

Laurel Oak: *Quercus laurifolia*

Family: Fagaceae

Laurel oak is a tree of pleasing symmetry. It is fast growing, tall, and full. Laurel oak is abundant in Florida's urban and rural areas and is a common ornamental in other parts of the south. It also becomes a common component in pine forests when fire is excluded from those systems.

Habitat & Range

Laurel oak grows scattered with other hardwoods in well-drained hammocks near the edges of streams and rivers. Associated species include sweetgum, bald cypress, pignut hickory, live oak, longleaf, and loblolly pines

Wildlife Use

Laurel oak produces large crops of acorns regularly. It is an important wildlife food resource for whitetail deer, raccoons, squirrels, turkeys, ducks, quail, birds, and rodents.

Human Use

Landscaping is the main economic value of laurel oak. It has also been used locally for fuel wood, as well as pulpwood for making paper. Some large trees are sawn into large timbers for industrial uses.

Size/Form: Laurel oak is a large tree that reaches heights of 65 to 100 feet and up to 3 to 4 feet in diameter. It has a full rounded crown and a tall, straight trunk.

Leaves: The leaves are simple, alternately arranged, and deciduous, but may persist on the tree until gradually falling in early spring. The leaves are 3 to 4 inches long about 1 inch wide. The leathery, elliptical-shaped leaves usually have smooth, shiny, bright green upper surfaces and are smooth and light green below. The leaf base is wedged and the tip is acute. The margin is entire. Leaf petioles are short, stout, yellow, and ¼ inch long.

Twigs: The twigs are slender, deep red, and glabrous. The pith is star-shaped and homogeneous.

Bark: The dark gray to brown bark is thick and usually fairly smooth on young trees. As trees get older, the bark develops furrows and flat, broad ridges.

Flowers: The laurel oak is a monoecious species. The yellow-green male flowers are long catkins, while the green to reddish female flowers are very small spikes located in leaf axils.

Fruit: The fruit is an acorn about ½ inch long generally occur solitarily yet sometimes in pairs. The reddish-brown cap covers ¼ of the light brown acorn. Acorns mature in two growing seasons.