

Chinkapin Oak

Quercus muehlenbergii Engelmann

The chinkapin oak (also spelled chinquapin oak) is native to eastern North America. It is a calciphile, in nature showing a strong preference for soils over limestone. It is the predominant ridgetop tree in many limestone areas,



although it flourishes best in bottomlands. The leaves are of the primitive form that is similar to chestnut oak, *Quercus prinus*, and swamp chestnut oak, *Quercus michauxii*, with coarse, blunt teeth and no lobes. The acorns are very small, oblong, and dark in color. The wood is of good quality, marketed with white oak.

This species is also called yellow oak, because the bark, while very similar to that of white oak, *Quercus alba*, often has a more yellowish or brownish cast. This species is in the white oak subgenus, *Quercus* (formerly *Leucobalanus*).

This is a versatile and attractive tree in cultivation. It is fully as good a landscaping tree as the majority of oaks, but for some curious reason is seldom cultivated. This tree in nature is generally a medium-sized tree, but can become massive when grown under optimal conditions. Michael Dirr, authority on landscape trees, writes that this species is “. . . quite an attractive tree, especially in old age . . . mammoth specimens . . . are actually inspiring.” In cultivation, it will grow in most soils that are not strongly acid.

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 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 a grub, it is harmless. Simply destroy it and dispose of it. The acorn is probably still viable.

Conservation Seed

PO Box 1196, Athens, OH 45701

cs@hokhokken.com