



NORTHERN RED OAK

Quercus rubra

Native Range

Northern red oak is native to the eastern third of Kansas.

Mature Size

It is a large tree reaching a height of 50 to 75 feet and spread of 40 to 60 feet.

Growth Rate

It grows about 12 to 18 inches per year.

Leaves, Stems and Fruit

The dark green leaves are simple and alternately arranged on the twig. The tapered lobes may extend half way to the middle of the leaf. Fall color is red-orange. The one inch long acorn matures in October of the second year. A shallow cup curved in at the top with dark edges on the scales encloses about 1/4 of the nut. The bark remains smooth and steel gray to gray-brown on the young branches for several years. Only with age does the main stem develop dark reddish brown to black bark with shallow fissures in broad flat ridges.

Use

Windbreaks

Red oak is useful as the large tree component of windbreaks. It can also be used in single-row windbreaks.

Timber

The wood from this tree is used for furniture and interior finish.

Wildlife

Acorns are eaten by squirrels, deer, turkey and probably many other birds and animals.

Adaptation

Eastern one-third of Kansas.

Soil

It grows along streams, on flood plains and hillsides bordering streams; and it grows in soils ranging from clay to loamy sands, and from deep, stone-free to shallow, rocky soils.

Red oak grows best on fertile soils, but will grow on a broad range of soils with adequate moisture.

It is moderately drought tolerant once established.

Spacing

Normally, spacing is 8 to 18 feet within row and 20 to 24 feet between rows in multiple row plantings.

Culture

One-year-old, bare-root seedlings, 12 to 18 inches tall are used in conservation plantings. They require good weed and grass control for at least 3 years. Seedling growth often responds to supplemental watering.

Pests

Oak wilt occurs occasionally, but it isn't considered a serious pest in Kansas.