



## WHITE OAK *Quercus alba* L.



**W**hite oak, which gets its name from the color of the bark, occurs naturally in southern and central Maine as far north as Oakland in northern Kennebec County. It grows on sandy land, gravelly ridges and moist bottomland, but makes the best growth on rich, heavy, upland soils. In good situations, it attains a height of 60–70 feet and a diameter of 3–4 feet. When not crowded by other trees, the

*White oak wood is strong, heavy, hard and durable, making it ideal for use in flooring, furniture and boatbuilding.*





*White oak acorns mature in one year. They contain less tannin than red oak acorns and are preferred by wildlife.*

bole (trunk) is short, the limbs are large and diverging, and the head is broad and rounded. In the forest, it has a long bole and a narrow head.

The **bark** on the trunk is separated into thin, irregular flakes and varies from light to ashy-gray.

The **leaves** are usually nine-lobed. The lobes are rounded, slightly cleft or cleft nearly to the midrib, alternate, 4–7 inches long, bright green above, pale green or whitish beneath. They sometimes remain on the tree during winter.

The **flowers** come out in May when the leaves are half grown.

The **fruit** ripens in September of the first year. The acorn is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long, 2–4 times longer than the cup, and about one-quarter enclosed by it. The fruit is edible. American Indians pounded it into a flour and bleached out the tannin with hot water.

The **twigs** are gray to purple; buds are blunt-pointed, and scales are without hairs.

The **wood** is strong, heavy, hard and durable. It is used for ship and boatbuilding, railroad ties, piling, agricultural implements, interior finish, furniture, flooring, pulp, and firewood. In the past, it was used for deck planking on ships, tight cooperage (tight casks capable of holding liquid such as whiskey), and spokes and rims of wooden wheels.



MAINE REGISTER OF BIG TREES 2008  
White Oak Circumference: 239" Height: 64' Crown Spread: 95' Location: Pittston

