

School-to-Nature



Red Oak Tree

The Red Oak's scientific name is *Quercus Rubra*. These very large, beautiful trees are abundant across America, and are found on Conservancy properties as well. Red Oaks grow 2-3 feet per year and can reach 60-75 feet tall, the same in width. The bark of a Red Oak has vertical furrows and appears much rougher and scallier than the bark of a White Oak. The wood under the bark (sapwood) is light in color; but the wood deep inside (heartwood) has a reddish pink tone, giving this tree its name. The lobed leaves are sharply pointed, 5-8" long and 4-6" wide.

When the tree reaches maturity at about 20 years old, it can grow acorns. In spring, long flower tassels form that are the male parts, with small nodes at the branch that are female parts, where the acorns will grow. (See the photo at the right.) Ripe acorns are reddish-brown with tan caps, $\frac{3}{4}$ -1" long. They are a healthy food for animals but somewhat bitter in taste; and so, animals leave them alone until late in winter when food is scarce. Blue Jays love these acorns and bury more than they eat; and so, the birds seed more trees.



The wood of Red Oaks is somewhat porous, making it ideal for staining and painting. The wood is popular for cabinetry, and for making furniture that is durable as well as beautiful. The wood is also used for shiplap board used for boats and in houses, woodwork, veneers, flooring, fencing, and decks. Red Oak trees are planted along streets because they are resistant to damage from winter salt used in traffic. Red Oak is important to the timber industry because it grows relatively quickly. It is also a fast-burning and popular firewood.

There are other articles to read about types of oaks, and acorns, on the Conservancy website, on the School to Nature page.

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