

## TREE DESCRIPTIONS

OAKS (*Quercus* species) are the most abundant and important trees in forests of the Mid-Atlantic region and in our native canopy in North Ridge. They are particularly well adapted to a warming and dry climate.

### WHITE OAK, *Quercus alba*

This majestic and beautiful tree is Alexandria's most dominant tree and is one of the most important among the white oaks. It soars 80 to 100 feet in height and has a rounded and spreading shape; its branches reach out at wide angles as it matures; its bark is light grey; in spring its leaves are a silvery green with a blanket of down; in summer, they are a glowing green turning in the fall to red, brown and sometimes purple; its sweet 3/4" acorns are the preferred food of birds and other wildlife and were used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes. It attracts innumerable beneficial insects that birds feed on, especially neo tropical migrants. It grows from 1 to 2 feet a year and likes full sun to part shade. It is sensitive to soil compaction and grade changing water patterns. With its large central tap root, it grows best in deep, well drained loamy soils, but it tolerates different habitats - dry and moist, acid and alkaline soils. It is rot resistant and very long lived - 250 to 500 years.

### CHESTNUT OAK - *Quercus montana*

The Chestnut Oak is an important white oak in oak forests from Maine to Mississippi. In its native dry ridge top habitat, it reaches 70 feet, but elsewhere it can reach 140 feet and is long lived. It is sometimes called 'rock oak' because it grows in rocky mountainous areas and ridge tops. Like the Northern Red Oak, with which it is often co-dominant, it specializes in north, east, and northeast-facing exposure, especially steep slopes and ravines. It is considered a fast-growing tree. Its shape is lacy, irregular, and narrower than most white oaks. It is known for its deeply furrowed and thick bark. Its leaves are dark green, somewhat shiny. In the fall, they turn yellow and yellow rusty brown. It prefers well drained acidic soil. Its annual acorns are among the largest and are very important food source for wildlife. It is an important tree in upland oak forests.

### Black Oak - *Quercus velutina*

The Black Oak is a red oak that grows from 75 to 110 feet tall. It is widespread in Eastern and Central North America from Maine to Texas. It is often a predominant species in oak forests, hybridizing with other red oaks. It grows best in west, south, and southwest-facing exposure, and in this area, it likes soils that are well drained, silty clay to loamy. It has an open and wide spreading irregular shape. Its summer leaf is a shiny deep green and the underside a yellowish brown. Its fall color is red to orange. Its bark is dark brown to black and was a source for the yellow dye quercitron, used medicinally. Its biennial 1/2" acorns are food for birds and mammals. It grows best in rich well drained soils.

### NORTHERN RED OAK - *Quercus rubra*

This large, beautiful tree averages 70 to 100 feet in height, but can reach 140 feet, growing tallest in the company of other canopy trees. It has a straight trunk and a lacy, round topped narrow shape - spreading about 45 feet at maturity. It is a fast grower, particularly with more sun - 2 feet a year; it prefers north, east, and northeast-facing exposure; it grows best in well drained loamy, fertile soils. It is not a wetland tree, but is relatively tolerant of different soils and conditions. Its biennial 3/4 to 1" acorns feed birds and small mammals and were an important food and medicinal source for indigenous Americans. It starts fruiting at 25 years. Its bark is smooth and grey when young, turning thick with shallow fissures as it ages. Its spring leaves emerge lime green with silky down turning deep green in summer. Its symmetrical shape and deep red leaves in the fall make it a very popular landscape oak.

### SCARLET OAK - *Quercus coccinea*

The Scarlet Oak has brilliant red fall colors giving it its name. In early spring before turning green in the summer, new leaves unfurl with a red hue before turning wonderful shades of vivid red in the fall. It is a fast grower and at maturity averages 60 to 80 feet and up to 120 feet. It has relatively small branches, spreading to form a narrow lacy, open and irregular overall shape. Its spread at maturity can be 45 feet. Its bark is smooth and grey when young turning darker with irregular ridges as it ages. Its 1/2 to 1" acorns attract a variety of birds and wildlife. It is intolerant of deep shade and is a fast grower in sunny south, west, and southwest-facing locations. It is drought resistant. Its tolerance of poor soil conditions, its wind resistance, and its graceful and colorful form make this a popular tree in yards and parks.

### BLACK GUM, BLACK TUPELO - *Nyssa sylvatica*

This tree does not produce nuts or acorns, making it a good choice for those wanting a tree near a driveway and concerned about acorns/nuts dropping on their cars. The Black Gum is a beautiful and remarkable tree sought after for its formal symmetrical shape and changing colors. It is native from eastern Canada to central Florida and is also in eastern Texas and Mexico. It is found in many different types of areas in Virginia. It grows from 60 to 80 feet, sometimes more than 100 feet, and has a spread of 25 to 35 feet. It has a strong straight trunk with strong horizontal branching; its overall shape is pyramidal then spreading with age. In, spring its small leaves are bright red turning delicate green in summer then yellow, red purple, and scarlet in the fall. Its white flowers are a rich source of nectar for bees and native insects. Its sour dark blue fruit add attractive color in late summer and are a favorite of most species of birds. The female tree needs a male tree to produce the fruit. Its bark is grey when young becoming deeply furrowed as it ages. It grows in boggy soils to well drained light textured soils and in loamy clay, often as a companion to oaks. It prefers acidic soils. It has a long deep central tap root. It is very long lived, capable of reaching 650 years.