

Quercus prinus

[Synonyms : *Quercus houstoniana*, *Quercus michauxii*, *Quercus montana*, *Quercus prinus* var. *palustris*]

CHESTNUT OAK is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern North America it has small glossy brown acorns half-enclosed by the cup and leaves that turn crimson and rich yellow to brown in Autumn.

It is also known as American white oak, Bamboo-leaved oak, Basket oak, Chestnut rock oak, Chestnut swamp oak, Chestnut white oak, Cow oak, *Dub košičkatý* (Czech), Michaux's oak, Mountain oak, Rock chestnut, Rock chestnut oak, Rock oak, Swamp chestnut oak, Swamp oak, Tanbark oak, Water chestnut, White chestnut oak, and White oak; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of independence.

This oak can be confused with the chinkapin oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*) but chestnut oak's deeply-grooved dark grey to brown bark sets it apart from chinkapin oak which has flaky grey bark.

Chinkapin oak is larger than dwarf chinkapin oak and also has sharply pointed buds, while its scaly grey bark sets it apart from chestnut oak.

One of its North American names Basket oak emerged because the wood has been used to make baskets and crates.

This strong and heavy wood was once made into fence posts and burnt as fuel. It has also been used to make railroad sleepers, agricultural implements, furniture and interior finishing,. Today its hard and durable qualities can be valued for construction, and for making sleepers and barrels. The bark has been used for tanning leather.

North American Indian tribes were said to use a dye made from the bark to paint their skins red. [Many authorities believe however that it was the Caribbean Indian use of the dye from annatto (*Bixa orellana*) or alternatively the North American Indian use of bloodroot roots (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) that led to the term 'Red Indian'.] Certainly Cherokee Indians made a brown dye from chestnut oak.

In the 1940s it was noted that the Hudson River boasted a celebrated chestnut oak on its banks. The tree called the 'Washington Oak' was estimated to be 800-1000 years old at that time.

Authorities note that (once eaten by North American Iroquois Indians) the acorns are particularly sweet and nutritious – and are especially enjoyed by pigs.