

Water Oak *Quercus nigra*

Secondary Names: Pin Oak

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native:

Tree Description: A large tree to 90 feet or more and a trunk to 3 feet in diameter, with a dense, round crown of dark green foliage.

Range/Site Description: Occurs along the borders of swamps and streams and on rich bottomlands in East Texas, west and south to the Colorado River.

Leaf: Simple, alternate, 2" to 4" long and 1" to 2" wide, obovate or slightly three-lobed at the outer end, bristle-tipped, thin, dull bluish-green above and lighter green beneath, persisting on the twigs late into winter. Juvenile leaves are highly variable and have a mix of sharp teeth and rounded lobes.

Flower: Separate male and female flowers appear on the same tree in spring when the leaves begin to unfold; male flowers are borne on a yellowish catkin 2" to 3" long; the female flowers are less conspicuous and clustered on a short stalk.

Fruit: An acorn, requiring two years to mature, 0.5" to 0.75" long and wide, light brown or yellowish-brown and enclosed only at the base in the thin, saucer-shaped cup.

Bark: Smooth, light brown to dark gray, with many thin scales over the surface; developing broad, smooth plates on older trunks.

Wood: Heavy, hard, and strong, light brown in color, with lighter-colored sapwood; utilized chiefly for crossties, fuelwood, and pulp.

Similar Species: Willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) has narrow, linear leaves and rougher bark; laurel oak (*Q. laurifolia*) occurs only on very wet sites and has semi-evergreen, elliptical leaves.

Interesting Facts: Along with several other oaks, water oak is commonly referred to as "pin oak" because of its similarities to the true pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), except for leaf shape. This name is almost generic for any unknown oak species.