Pin Oak

Quercus palustris

Pin Oak is one of the most utilized oaks in landscaping due to its attractive pyramidal shape and straight, dominant trunk. Green, glossy leaves borne on relatively small diameter branches give way to brilliant red to bronze fall color. The leaves persist on the tree well past most other trees. It is highly adaptable to urban environments and can tolerate wet, clay soils, compacted soils, drought, and requires almost no pruning to maintain its form. Pin Oak has a highly adaptable rooting system enabling the wide range of soil tolerances. It can be tap rooting or shallow, fibrous rooting. The wood is light brown, heavy, hard, and generally knotty and sold as generic red oak. A beautiful specimen was planted at the southeast corner of my childhood home. My mother was told to be "patient." After 40 years, the tree is a stunning specimen.

Identification

Leaves

Simple, alternate, lobed, 3-5" in length, 2-4" wide. Leaves are glossy green on top and light green beneath. Conspicuous tufts in the vein axils.

Flower/Fruit

Monoecious flowers appear coincident with leaf development. Self fertile. Hemispherical brown acorn 1/2" long taking two years to mature.

Bark/Wood

Bark is grayish,thin and easily damaged. Becomes ridged with age. The wood is light brown, heavy, hard, strong, and usually quite knotty with darker sapwood.

Form

Pyramidal habit with a straight, central trunk, rarely forked. Many small diameter branches. Adaptable rooting system - tap or shallow fibrous.

Uses

Pin Oak is a widely utilized landscape specimen tree adaptable to urban environments. Its wood is sold and used as red oak for flooring, furniture, and cabinetry. Squirrels and other wildlife attracted to acorns.

Ethnobotony

Native Distribution

Ohio River Valley and mid Atlantic states. Adaptable to most areas of the US.

Establishment

Use local seed. While very adaptable, seed from one extreme not likely to survive in other extremes.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size	70'Hx40'Wx2'dbh	Soils	Diverse/Acid
USDA Zone	4-8	Drought Tolerant?	Yes
Light Requirements	Full Sun	Innundation Tolerant?	Yes

Pests/Damaging Agents

Many insects feed on leaves or bore into trunk but rarely do they cause serious injury. Anthracnose can be a problem in wet weather. Gypsy moth will defoliate, but not generally fatal.

Similar Species Scarlet Oak

Scarlet Oak leaves are larger (up to 6") and bases are nearly square while Pin Oak leaf bases are wedge shaped. Largest terminal buds of Scarlet Oak are >1/4 inch; less than 1/4" on Pin Oak.

Propagation

Seed - cold stratify 30-45 days.

Source(s)

Transplanted volunteers from Walden, NY.