

# CHESTNUT OAK

*QUERCUS PRINUS*  
(pronounced KWERK-us PRY-nus)

Common names: Chestnut Oak, Rock Oak, Basket Oak

Family: *Fagaceae* (Beech Family)  
Order: *Fagales*

Relatives: Beeches, Chestnuts, and Oaks



## Did you know?

- The Chestnut Oak typically lives between 300-400 years (1).
- Its common name, Chestnut Oak, comes from its chestnut or brown bark when it reaches maturity (6).
- Also, its common name, Rock oak, is derived from its canny ability to thrive in dryish rocky soils (6).
- Sometimes, people use the caps of acorns being used as buttons (7).
- In 1940, the Chestnut Oak of Suffield, Connecticut, was the first to be nominated on the list of America's biggest trees (8).

### References:

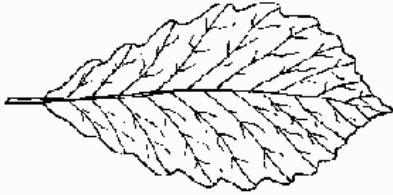
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## Characteristics of Chestnut Oak tree

### Leaf characteristics

Alternately arranged and oblong-lanceolate or obovate in shape

Simple, pinnate, green leaves, range in length from 4 to 8 inches (1) and 1.5 to 3 inches in width (5), that turn red and yellow in the fall. These leaves have wedge-shaped or rounded bases with rounded teeth and rounded apex.



### Flower characteristics

These brown, monocot flowers are born as both males, as catkins, and females, in short spikes (1).



### Fruit characteristics

These nuts have one seed with a hard pericarp, and protected in a cup-like structure (3).

Acorns are oval in shape and up to an inch and a half long (1) with caps that cover about a third of the acorns length.



### Trunk characteristics

A single trunk, often growing into multiple trunks due to casualties to the original stem, grows upright with brownish grey bark. At maturity, bark will develop very deep furrows and give rise to ridges that cross in a triangular fashion (4).



## The life of a Chestnut Oak Tree

Chestnut Oaks are native trees to the eastern regions of North America. In fact, the Native Americans took advantage of what this tree has to offer. They ground up seeds into a powdery substance to use for baking of breads and sorts. As a substitute for coffee beans, Natives would use roasted Chestnut Oak seeds; however, the high tannin content of acorns made for a very bitter and unappealing taste (3). Acorns were considered a fashion statement among them as they often used acorn cups for buttons and decoration on their clothing (2).

### Geographic range

The Chestnut Oak is native to parts of America ranging from the southern region of Maine do to central Mississippi- through both Indiana and Illinois and down south to Alabama and Georgia staying west of the coastal plains (7). However, the Oak thrives throughout the high topography found in the Appalachians, and in the mountains of the Carolinas and Tennessee (8).



-The native range of chestnut oak.

## Insect and fungal pests

As a testament to superior genetics, the Chestnut Oak seemingly faces no major, life threatening pests and disease problems. However, fungi and most often wasps tend to take over this tree in more cases than not, without ultimately killing the tree itself (4).

The Chestnut Oak tends to be susceptible to Oak Wilt, which ultimately prevents water from reaching the branches causing the leaves to wilt as the tree eventually dies (5).

Cankerworms, The Forest Tent Caterpillar, and The Half-Wing Geometer help shed the tree of its leaves during the spring and fall seasons (5).

Variable Oak and Oak Slug caterpillars infest the trees; however, their presence never seems to cause major problems (4). Commonly, acorns are infested with larvae, moths, and wasps.

### Economic importance

This heavy, durable, and close-grained wood is ideal for construction lumber, railroad ties, flooring, furniture, cabinets, interior finishes, and even fuel (3). We also extract tannin from the wood, used in the processing and making of leather (8).

### *Multiple-choice question:*

What are some unique characteristics of Chestnut Oak leaves?

- A. opposite, compound, shallow-lobed teeth
- B. alternate, simple, coarsely rounded teeth
- C. alternate, simple, finely crenate teeth
- D. whorled, lobed-rounded teeth, oblong