

***Quercus phellos* (Willow Oak)**
Beech Family (Fagaceae)

Introduction:

Willow oak is a member of the red oak group with willow-shaped leaves. The fine foliage of the willow oak is one of its best ornamental features. The willow oak has excellent texture, rounded form, attractive bark, and beautiful winter features (fine-texture, persistent leaves and twiggy form).

Culture:

The willow oak is an excellent choice as a shade tree. It thrives in moist, well-drained, acidic soil and full sun. The willow oak will tolerate pollution and drought and is considered a trouble-free tree as long as soil pH is acidic. Willow oak has a fibrous root system and is therefore easy to transplant. It has no serious disease or insect problems. As little as 1 inch of fill soil can kill an oak.

Additional comments:

Willow oak is an excellent large shade tree. Its fine texture contrasts with the coarseness of most other red oaks. It is one of the best oaks for avenue plantings or large residences. Willow oak is a fast-growing oak that transplants easily and is tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions.

Willow oak is a member of the red oak group without lobed leaves. Its acorn matures in two years. With age, the willow oak becomes a stately tree. It is a superior choice where space permits a large oak tree.

Willow oak's common name comes from the shape of the leaves and its specific epithet, *phellos*, is the ancient Greek name for the cork oak, *Quercus suber*.

Co-national champion willow oaks are in Memphis, Tenn., (123 feet tall, 100-foot spread) and Noxubee County, Miss. (73 feet tall, 132-foot spread).



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: Southeastern USA in alluvial soils, swamps.

Growth habit: Unique among the oaks, the willow oak has a rounded habit.

Tree size: Growing fast for an oak, it can reach 70' in height and equal width.

Flower and fruit: Female flowers are inconspicuous; however the pendulous male catkins look like a cloud of green smoke. The small, 1/2 inch acorn is topped by a shallow cup.

Leaf: The long, pendulous, narrow leaves of this willow-type oak are light green and glossy above and dull below. The leaf is tipped by a bristle. Fall color varies from yellow to red but is not showy.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA zone 5.