

Pin Oak

Description:

Large tree with a tall, straight trunk, pyramidal crown. Lower limbs droop, middle limbs horizontal, top limbs slant upward.

Leaves alternate, simple, 4–6 inches long, broadest in the middle; lobes usually 5–9; notches rounded, deep, 2/3 or more to the central vein; each lobe with 2–4 sharp-pointed teeth, bristle-tipped. Upper surface dark green, shiny; lower surface paler, smooth, with tufts of hair in the vein axils. Deep scarlet in fall.

Bark light brown, smooth, shiny; becomes gray-brown, shallowly grooved and slightly roughened with closely flattened scales with age. The many limbs make pin knots in the lumber.

Flowering April–May, in catkins.

Fruits September–October, acorns solitary or in clusters of 2 or 3, often striped, 3/8 to 1/2 inch long, hemispherical; the shallow cup covers 1/4 to 1/3 of the nut. Fruit bitter, ripening in autumn of second year.

Similar species: Northern pin oak (*Q. ellipsoidalis*): acorns are longer; known only in northern Missouri.

Size:

Height: to 100 feet.

Habitat and conservation:

Occurs in bottomland forests in floodplains along streams, rivers, sloughs and edges of swamps; also around margins of upland sinkhole ponds and flatwoods, on poorly drained prairie soils, in fencerows and along draws in the prairie regions of the state. Pin oak is also a favorite yard, street and park tree and is often planted, for example, on college campuses and in industrial parks.

Human connections:

Pin oaks are popular in landscaping and for windbreaks. The wood has many uses. If you are planting a pin oak, remember that alkaline soils cause pin oaks to suffer from iron chlorosis, resulting in poor health and yellowish leaves. You may need to supplement the soil to keep them healthy.

Ecosystem connections:

Songbirds, woodpeckers, ducks, turkey, quail, mice, squirrels, raccoon and deer all eat the acorns. Big trees like pin oaks provide many places for bird and squirrel nests. When these trees die, many insects burrow in the rotting wood and provide food for woodpeckers and other insectivores.