

Quercus lyrata

[Synonyms : *Quercus bicolor* var. *lyrata*]

OVERCUP OAK is a deciduous tree. Native to central and south-eastern United States, it has glossy dark green leaves and sweet-tasting, spine-tipped, greyish or pale brown acorns. It is also known as American white oak, *Chêne des marais* (French), *Gómbkupacsú tölgy* (Hungarian), Swamp oak, Swamp post oak, Swamp white oak, Walter white oak, Water white oak, and White oak.

This tree tolerates flooding and its acorns float in water. The flowers are pollinated by the wind. In the state of New Jersey in the United States overcup oak has been declared an endangered species.

Its heavy, very durable wood (which has dark brown heartwood and paler sapwood) is marketed as ‘White oak’ but the wood of this species is considered to be of far poorer quality than that of White oak (*Quercus alba*).

Lyrata is derived from Latin *lyra* (harp, lute, lyre) meaning ‘lyre-shaped’ with reference to the base of the leaves which is believed to be reminiscent of the neck of a lyre. On the other hand the common name Overcup oak is a description of the acorn enveloped in its cup. Both the Creek and Cherokee North American Indian tribes turned to a decoction of the bark for treating dysentery, while the Choctaw took it for stomach upsets.

This strong wood has been used in the past for making wheels and barrels, as well as for dams, vehicles, building interiors, furniture, railway sleepers, basketry, and agricultural implements. It has also been used for tanning and has been burnt as fuel. Apart from any of the foregoing it is used today, in the 21st Century, for shipbuilding, construction, and furniture.

The tree has been planted as a street tree or on lawns for both its shade and its ornamental attributes. Environmentalists have also found it useful for reclamation programmes.

Deer, wild pigs, squirrels, wild turkeys and ducks all eat the acorns – although the latter are not best served by this acorn’s large size.