

Red Oak

Quercus rubra Linnaeus



Red oak, *Quercus rubra*, is one of the predominant eastern North America forest oaks. It is a member of the red oak subgenus, *Lobatae* (also known as *Erythrobalanus*). This oak has the highest quality wood for furniture and flooring of the oaks, although black oak, scarlet oak, pin oak, Shumard oak and other members of the group may be marketed as red oak in the lumber trade. This species usually lives 200 to 250 years under normal conditions. It grows to be a very large tree, and can reach a trunk diameter of seven feet in very old specimens. It is an oak of rich hillside forest, and often will perch atop a rock on a streambank.

The bark has smooth, almost shiny stripes on top of the ridges, all the way to the base of the tree. The leaves are shallowly lobed, with the lobe sinuses generally cut no more than half the way to the stem. The leaves have more lobes than the other oaks in the red oak group.

This oak is sometimes called northern red oak. However, the species called southern red oak (or Spanish oak) is more closely related to the black oak than the red oak, while the red oak is more closely related to the Shumard and scarlet oaks than it is the Spanish oak. The species name *Quercus borealis* is also sometimes used for this species.

Cultivation

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 seed can be stored in refrigeration for a year, but this is not recommended, and viability will be much lower.

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 destroy it and dispose of it. The acorn is probably still viable.

Conservation Seed
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