

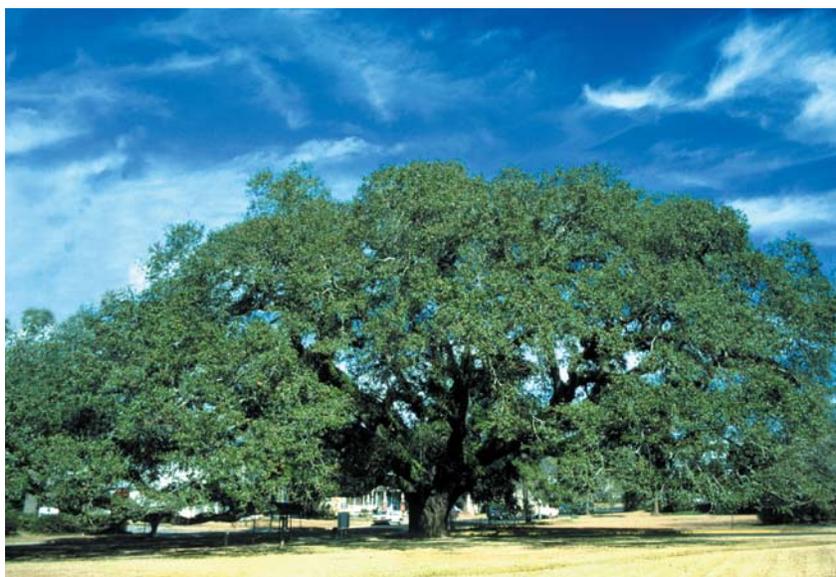


## Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) Georgia's State Tree

Live oak is a beautiful, hardy, spreading shade tree with ever-green foliage.

**Size:** Medium-large tree; 45-65 feet tall and 3-4 feet in diameter. Georgia's Champion live oak tree, growing in Waycross, is almost 10 feet in diameter, 86 feet tall, with a limb spread of 143 feet. The largest trees are usually 200-300 years old.

**Appearance:** Live oaks usually have a large **trunk** that divides after only a few feet into 3-5 arching, horizontal branches that form a wide-spreading, low, dense crown. **Leaves** have an oval to elliptical shape and alternate along twigs. Leaves are thick and dark green, with a waxy coat that provides protection, especially in salty regions; the underside of the leaf usually has grayish hairs and a yellow mid-vein. Male flowers are hairy catkins that dangle below the twigs; female flowers, found on the same tree, are small, slender, hairy stems with bright red tips. The **fruit** is an oval acorn, about one inch long and dark, shiny, brown, which matures in one year. **Acorns** have a fowl-shaped, reddish-brown cap for one third of its length. Live oak starts bearing fruit at a young age and bears a good crop almost annually. Small acorns are eaten by many



native, migrating, and wintering songbirds, as well as quail, turkey, squirrel and deer.

**Habitat:** Live oak is found in a variety of habitats, including floodplains, barrier islands, upland forests, swamp hammocks, sand dunes, pine woods, and stretched over pastures. Damage from cold weather

keeps live oak from thriving in northern zones of Georgia. In many areas, live oak is the dominant forest tree, intolerant to competition.

**Significance:** The oak is the mightiest of trees and symbolizes strength and courage. The ancient Romans thought oak trees attracted lightning and thereby connected the oak tree to the sky god, Jupiter and his wife, Juno, the goddess of marriage. Thus, the oak is a symbol of conjugal fidelity and fulfillment. The oak tree was regarded by Socrates as an oracle tree. The Druids likewise ate acorns in preparation for prophesying. In addition, the Druids believed the leaves of the oak tree had the power to heal and renew strength. The live oak was a favorite species of shipwrights. They used the crotches and limb angles to fashion the various components of the great wooden sailing ships of the previous eras.