



White Oak
Quercus alba

Secondary Names:

Leaf Type: Deciduous
Texas Native:
Firewise:



Tree Description:

A large forest or shade tree to 100 feet tall and a trunk to 3 feet or more in diameter, with a broad, rounded crown of dense foliage. Open grown specimens often develop a short trunk and far-reaching limbs.

Range/Site Description:

Found in East Texas, west to the Brazos River, growing best on fertile slopes but also on drier uplands or gravelly ridges.

Leaf:

Simple, alternate, 6" to 9" long and about half as wide, deeply divided into 7 to 11 rounded, fingerlike lobes without bristle tips. Young leaves are a soft silvery-gray or reddish while unfolding, later becoming blue-green, dull above and very pale below.

Flower:

Male and female flowers borne separately in spring on the same tree; male catkins 3" to 4" long, yellowish-green, female flowers reddish, about 0.5" long, usually solitary.

Fruit:

An acorn, requiring one season to mature, 0.75" to 1" long, light brown, about one-fourth enclosed in a warty bowl-shaped cup.

Bark:

Smooth and red-brown on young trees, quickly developing white to ash-gray scales that ultimately form broad, loose plates giving the trunk a "shaggy" appearance. Old trees develop dark, thin ridges and deep fissures.

Wood:

Heavy, strong, hard, tough, close-grained, durable, and light brown in color, its uses include construction, watertight barrels, furniture, wagons, tool handles, cabinets, flooring, and fuelwood.

Similar Species:

Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) has similar leaves, but only occurs only at high elevations in the mountains of West Texas. Bur oak (*Q. macrocarpa*) has larger leaves and acorns with a fringed cup.

Interesting Facts:

Oaks can be separated into two main groups: white oaks and red oaks. While oak wood is often used to make barrels of many kinds, only wood from the white oak group can be used for watertight barrels because the pores in its wood are blocked by structures called "tyloses" that don't allow liquids to leak out.