

Leaves, Limbs, Needles & Boughs



by Fred Opperman

Tree trivia question: What height of a tree is needed to provide the wood and paper products consumed annually by the average American?

This month's selection is a true native tree of Illinois. Its branches have shaded many generations of native Americans. The crop of its acorns is the staple diet of the white-tailed deer, wild turkey and of course the squirrels. The squirrel is the one who should get the most credit for planting this mighty tree. The Bur Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa* is the king of the prairie. Its thick bark can withstand the grass fires that used to sweep the vast prairies of Illinois.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, 4 to 10" long, about 1/2 as wide,



obovate to oblong-obovate. Lower portion of the leaf usually has 2 to 3 pairs of lobes, dark green and often lustrous above, grayish beneath. Leaf somewhat shaped like a fiddle.

Buds: Rounded or slightly pointed at the tip, yellowish-brown to reddish-brown, finely hairy.



Fruit: Acorn usually solitary, with or without a stalk, the nut ovoid to ellipsoid, dark brown, up to 1 3/4" long, the cup covering half to nearly all the nut, and hairy.

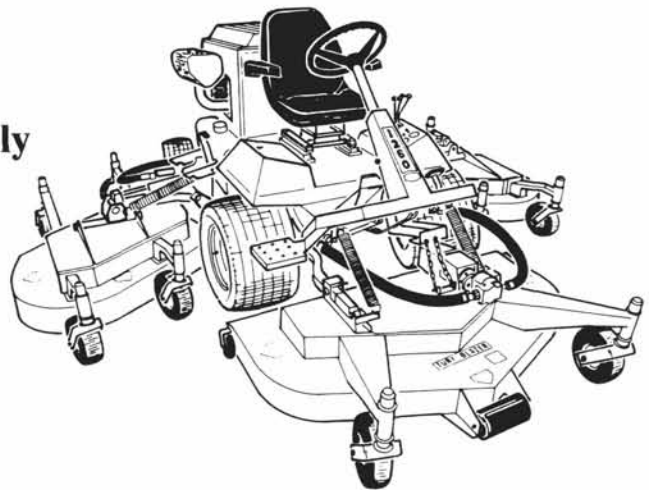


Bark: Dark brown or yellow-brown, rather deeply furrowed.
Size: Usually 60 to 80 feet in height and can be just as wide.
Wood: Heavy, hard, durable and very close grained.
Uses: Cabinets, ship-building, structural timbers.
Trivia answer: About a 100' tree is needed.

Credit: "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants" by Dirr & Stipes

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