

Cherokee Ethnobiology

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Southern Red Oak



Northern Red Oak

RED OAK

Cherokee Usage

Cherokees use the wood from the Red Oak to keep the sacred eternal fire burning at pow wows. Baskets were also fashioned from the inner bark of this tree, and the acorns were sometimes used to make kenuche. The Red Oak is also used to remedy heart problems.

Description

Both the Northern and Southern Red Oaks are large trees that can grow up to 80 feet in height and have a trunk diameter in excess of 2 feet. The Northern Red Oak leaves are deeply lobed, but have a general oak shape, whereas the Southern Red Oak's leaves resemble turkey tracks. The Northern Red Oak looks very similar to the Black Oak. Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish the two is the color of the inner bark: the Northern Red Oak has pinkish red inner bark while the Black Oak has orange inner bark. Both Red Oaks produce acorns that mature in their second year. Northern Red Oaks are more common than Southern Red Oaks and can be found in the majority of the Cherokee Nation. Southern Red Oaks are primarily found only in the southern halves of Adair and Cherokee Counties and throughout Sequoyah County.

Where found:

Other names:

Northern Red Oak and Southern Red Oak

Taxonomy:

Kingdom - Plantae

Phylum - Magnoliophyta

Class - Magnoliopsida

Order - Fagales

Family - Fagaceae

Genus - *Quercus*

Species - *rubra* (Northern), *falcata* (Southern)

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