

*Quercus falcata*

[Synonyms : *Quercus aurea*, *Quercus cuneata* var. *falcata*, *Quercus digitata*, *Quercus elongata*, *Quercus falcata* var. *falcata*, *Quercus falcata* var. *leucophylla*, *Quercus falcata* var. *pagodifolia*, *Quercus falcata* var. *triloba*, *Quercus hudsoniana*, *Quercus nobilis*, *Quercus oblongifolia* var. *brevilobata*, *Quercus pagoda*, *Quercus pagodifolia*, *Quercus rubra*, *Quercus triloba*]

**SOUTHERN RED OAK** is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern United States it has densely grey-woolly beneath, glossy dark green leaves and spiny-tipped, brown acorns. It is also known as American red oak, *Amerikai tölgy* (Hungarian), Bottomland red oak, *Chêne à feuilles falciformes* (French), *Chêne rouge* (French), *Chêne rouge des marais* (French), *Chêne rouge espagnol* (French), Cherrybark oak, Elliott oak, *Encina roja* (Spanish), Falcate quercus, Finger oak, Hill red oak, Mountain red oak, *Punane tamm* (Estonian), *Quercia rossa* (Italian), *Rdeci hrast* (Slovenian), Red oak, *Ródeg* (Danish), *Rot -Eiche* (German), *Sallangoslevelû tölgy* (Hungarian), Scarlet oak, *Sichelblattridge-Eiche* (German), *Sichel-Eiche* (German), *Sikkel-eik* (Dutch), Spanish oak, *Spansk ródeg* (Danish), Spotted oak, Swamp red oak, Swamp Spanish oak, Three-lobe red oak, Turkeyfoot oak, Turkey oak, Turkey red oak, *Vöröstölgy* (Hungarian), and Water oak

Warning – the acorns are said to be poisonous for cattle and hogs.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

Southern red oak can be confused with cherrybark oak, *Quercus pagoda*. The leaves of the former are irregularly lobed and have long, curved thin tips while those of cherrybark oak are usually uniformly lobed and broadly tipped. In addition cherrybark oak prefers wet bottomland. It can also be confused with red oak, *Quercus rubra* but the acorns of red oak are larger.

This tree, in the United States, is believed to be threatened in Ohio and endangered in Pennsylvania.

*Falcata* is derived from Latin *falcis* (sickle, bill-hook, pruning-hook) meaning ‘sickle-or scythe-shaped’ with reference to leaf shape. The common name Spanish oak is said to have been given by early Spanish settlers who were reminded by this species of an oak tree in their homeland.

Records would suggest that this oak was used by few North American Indian tribes other than the Cherokee. The tribe used its durable, coarse-grained wood for making furniture, basketry and cooking tools – and they also burnt it as fuel.

The dark reddish-brown to greyish-black bark provided medicine for the Cherokee Indians for treating fever, asthma, dysentery, urinary ailments, indigestion, skin problems, oral sores and hoarseness – and they also used it to cause vomiting when deemed necessary.

The tannin-rich, thick, rough bark has also been used for tanning.

This rough, coarse-grained, strong, hard wood (like that of red oak, *Quercus rubra*, but of inferior quality) has been used for heavy construction, flooring, and building interiors, as well as for making wagon spokes, railway sleepers, fence posts and furniture. It is also burnt for fuel.

Southern red oak has been and still is often cultivated near homes as a shade tree and an ornamental plant. It is also grown as a street tree and environmentalists have planted it in reclamation programmes.

The acorns provide food for wildlife from squirrels, deer and raccoons to jays, myna birds, turkeys, woodpeckers, nuthatches and waterfowl. The trees also offer nesting sites and cover for a whole variety of wild creatures – and southern red oak is sometimes browsed by cattle.

Medicinally, the leaves have been used locally to stem bleeding and treat dysentery and gangrene. The tree has also been said to have offered a remedy for ulcers, diarrhoea and piles.