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## Oak

*Quercus* spp.

Family: Fagaceae

Worldwide, the oaks (*Quercus* spp.) consist of 275 to 500 species that can be separated into three groups based on their microanatomy: the live or evergreen oak group, the red oak group (*Erythrobalanus*), and the white oak group (*Leucobalanus*). Species within each group look alike microscopically. The word *quercus* is the classical Latin name of oaks, said to be derived from Celtic fine and tree.

The commercial North American species are as follows:

### Red Oak Group (*Erythrobalanus*)

*Quercus coccinea*-bastard oak, black oak, buck oak, red oak, **scarlet oak**, Spanish oak, spotted oak

*Quercus falcata*-American red oak, bottomland red oak, **cherrybark oak**, Elliott oak, red oak, Spanish oak, **southern red oak**, swamp red oak, swamp spanish oak, turkeyfoot oak, water oak

*Quercus kelloggii*-black oak, **California black oak**, Kellogg oak, mountain black oak

*Quercus laurifolia*-Darlington oak, diamond-leaf oak, **laurel oak**, laurel-leaf oak, swamp laurel oak, water oak, obtusa oak

*Quercus nigra*-American red oak, blackjack, pin oak, possum oak, punk oak, red oak, spotted oak, **water oak**

*Quercus nuttallii*-**nuttall oak**, pin oak, red oak, red river oak, striped oak

*Quercus palustris*-**pin oak**, red oak, Spanish oak, Spanish swamp oak, Spanish water oak, swamp oak, swamp Spanish oak, water oak

*Quercus phellos*-black oak, laurel oak, peach oak, pin oak, red oak, swamp willow oak, water oak, **willow oak**, willow swamp oak

*Quercus rubra*-American red oak, black oak, buck oak, Canadian red oak, common red oak, gray oak, eastern red oak, leopard oak, Maine red oak, mountain red oak, **northern red oak**, red oak, Spanish oak, spotted oak, southern red oak, swamp red oak, water oak, West Virginia soft red oak

*Quercus shumardii*-American red oak, Schneck oak, Schneck red oak, **shumard oak**, Shumard red oak, southern red oak, spotted bark, spotted oak, swamp red oak, Texas oak, Texas red oak

*Quercus velutina*-American red oak, blackjack, **black oak**, dyer oak, jack oak, quercitron, quercitron oak, redbush, red oak, smoothbark oak, spotted oak, tanbark oak, yellowbark, yellow oak, yellowbark oak

### White Oak Group (*Leucobalanus*)

*Quercus alba*-American white oak, Arizona oak, Arizona white oak, forked-leaf white oak, Louisiana white oak, mantua oak, ridge white oak, stave oak, true white oak, West Virginia soft white oak, **white oak**

*Quercus bicolor*-blue oak, cherry oak, curly swamp oak, swamp oak, **swamp white oak**, white oak

*Quercus garryana*-Brewer oak, Garry oak, Oregon oak, **Oregon white oak**, Pacific post oak, Pacific white oak, post oak, prairie oak, shin oak, western oak, western white oak, white oak

*Quercus lyrata*-American white oak, **overcup oak**, swamp post oak, swamp white oak, water white oak

*Quercus macrocarpa*-blue oak, **bur oak**, burr oak, mossycup oak, mossy-overcup oak, overcup oak, scrub oak, white oak, white mossycup oak, white overcup oak

*Quercus michauxii*-American white oak, basket oak, cow oak, swamp oak, **swamp chestnut oak**

*Quercus muehlenbergii*-chestnut oak, **chinkapin oak**, chinquapin oak, dwarf chestnut oak, dwarf chinkapin, pin oak, rock oak, rock chestnut oak, running white oak, scrub oak, shrub oak, white oak, yellow oak, yellow chestnut oak

*Quercus prinus*-American white oak, basket oak, **chestnut oak**, chestnut rock oak, chestnut swamp oak, cow oak, mountain oak, rock oak, rock chestnut, rock chestnut oak, swamp oak, tanbark oak, white oak, white chestnut oak

*Quercus stellata*-American post oak, barren white oak, bastard oak, bastard white oak, box oak, box white oak, brash oak, Delta post oak, Durand oak, iron oak, pin oak **post oak**, ridge oak, rough oak, rough white oak, southern oak, turkey oak, white box oak, white oak

### **Live Oak Group**

*Quercus virginiana*-dwarf live oak, encino, **live oak**, rolfs oak, scrub live oak, Virginia live oak, Virginia oak

#### Distribution

Widely distributed throughout the United States.

#### The Tree

Oaks can reach a height of 125 ft (38 m), with large diameters.

#### The Wood

##### General

The sapwood of oak is white to very light brown, while the heartwood is light to dark brown in the white oak group and reddish brown in the red oak group. Oak wood has a coarse texture; it is heavy, straight-grained, hard, tough, very stiff, and strong. Fast-grown oak, with wide rings, is stronger and heavier than slow-grown oak.

Working Properties: Oak wood has good working properties. It machines and glues well and holds fasteners extremely well. It tends to split when nailed, unless predrilled. Oak finishes well, but shrinks considerably.

Durability: The oaks are rated with respect to resistance to heartwood decay as follows (98):

Very resistant--bur oak, chestnut oak, Gambel oak, Oregon oak, post oak and white oak

Moderately resistant--swamp chestnut oak

Slightly to nonresistant--black oak and red oak

Preservation: The heartwood of the white oak group is resistant to impregnation with preservatives, whereas that of the red oak group is more easily penetrated.

Uses Ships, railroad crossties, timber bridges, tannin dyes, fuel wood, hardwood dimensions and flooring, furniture, veneer, plywood, barrels, kegs and casks (white oak group), truck and trailer beds, mining timbers, containers, pallets, caskets, boxes, paneling.

Toxicity: May cause allergic bronchial asthma, rhinitis, and dermatitis