



## A Tree Identification Booklet for South Carolina Forests

### Untoothed Simple Leaf

Black Tupelo

Eastern Redbud



Flowering Dogwood

Laurel Oak

Live Oak

Southern Magnolia

Sweetbay

Willow Oak

## Black Tupelo

"Blackgum", "Pepperidge"  
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)  
Height 50-100'

**Characteristics:** The black tupelo or blackgum has many slender, nearly horizontal branches and very glossy leaves that turn a beautiful scarlet in autumn. The leaves are oval, smooth-edged and crowded on short twigs. The fruit is round, dark blue, and clustered on stalks up to 1 1/2" long.

**Location:** Look for this tree in moist soils of valleys and uplands in hardwood and pine forests.

**Use:** Tupelo pulp is used for high-grade book and magazine papers. The lumber goes mostly into shipping containers and parts of furniture.

**FUN TREE FACT:** Black tupelo is a honey plant. The juicy fruit is eaten by many mammals and birds.

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## Eastern Redbud

"Judas-tree"  
(*Cercis canadensis*)  
Height 40'

**Characteristics:** This tree has a broad heart shaped leaf 3-5" wide with a pointed tip and smooth margins. The beautiful pinkish-lavender flowers that cover the leafless twigs are an early sign spring is on the way. The leaves turn yellow in the fall. The fruit is a flat seed pod 2-3" long and pinkish green turning brown.

**Location:** Redbud grows in moist soils of valleys and slopes in hardwood forests.

**Use:** It is a popular ornamental tree. The flowers can be eaten as a salad, or fried.

**FUN TREE FACT:** According to myth, Judas Iscariot hanged himself on the Judas-tree after which the white flowers turned red with shame or blood.

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## Flowering Dogwood

(*Cornus florida*)  
Height 30'

**Characteristics:** This small understory tree is named for its beautiful white springtime flowers. The leaves are oval and slightly wavy. The dark brown rough bark is broken into small square plates that some say resembles alligator hide. What is thought to be the "flower" is composed of 4 large white petal-like bracts. The "true" flower is a small greenish-white compact head in the center of the showy bracts. The fruit is shiny red berries clustered at the end of a long stalk.

**Location:** It grows well on moist and dry soils throughout the forest.

**Use:** The extremely hard wood is shock resistant and useful for making weaving shuttles, spools, small pulleys, mallet heads and jewelry blocks. Wildlife feast on the red berries in fall and winter.



**FUN TREE FACT:** Indians used the aromatic bark and roots as a remedy for malaria.

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## Laurel Oak

(*Quercus laurifolia*)

Height 60-80'

**Characteristics:** The leaves are semi-deciduous which means that the leaves of the current year remain on the tree through the winter. The leaves are small, narrow, 2 - 4" long and pointed. Some of the leaves are irregularly lobed.

**Location:** Look for the laurel oak on moist sandy soils quite often along the edges of rivers and swamps. The tree grows rapidly.

**Use:** Laurel oaks are handsome shade trees.

**FUN TREE FACT:** The name derives from the similarity of the foliage to Grecian Laurel, a Mediterranean shrub.

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## Live Oak

"Virginia Live Oak"  
(*Quercus virginiana*)  
Height 40-50'

**Characteristics:** This oak tree is evergreen. The leaves are quite small, shiny and dark green above and slightly rolled under on the sides. The live oak has a widespread crown and gnarled branches usually draped in Spanish moss. The tree seldom grows to more than 50' but may have a crown-span of 150' or more.

**Location:** Live oaks grow well in sandy soils, including coastal dunes and ridges near marshes.

**Use:** Today it is used mostly as an ornamental tree, characterizing the deep south.

**FUN TREE FACT:** The wood is extremely difficult to saw and dry. It was once used to build structural pieces for repair of wooden warships such as "Old Ironsides".

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## Southern Magnolia

"Evergreen Magnolia", "Bull Bay"  
(*Magnolia grandiflora*)  
Height 60-80'

**Characteristics:** One of South Carolina's most beautiful native evergreen trees. The 5- to 10- inch long leaves are shiny-bright green and leathery on the upper surface and covered on the lower surfaces with rusty-colored fuzz. The fragrant showy-white flowers are 6 to 9 inches in diameter. The fruit is made up of numerous pod-like structures that each contain 2-3 crimson seeds that hang from the pods on slender stalks when ripe.

**Location:** Magnolias grow in moist soils of valleys and low uplands with other hardwoods.

**Use:** It is a very popular southern ornamental and shade tree. The wood is hard and heavy; used for crates, boxes, flooring and doors.

**Fun TREE FACT:** Florists use the dried leaves in decorations.

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## Sweetbay

"Swampbay", "Swamp Magnolia"  
(*Magnolia virginiana*)  
Height 20-60'

**Characteristics:** The leaf is shiny bright green above and whitish underneath. It is 3-6" long. In the South, the leaves stay on the tree until new ones appear. The creamy white flowers are 2-3" wide and very fragrant. The bark of the tree is smooth and the foliage and twigs have a spicy fragrance.

**Location:** This swamp magnolia prefers to grow on the borders of ponds and streams and in wetlands.

**Use:** This tree is used as an ornamental because of the fragrant flowers and showy conelike fruit. The wood is soft and used for minor products such as handles and core stock for lower-grade furniture.

**FUN TREE FACT:** Colonists called the tree "Beavertree" because they caught beavers in traps baited with the fleshy roots.

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## Willow Oak

"Pin Oak"  
(*Quercus phellos*)  
Height 50-80'

**Characteristics:** This oak is named for its willow-like leaves. Distinguishable from most other oaks because of the narrow leaves without lobes or teeth. You can also distinguish this oak from willows because of the acorns and the tiny bristle-tip points on the leaves.

**Location:** It is most common on moist soils of lowlands, along streams and swamps.

**Use:** Willow oak is a popular shade tree for streets, lawns and parks. It is also important for wood products.

**FUN TREE FACT:** It is easily transplanted because it has shallow roots. It is considered one of the best oaks for texture and form.

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