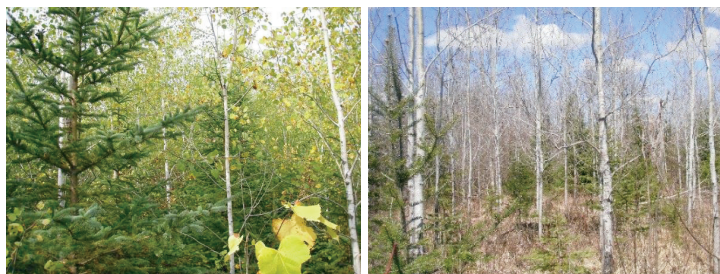


# Decorative Birch Poles and Fine Woody Materials Permit and License



Before tree stem thinning.

After a careful harvest tree stem thinning.

Fine woody materials—tree stems, poles, tops, branches, twigs, vines, and sticks—are used to make decorative accent pieces, furniture, and more. Fine woody material is all living or dead wood material less than 4 inches in diameter inside the bark at the large end.

Crafters and harvesters seek out certain size, form, color, texture, strength, or aroma when selecting a species for a decorative project. Commonly used trees and shrubs include: birch, aspen, balsam fir, black spruce, ironwood, cedar, tamarack, red-osier dogwood, alder, willow, sumac, hazel, mountain maple, dogwood, and grapevine.

Careful removal of fine woody materials allows trees to continue growing and supports healthy future forests. Harvester permits and buyer's licenses are important tools to ensure sound management of our forest resources and a commitment to sustainability.

## Do I Need a Permit or License?

Harvesting and buying all types of decorative forest material is governed by *Minnesota Statutes*, sections **88.641 - 88.648**. A “HARVESTER” IS ANY PERSON COLLECTING DECORATIVE MATERIALS FROM A FOREST. A “BUYER” IS ANY PERSON PURCHASING DECORATIVE FOREST MATERIAL.

### Harvester Permit

Permission is needed to harvest on public or private lands.

**Public Land:** A harvester needs a permit to harvest any amount of stems, braches, or fine woody materials on public land. The harvester can obtain the permit from the government land manager—state, county, or federal. Each government land manager

issues their own permit. Costs and requirements vary, be sure to contact the right local government office for details.

**Private Land:** A harvester must obtain written consent, permit, or bill of sale from the land owner to harvest more than 50 birch stems or branches greater than 1-inch large-end diameter or more than 100 pounds of any other decorative material on any private land. The documentation must contain the legal description or property tax identification number of the land, as well as the landowner's name, address, and signature.

### Buyer's License

A buyer's license is required to purchase more than 50 birch stems or branches greater than 1-inch large-end diameter or more than 100 pounds of any other decorative material harvested from any land in Minnesota—public or private. Only one buyer's license is needed, regardless if the boughs come from public or private land. Purchase licenses at any Electronic License System (ELS) vendor—the same locations where hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

Buyers must keep a decorative material buyer's log to record and track:

- Harvester's name and address
- Type of consent: permit, written consent, or bill of sale
- Harvest permit number for fine woody material from public land
- Legal description and property tax ID number for fine woody material from private land

Records must be maintained until June 30 of the following calendar year. Buyers may NOT purchase decorative materials from a harvester who is unable to furnish all required information. For a buyer's log template, visit [mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts](http://mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts)

### Transporting

A harvester transporting or possessing more than 50 birch stems or branches greater than one-inch large-end diameter or more than 100 pounds of any

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other decorative material must carry a harvester permit or written landowner consent for the material. A buyer and anyone transporting material for a buyer must have a buyer's license and buyer's log for all the material in the load.

## Penalties

A person who fails to comply with the law is subject to a misdemeanor, seizure, and confiscation of decorative fine woody material and other penalties provided by law. The DNR Commissioner may deny, modify, suspend, or revoke a buyer's license for reasonable cause, including falsifying required records or for violating *Minnesota Statutes*, sections 88.641 - 88.648.

## Sustainable Harvest Practices

Harvesting branches, stems, and fine woody materials can promote healthy forests by removing competition and promoting desired trees. For example, if an aspen forest is desired, harvesting birch stems and retaining aspen stems promotes the landowner's objectives for their forest. However, careful harvesting is required to minimize damage to the woods and keep remaining trees healthy and strong.

## Careful harvest techniques to keep Minnesota's forests growing strong

- Respect the harvest site and access to the area. Your activity should not damage other plants, including growth from the same tree.
- Remove entire stems only if that is the forest land manager's site objective.
- Select areas where trees or shrubs are abundant and do not cut all of the material in one area to reduce the impact and promote regeneration.

- Harvest stump sprouts before single stems. Reduce stump sprout clumps to two straight stems. Do not harvest the entire clump.
- Cut trees as low to the ground as possible for safety, aesthetics, and proper regeneration. For shrubs, leave enough stem that some buds remain to regenerate.
- Use sharp hand or power tools—do not break the material by hand. Clean cuts reduce the impact to the tree or shrub and allow for quicker recovery.
- Harvest unhealthy or damaged stems first. Many damaged stems have desired decorative characteristics—and you are also improving the health of the woods.
- Follow these tips for birch, aspen, and other poles:
  - › Select trees 2 to 3 inches in diameter at breast height (4.5 feet above the ground) and at least 16 feet tall to minimize the number of trees harvested while maximizing the number of poles per tree.
  - › Ensure remaining trees, after harvest, are evenly distributed across the site and uniformly spaced, approximately 8 to 12 feet apart.

## More Info

Visit [mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts](https://mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts) for details on permits and licenses.

The *Minnesota Harvester Handbook* from the University of Minnesota is a great source for tips and techniques on when and how to harvest birch poles and fine woody materials.

