



## TREES & plants

# Swamp white oak

Swamp white oak is a striking tree with attractive peeling bark, especially on young trees. The lustrous, lobed leaves have a two-tone appearance, dark green on top with a silvery-white underside. Fall color is an orange-gold to yellow in mid-autumn. An excellent shade tree for any landscape.

This species is native to the Chicago region according to Swink and Wilhelm's *Plants of the Chicago Region*, with updates made according to current research.

This plant has some cultivated varieties. [Go to list of cultivars and related hybrids.](#)



**Botanical name:** *Quercus bicolor*

**All Common Names:** swamp white oak

**Family (English):** Beech; Oak

**Family (Botanic):** Fagaceae

**Planting Site:** Residential and parks, City parkway, Wide median, Restricted sites

**Tree or Plant Type:** Tree

**Foliage:** Deciduous (seasonally loses leaves)

**Native Locale:** Chicago area, Illinois, North America

**Landscape Uses:** Parkway/street, Shade tree, Specimen

**Size Range:** Large tree (more than 40 feet)

**Mature Height:** 50-60 feet

**Mature Width:** 50-60 feet

**Light Exposure:** Full sun (6 hrs direct light daily)

**Hardiness Zones:** Zone 4, Zone 5 (Chicago), Zone 6, Zone 7, Zone 8

**Soil Preference:** Acid soil, Moist, well-drained soil

**Acid Soils:** Tolerant

**Alkaline Soils:** Moderately Tolerant

**Salt Spray:** Intolerant

**Soil Salt:** Moderately Tolerant

**Drought Conditions:** Tolerant

**Poor Drainage:** Tolerant

**Planting Considerations:** Messy fruit/plant parts

**Ornamental Interest:** Fall color

**Season of Interest:** Early winter, Mid winter, Mid fall, Late fall

**Flower Color & Fragrance:** Inconspicuous

**Shape or Form:** Broad, Round

**Growth Rate:** Moderate

**Transplants Well:** Yes

**Wildlife:** Game birds, Game mammals, Migrant birds, Small mammals

**More Information:**

**Tree & Plant Care**

One of the easiest oaks to transplant and more tolerant of poor drainage than other oaks.

Avoid high pH soils or plants may develop chlorotic (yellowing ) leaves.

Tolerant of salt, drought and heat.

Prune oaks in the dormant season to avoid attracting beetles that may carry oak wilt.

**Disease, pests, and problems**

Anthraxnose, occasional powdery mildew, chlorosis in high pH soils, and insect galls.

**Disease, pests, and problem resistance**

Tolerant of black walnut toxicity.

**Native geographic location and habitat**

**Swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*)**

PHOTO: JOHN HAGSTROM

C-Value: 6

**Bark color and texture**

Mature bark is a dark gray-brown with blocky ridges,. Young trees develop a flaky, peeling bark that reveals an orange inner bark.

**Leaf or needle arrangement, size, shape, and texture**

Alternate, simple, rounded to coarsely lobed leaves with variable wavy margins. Dark green above with silvery-white underside. Leaves turn to golden or orange brown in fall.

**Flower arrangement, shape, and size**

Male flowers hang in clusters of catkins.

Female flowers are inconspicuous, tiny spikes in leaf axils.

**Fruit, cone, nut, and seed descriptions**

Acorns are 1 inch long and enclosed halfway with a warty cap. The cap often remains attached to a stalk (peduncle) once the fruit is ripe and falls from the tree.

**Cultivars and their differences**

"This plant is a cultivar of a species that is native to the Chicago Region according to Swink and Wilhelm's Plants of the Chicago Region, with updates made according to current research. Cultivars are plants produced in cultivation by selective breeding or via vegetative propagation from wild plants identified to have desirable traits."

**American Dream®** (*Quercus bicolor* 'JFS-KW12'): Good resistance to anthracnose and powdery mildew. This cultivar has a broadly pyramidal shape and dark green foliage changing to yellow brown in fall.

**Related hybrids (between *Quercus bicolor* and *Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata)**

**Kindred Spirit® Ware's Oak** (*Quercus x warei* 'Nadler'): A columnar cultivar, growing 40 feet high by 6 feet wide; red-orange fall color. Resistant to drought and powdery mildew.

**Regal Prince® Ware's Oak** (*Quercus x warei* 'Long'): Narrow habit (45 feet high and 20 to 25 feet wide); excellent resistance to borers and powdery mildew. Yellow fall color.

