

Quercus palustris

[Synonyms : *Quercus rubra* var. *dissecta*, *Quercus rubra* var. *palustris*]

SWAMP OAK is a deciduous tree. Native to eastern North America (north-eastern United States and south-eastern Canada), it has glossy dark green leaves and often reddish-brown streaked, pale brown acorns.

It is also known as *Chêne à épingles* (French), *Chêne des marais* (French), *Chêne palustre* (French), *Dub bahenní* (Czech), Marsh oak, Marsh quercus, *Mocsári tölgy* (Hungarian), *Mocsári vöröstölgy* (Hungarian), *Moeras-eik* (Dutch), Oak, Pin oak, Red oak, *Sártölgy* (Hungarian), *Sootamm* (Estonian), Southern pin oak, Spanish oak, Spanish swamp oak, Spanish water oak, *Spiess-Eiche* (German), *Sumpeg* (Danish), *Sumpf-Eiche* (German), Swamp Spanish oak, *Tavi tölgy* (Hungarian), and Water oak.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind. This tree attracts insects which produce galls.

This oak can be confused with several close relatives including scarlet oak, *Quercus coccinea* and red oak, *Quercus rubra*. Unlike swamp oak, scarlet oak's leaves have more and shallower lobes and the tree also much prefers upland sites, while the red oak has larger acorns.

Authorities note that the small knots often found in the wood can limit its use, as also its tendency upon drying sometimes to warp and split.

The wood of swamp oak is often marketed as 'red oak'.

Palustris is derived from Latin *palus* (bog, marsh) meaning 'of or from bogs, swamps or marshes'. The common name Pin oak is believed by some to be a description of pin-like twigs and others think it is a reference to the past practice of using the tough branchlets for 'pinning together' the timbers of a barn.

The tree was a source of medicine for the North American Delaware Indians who took an inner bark infusion to ease stomach pains.

The galls have offered a source of black ink.

Its hard, heavy, light brown wood has been used on occasion for general construction, as well as for shingling, clapboarding, building interiors, mine props, cooperage, and wooden nails. Today it is cultivated for its timber in Denmark and Germany. It has also been burnt as fuel.

Not only has swamp oak been grown in avenues in North America and as a street tree, but it has also been cultivated as an ornamental lawn and shade tree. It can be found in parks and on estates in southern England and as an ornamental too on the European mainland. Swamp oak has also been planted in reforestation programmes on bottomland.

It was introduced to Britain in 1800 by John Fraser (1750-1811) who was a Scottish plant collector who specialised in North American plants. He made several collecting expeditions to that Continent and brought plants back to an English nursery in Chelsea.

The spine-tipped, acorns are enjoyed and dispersed by turkeys, jays, woodpeckers, waterfowl, deer, squirrels and mice. In addition, several varieties of wild duck especially rely upon them for food during their Autumn migration.