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Quercus marilandica

[Synonyms : *Quercus cuneata*, *Quercus dilatata*, *Quercus ferruginea*, *Quercus marylandica*, *Quercus marylandica* var. *ashei*, *Quercus neoashei*, *Quercus nigra*, *Quercus nigra* var. *integrifolia*, *Quercus nigra* var. *marilandica*, *Quercus nigra* var. *quinqueloba*, *Quercus nobilis*]

BLACKJACK OAK is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to central and south-eastern North America, it has glossy dark green leaves and pale pinkish-brown acorns.

It is also known as Barren oak, Blackjack, *Black-Jack-Eiche* (German), Black oak, *Chêne du Maryland* (French), *Chêne noir* (French), *Dub marylandský* (Czech), Jack oak, *Jaquier noir* (French), *Lantlevelu tölgy* (Hungarian), *Roostepruun tamm* (Estonian), *Schwarz-Eiche* (German), Scrub oak, and Water oak.

Authorities note that these trees are usually small. The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

Marilandica means ‘of or from the State of Maryland (United States)’.

Some authorities believe it is the early European settlers who are responsible for the name Blackjack. For them anything considered worthless could attract the name ‘jack’ and the wood of blackjack oak compared with that of close relatives proved to be of little value to them – not least because the tree is so small. Other authorities note that ‘black’ refers to the colour of the dark bark and ‘jack’ to a name for a drinking vessel (often made of wood)

Boiled acorns from this oak served as famine food for the Comanche North American Indian tribe. (The fresh, pointed, often striped acorns were steeped in running water for long periods to remove the bitter taste caused by tannin.)

Comanche Indians used the leaves as cigarette sleeves.

In contrast the Choctaw tribe valued the tree as a source of medicine which they used not only to ease cramp but also to aid childbirth.

The strong, heavy wood has been used for railway sleepers and fence posts, as well as to make charcoal. It has also been burnt as fuel.

In the 1960s blackjack oak caused some environmental concern. Its encroachment on valuable grazing land in western and south-western regions of the United States was such that drastic eradication methods had to be considered.

Blackjack oak has been introduced to Europe and is cultivated in France and Germany.

Deer and wild turkey enjoy the acorns.