

Learning about Cherrybark Oak *Quercus pagoda* Raf.

Cherrybark oak is a medium to large red oak tree that can grow over 100 feet tall and over three feet in diameter. It grows on moist, well drained bottomland sites. The tree also serves as an important food source for birds, including wild turkey, blue jay and wood duck. It is also a source of food for raccoon and white-tailed deer.

Characteristics. The leaves of the cherrybark oak are deciduous, simple and alternate. They are 5 to 8 inches in length and have 5 to 9 sharp lobes. They are a bright green on the upper surface and paler and hairy on the bottom surface. The twigs are also hairy when young and become smooth as the tree ages. The wood of the cherrybark oak is strong and it is an excellent timber tree for furniture and interior uses. It is a fast growing oak tree.

Fruit. Flowers appear in April and May. The acorns are ½ inch long, and orange-brown in color. The cap, which is scaly, covers about 1/3 of the acorn. The acorns mature in September and October after growing two years on the tree. Acorns are usually produced when the tree is 25 years of age.

Geographic Range. The cherrybark oak grows on well-drained sites in the southeastern Gulf Coastal Plain and Mississippi River flood plains.

Additional Information.

- Squirrels, which hoard the acorns for food, are important in the dispersal of seeds.
- The species name *pagoda* refers to the tiered shape of the leaves (when held by the stem). This resembles the shape of tiered roofs from East Asia.
- Cherrybark oak was used by Native Americans to treat indigestion, asthma and lost voice.
- The best way to tell if your cherrybark oak acorns are viable or able to sprout is to float them in a bucket of water. The ones that float or have holes in them are empty and will not germinate.
- The best time to plant the cherrybark acorns is in the fall or winter. They can also be planted if they have been placed in a moist cold storage refrigerator.
- Acorns take two years to mature on the tree.

References:

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