

WHAT KIND OF OAK TREE IS IT?



Valley Oak

(*Quercus lobata*)

This tall, spreading oak was once an important member of the Central Valley's riparian forests. It is deciduous, which means it loses its leaves in the winter. Since it generally grows on deep fertile soils, many areas where valley oaks once grew have been converted to agriculture and the valley oaks were cut down. It can still be found from Shasta County to Los Angeles County, where it often grows to large size. It is a conspicuous oak in the hardwood range, especially in valley bottoms and on deep alluvial soils.



Blue Oak

(*Quercus douglasii*)

This deciduous oak is the dominant oak of the hardwood range. Surrounding the central basin of California from Shasta County to Kern County, it shares its range with the valley oak. Blue oaks occupy the more shallow soils, steeper slopes, and upland sites. In the foothills, it often grows in association with interior live oaks and digger pine.



Coast Live Oak

(*Quercus agrifolia*)

This is an evergreen oak found from southern Mendocino County southward into northern Baja California, primarily west of the coast ranges. In the southern portions of its range, it replaces the valley oak in the hardwood range, and in the valley and alluvial sites, it often attains a tall, spreading appearance.



Interior Live Oak

(*Quercus wislizenii*)

This evergreen oak is widely distributed in California from Siskiyou County south into Baja California. It is abundant in the Sierra Nevada foothills and in the coast ranges it occupies the higher, drier, or more inland sites than the coast live oak. Interior live oak is often found in heavily wooded sites and in chaparral habitats or other dry locations. It often develops a shrubby form. If the top is killed by fire, it will sprout vigorously from its base.

Engelmann or Mesa Oak

(*Quercus engelmannii*)

This semideciduous oak has a limited distribution in less than 2 percent of the state—primarily in western San Diego County. There, the mesa oak replaces the blue oak in the hardwood range.



Black Oak

(*Quercus kelloggii*)

This oak generally grows on moister sites at elevations above 1,500 feet. It often grows in association with both ponderosa pine and incense cedar. Before the leaves fall in winter, many turn bright yellow. Mature leaves are 3 to 6 inches long and are deeply cut or lobed. Leaf tips are sharp and pointed. The bark is dark grey and the trunk often rises 10 or 20 feet before branching. The acorns, which are about 1 inch long and 3/4 inch wide, are lemon-shaped at their end. Like the interior live oak, the black oak will sprout readily from its base if the top is cut or killed by fire.



Canyon Live Oak

(*Quercus chrysolepis*)

This oak is also called "golden cup" oak because its acorns have large cups that are covered with a golden fuzz or powder. This species generally grows above 1,500 feet in sheltered canyon bottoms and northerly slopes. It grows abundantly along the canyon bottoms of the South Yuba River. Trees generally branch several times near the ground and rarely form as a single trunk. Its bark is thin, grey-brown, and becomes flaky with age. The leaves remain on the tree in the winter and can either have a smooth edge or be hollylike. Leaves are 1 to 4 inches long and curled at lower edges. The upper leaf surface is dark yellow-green and polished; the under surface is often fuzzy. Acorns have large golden cups and are egg shaped at the end. Due to its thin, flaky bark, this species is very sensitive to fire. However, like interior live oak and black oak, it is a vigorous sprouter.

