

# Swamp chestnut oak

## *Quercus michauxii* Nutt.



The swamp chestnut oak, *Quercus michauxii*, is native to eastern North America, generally growing south of the Ohio River. This oak is in the white oak subgenus, *Quercus* (or *Leucoobalanus*). This species grows to be a very large tree and may live to several hundred years of age. The Kentucky state champion, shown above, has a trunk almost seven feet in diameter, with a height of around 100 feet and a spread of over 100 feet. This oak is excellent for planting near buildings because of the strength of its wood. A properly-maintained swamp chestnut oak will never drop branches except under the most extreme of storm conditions (extreme hurricanes or tornadoes).

The swamp chestnut oak is also called basket oak, because the wood makes good baskets, and cow oak, because cows eat the large acorns. The acorns are second only to the bur oak, *Quercus macrocarpa*, in size among eastern North American oaks. The leaves are entire but coarsely toothed, very similar in appearance to those of the chestnut oak, *Quercus prinus* (*Q. montana*), or chinkapin oak, *Quercus muehlenbergii*. The bark is light gray and scaly, similar to that of the white oak, *Quercus alba*. This tree may be sometimes mistaken for the swamp white oak, *Quercus bicolor*, but may be told apart by the leaves, because the swamp white has fewer teeth, and the veins in the teeth do not penetrate fully to the tips of the teeth.

### Cultivation

Plant these acorns as soon as you receive them! Normal winter stratification of the acorns is all that is necessary. This can easily be accomplished by planting the seed in fall or early winter, preferably under two or more inches of humus. Alternatively, this can be accomplished by embedding the acorns in a planting mix and storing in the freezer for ten days, then the refrigerator for another sixty days. This species roots immediately on contacting moist earth in the fall, but the tops do not emerge until the spring.

### Note

Many acorns are subject to one or another species of acorn weevil, mostly in genus *Curculio*. These have legless grubs that resemble maggots. They grow in the acorn from early formation, and then bore a hole to exit after the acorn has dropped from the tree. We try to screen for these and pull infested acorns, but we cannot catch them all. If you find one of these grubs, they are harmless. Simply dispose of it. The acorn is probably still viable.

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