



APRIL 2019

TREE OF THE MONTH

White Oak • *Quercus alba*

ALSO KNOWN AS: AMERICAN WHITE OAK, STAVE OAK

White oak (*Quercus alba*) is a large, deciduous tree, reaching up to 100 feet tall, native to eastern and central North America. In fields and lawns, white oaks have short, stout trunks and broad, spreading crowns that become gnarled in old age. When crowded in forests, white oaks have tall, straight trunks with no lower branches. They are notable for their deep taproots, which provide stability in high winds.

Branches, twigs, and leaves grow in an alternate branching pattern. Leaves have rounded lobes and can vary in shape from tree to tree. Leaves are brighter green on top and paler green on bottom sides.

Bark is usually a light tannish grey to grey, often highly variable in pattern but usually with elongated rectangular ridges with shallow valleys.

Like all oaks, white oaks have a terminal bud flanked by two lateral buds at the end of each twig. In the northeast, they bloom in May and June. White oaks are monoecious, meaning that there are both male and female flowers on the same tree. Male flowers bloom on catkins (drooping spikes), while female flowers are reddish on short stalks.

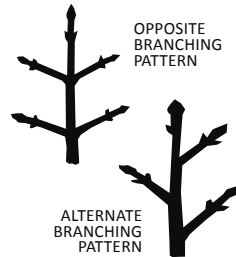
Like all oaks, white oak fruit matures into acorns in the autumn. White oak acorn caps have small, knobby scales over an oval fruit.

Acorns are consumed by many wildlife species including over 100 bird species.

White oak's species epithet, *alba*, comes from the Latin for white, referring to the tree's lighter colored bark.

Also called *stave oak*, white oak timber has been traditionally used to make barrels. The inner bark has been used to make a brown dye, *Thee bou*, which did not fade from textiles when exposed to sunlight.

Tree of the Month is a collaboration between BEAT, the City of Pittsfield, Pittsfield Tree Watch, and the MA Department of Conservation & Recreation's Greening the Gateway Cities Program. Find out more at thebeatnews.org.



White oaks are one of the slowest-growing and longest-lived oaks.

The tannin-rich bark has been used by many Native American tribes for centuries to treat a variety of maladies, from diarrhea to dysentery.

Like all oaks, white oaks are part of the beech family (Fagacaceae). Beech family trees are notable in winter because they can hold on to their dried, brown leaves even until spring in the northeast.



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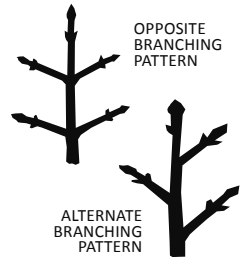
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Basora Sc.

P. J. Redouté del.

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