

The Oaks

All the Oaks in the world are divided into two groups, Red Oaks and White Oaks. Red Oaks generally grow faster and have shorter lives (80-130 years). White Oaks grow about ten percent slower than Red Oaks and usually live 400 - 600 years. Most of the Oaks planted in the Mid-South are Red Oaks because most humans want instant gratification.

Here is a chart of a dozen Oaks we grow by common name. This list is incomplete; there are 55 Oaks native to North America alone and 275 Oak species worldwide.

Oaks that grow on drier sites will die if moved into lower, wetter sites. Oaks that grow on wetter sites can be moved to drier sites and will continue to live. Therefore we are prejudiced in favor of hydric species of Oaks. Examples are Willow Oak, Nuttall Oak, and Overcup Oak. We usually prefer the White Oaks because they live four or five times longer than any of the Red Oaks, thus eliminating the need for multiple, pricey removals/plantings down the road.

We encourage our readers to come and study these trees during the course of the year.

Common Name	Scientific Name	White or Red	Comments
Burr Oak	Quercus macrocarpa	W	grows from Minnesota to Texas; tolerates drought
Cherrybark Oak	Quercus pagodifolia	R	suseptible to Oak Gall; holds brown leaves through winter
Northern Red Oak	Quercus borealis	R	very site specific - needs rich, moist, well-drained soil
Nuttall Oak	Quercus nuttalli	R	great source of food for wildlife; good fall color; excellent shade tree
Overcup Oak	Quercus lyrata	W	tolerates poorly drained sites and adversity well - should be used more

Pin Oak	Quercus paustris	R	most popular tree in America until 10 years ago; keeps brown leaves through winter
Southern Red Oak	Quercus falcata	R	prefers well-drained, higher slopes; keeps brown leaves through winter
Swamp White Oak	Quercus bicolor	W	very nice yellow fall color; should be used more
Shumard Oak	Quercus shumardi	R	reddish fall color; one of the largest Southern Red Oaks
Water Oak	Quercus nigra	R	shorter lived; very fast growing; not as wind firm as Willow Oak
Willow Oak	Quercus Phellos	R	very popular tree in the Mid-South, to the point of overuse
White Oak	Quercus alba	W	red fall color; highly desirable from containers; transplants poorly