

Willow Oak

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Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos* L.)

- **Recommended Use:** Landscape tree, shade tree or street tree
- **Exposure:** Full sun to partial sun (eight hours of direct sunlight recommended)
- **Size:** Height: 60 to 80 feet; width: 40 to 50 feet
- **Habit:** Upright
- **Bloom Time:** Spring
- **Maintenance Category:** Low maintenance
- **Water Use:** Average to low
- **Highlights:** Reliable, low maintenance; fall color; upright form; fine texture; adaptability to a wide range of conditions; long-lived tree; wildlife food; street tree.



Willow oak is an excellent choice for a street tree.

Summary

Trees are the largest living component of the home landscape. When used properly, they can add value to property, mitigate temperature fluctuations inside a home, create microclimates, block unwanted views and provide a large backdrop to all other components within the home landscape. Common deciduous oaks (those that shed all their leaves in winter) native to Louisiana include nuttall, shumard, southern red, water and willow oaks. One of the top choices for landscape consideration is the willow oak. Mature trees average between 60 and 80 feet tall by 40 to 50 feet wide. The linear-shaped leaves provide a fine texture — a unique characteristic of this wonderful landscape tree. Leaf litter debris is not a major concern. Acorns are small yet plentiful, providing great wildlife benefits. Willow oaks are deciduous trees, dropping their leaves in winter. While generally better in north and central Louisiana, fall color, which varies from yellow to russet-red, is typically good. There are no major insect or disease concerns. Few oak species are considered better for landscape use than the willow oak tree. Because of their tolerance of various soil conditions, moderate rate of growth, fall color, fine texture and good branching characteristics, the LSU AgCenter selected the willow oak as a Louisiana Super Plant in 2013.

Requirements

- Performs best in full sun.
- Occurs naturally in loose, acidic and moist soils; not well-adapted to dry soils.
- Optimally, soil pH should be between 4.5 and 5.5.

Growth Habit

- Mature trees can reach heights over 100 feet but average between 60 and 80 feet tall and produce a canopy diameter of 40 to 50 feet wide.
- Space trees 40 feet apart when planting in a line. Also, plant at least 20 feet from structures.
- Narrow, alternate leaves with an inconspicuous bristle on the tip give this tree a distinct look.
- Forms a rounded-conical canopy with dense, high branching.
- Well adapted for street plantings, malls, plazas, parks and other urban landscapes.

Care and Maintenance

- Take soil samples to determine soil pH, phosphorous and potassium levels prior to planting. Trees growing in urban soils may require more attention to soil fertility than those grown in natural settings.
- Follow proper planting instructions during installation. Dig planting hole slightly shallower than the height of the root ball and two to three times as wide as the root ball. Use backfill from original planting hole to replant tree. Slightly tamp soil to identify and correct any voids.
- Apply a 4-inch layer of organic mulch around the base of the tree to reduce weed pressure, retain soil moisture, mitigate soil temperature and provide an organic sources of plant nutrients.



- Trees should be thoroughly watered after planting. Provide irrigation in the first year and supplemental irrigation during periods of little to no rain activity.
- Use a three-point staking system in the first year to prevent newly planted trees from being uprooted.
- Determine total root zone area to use with fertilizer recommendations.
- Prune deciduous trees in late winter prior to bud break. Remove dead, diseased and damaged limbs from the canopy. Prune limbs so that they don't rub each other. Follow proper pruning technique and don't leave stub cuts. Shape the canopy as needed for symmetrical alignment.

For more information on willow oak trees and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office or visit LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.



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