

## Learning about Roble Beech

### *Nothofagus obliqua*

Roble Beech is a tree found in the south central parts of Chile. Roble beech is a fast growing tree and is often used as a hedge or windbreak.

**Characteristics.** Roble beeches reach a height of 30 m (98 ft) and up to 2 m (6.5 ft) in diameter. The bark is gray-brown to dark brown. The leaves are alternate and have a unique herringbone overlap pattern on the stem (the only other tree that has this overlapping pattern is the Atlantic beech). There are 7-11 pairs of raised veins on the leaf, which gives it a wavy appearance. The leaves, which are 2-5 cm long and oval, are serrated and the veins reach the edge of the leaf in between each serration. The color of the leaves is blue-green above and a paler green below. The tree is deciduous, turning gold, orange and red in autumn. The bark is silver gray.

**Fruit.** The inconspicuous flowers are either male or female (monoecious), but both sexes are found on the same plant. The flowers are pollinated by wind. There are three nuts (seeds) in each bract. The nuts are small (less than ¼").

**Sowing the Seed.** The seed is best sown as soon as it is ripe. The seed needs to be stratified for 2-3 months if planted in the spring. The optimum size for transplanting to a sunny location is between 30-80 cm.

**Geographic Range.** Temperate forests in Chile and Argentina between 36° and 41° S. The tree grows on the hills of the Andes of San Fernando (Region VI) and its southern extent is in Region X of Chile. It is common on the central plains of Region IX.

#### Additional Information.

- 'Roble' in Spanish means *oak* in English. The explorers who found this tree thought it looked like the oak trees back home.
- The wood is used in making furniture and in construction
- This tree is threatened in Chile because of its unregulated use as fuel and timber.
- The shape of the tree is taller than it is wide. The upper branches are nearly vertical, while the lower branches sweep low toward the ground.

#### References:

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