



TREE OF THE MONTH

Red Oak • *Quercus rubra*

ALSO KNOWN AS: NORTHERN RED OAK

Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) is a large, deciduous tree reaching up to 100 feet tall. Native to eastern and central North America, red oaks are one of the most common trees found in their range. In northeastern North America red oaks prefer cool, mesic, well-drained soils. They often associate with sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, red maple, white ash, eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, and northern white cedar.

Like all oaks, red oak branches, twigs, and leaves grow in an alternate pattern. The twigs are often reddish and stout with lighter lenticels (pores). Typical of most oaks, red oaks have oval, pointed buds with a terminal bud flanked by a smaller bud on either side.

Red oaks are monoecious, meaning that they have both male and female flowers on the same plant. They bloom May - June when the leaves are partially unfurled and grown. Male flowers bloom on drooping stalks (catkins) about 4 inches long while female flowers bloom on shorter, smooth stalks in a spreading shape and are bright yellow to green.

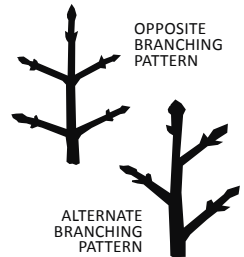
On young trees, bark is relatively thin, smooth, and gray to brown. On mature trees, bark is thicker, tending more towards brown, with long slashes and smooth ridges. In spring, the slashes often appear reddish.

Like all oaks, red oak fruit matures into acorns. The acorns mature in the autumn of the second growing season after bloom.

Red oak's species epithet, *rubra*, refers to the leaf's sometimes red veination and the reddish hue of the inner bark often seen in spring.

Red oak's wood is widely used for timber and fuel. The heavy, hard, strong, straight-grained wood is used for furniture, flooring, bridges, and veneer.

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.



Many Native American tribes use red oak bark to treat a variety of illnesses including: chronic dysentery, chapped and sore skin, colds, for mouth sores, and as a disinfectant.

Like all oaks, red 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.



P. J. Rolandé del.

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Red Oak.
Quercus rubra.