest of all conifers, its foliage beautiful and poisonous, the yew is a tree symbolic of both the heavens and the underworld. The Egyptians, ancient Greeks, and early Christians revered the yew as the tree of everlasting life. The practice of planting yew trees in the country churchyards of Europe is a remnant of these ancestral beliefs. The dense and peculiar grain of the yew has made it a favorite among woodworkers for the production of small boxes, spoons, and mechanical parts. The famous English longbows, which changed the course of European history, were made of yew. The yew is a tree of unique and powerful properties. It is classified as a softwood -- because it is cone-bearing -- but it is one of the hardest woods of all. The yew is a tree of contrasts, opposites, and mysteries.

Cedar (was Building G)

The cedar is sometimes called the Long Life Giver for its many powers, properties, and uses across many cultures. The First Nations peoples of the Pacific Northwest have been using cedar for millennia, in a multitude of ways. The cedars of the Himalaya are called the God Trees, and the cedars of the Middle East are famous in myth and legend. The hulls of ancient ships, buried almost five thousand years ago beside the pyramids of Giza and intended as vessels to guide spiritual journeys, are made of cedar. Throughout the world, the cedar is a tree of prophecy and spirituality. It is a wood of beauty and longevity and protection. From the intricate single-plank boxes of First Nations craftspeople to dowry chests built during the Renaissance, cedar has been a companion wood to human endeavor. Fragrant, resonant with color and diversity, the cedar is a tree of enduring majesty.