

Quercus velutina

[Synonyms : *Quercus velutina* var. *missouriensis*, *Quercus coccinea* var. *tinctoria*, *Quercus tinctoria*]

BLACK OAK is a deciduous tree. Native to eastern and southern North America it has leaves that turn dull red or orange-brown in Autumn.

It is also known as American red oak, Blackjack, *Dub sametový* (Czech), Dyer oak, Dyer's quercus, *Eiche* (German), *Färbereiche* (German), Jack oak, Quercitron, Quercitron oak, Redbush, Red oak, Smoothbark oak, Spotted oak, Tanbark oak, Yellowbark, Yellow-bark oak, and Yellow oak.

This oak can be confused with red oak, *Quercus rubra* but the latter's acorns have smaller cups. *Velutina* means 'velvety or covered in fine short soft erect hairs'.

The acorns seem to have been eaten by few North American Indian tribes apart from some of the Dakota and some of the Chippewa. The bitter taste may well have been a deterrent – and records show that those Chippewa who did eat them processed the acorns first to get rid of it.

Some of the Chippewa tribe used the bark to obtain a reddish-yellow dye.

Cherokee Indians (as they did with that of close relatives) used the hard and heavy wood for basketry and for making wagon wheels, railway sleepers, furniture and cooking tools – and they also burnt the wood as fuel.

Quercitron was a source of medicine for several North American Indian tribes. Delaware Indians gargled with a bark infusion to ease colds and the Menominee tribe are believed to have made an infusion of the bark to ease sore eyes. It provided medicine to treat some lung disorders among the Meskwaki Indians, and the Delaware and Cherokee tribes prescribed it for easing hoarseness. The latter seems to have found it useful too for causing vomiting when this was necessary – and they also used it to treat fever, indigestion, asthma, some female problems, urinary disorders, dysentery, oral sores and skin ailments, as well as prescribing it as a tonic.

The bark has been used for tanning and the inner bark yields a yellow dye that has been used on calico, silk and wool.

The wood has been collected for fuel.

Medicinally, European settlers and herbalists have used it to treat period problems, diarrhoea, asthma and rheumatism.