

Scarlet Oak

Quercus coccinea Muench.



The scarlet oak is native to eastern North America. It is a member of the red oak subgenus, *Lobatae* (formerly *Erythrobalanus*). This species has the most reliable red fall color of any oak. It is a tree of upper ridge sides and ridgetops, and is drought-tolerant once established.

The leaves are some of the most deeply cut of native oaks, with broad, C-shaped sinuses, and spreading, spine-tipped teeth on the lobes. The classic illustrations are of smallish, highly-symmetric leaves, but large, asymmetric leaves with alternating lobes are common. This is the ONLY native oak that reliably develops a deep red fall color every year. The bark has shiny stripes on the upper trunk, like red oak, *Quercus rubra*, but is dull and scaly on the lower trunk, like black oak, *Q. velutina*. This species generally retains many small upper branches. The acorns are generally oval, and scurfy on the upper half. The acorn caps glisten in reflected light.

This species makes a beautiful lawn tree, but also functions well as a street tree.

Cultivation

Normal winter stratification of the acorns is all that is necessary. This can easily be done 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.

Notes

Processing acorns properly involves cap removal. Most caps fall off acorns, in any case. If you want caps with acorns, this must be done by a special order. 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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