

SOUTHERN LIVE OAK

Quercus virginiana

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Evergreen
- **Size at Maturity:** 40–80' tall × 60–100' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Massive, spreading, picturesque
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun
- **Water Needs:** Medium; drought- and salt-tolerant
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—birds, mammals, insects
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Legacy, shade, habitat, large yards

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

The quintessential southern tree, live oaks are living landmarks. Their sweeping, moss-draped branches create shade havens and iconic beauty.

FUN FACT

The Southern live oak is unmatched in stormwater and carbon benefits.

One mature tree can intercept and absorb tens of thousands of gallons of stormwater each year, reducing flooding and protecting our waterways.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A single Southern live oak can be home to thousands of organisms—from lichens, mosses, and fungi clinging to its bark to insects, birds, bats, and mammals making use of its branches, leaves, and cavities.

It's not just a tree; it's an entire ecosystem.

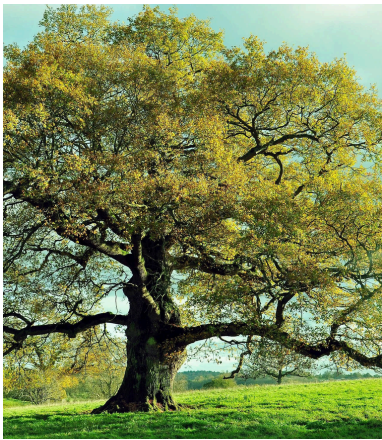
TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1-2x/week) and deeply** during the first one to two years to encourage strong root growth.
- **Maintain a 2-3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Leave the trunk's root flare visible to avoid rot.*
- Avoid soil compaction or construction near roots.
- **Prune during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and maintain strong structure. *Avoid warm-season pruning, and never top.*

WHERE TO PLANT

These giants grow slowly but live for centuries. Plant at least 20–30 feet from structures, driveways, and power lines so your oak has room to spread its iconic canopy.

Pair your live oak with native understory plants like yaupon holly, beautyberry, or wax myrtle. These species thrive in the filtered light beneath canopy trees like oaks!



OVERCUP OAK

Quercus lyrata

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 45–70' tall × 35–50' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Rounded, uniform
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun
- **Water Needs:** Medium to high; tolerates flooding
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—birds, mammals, insects
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Shade, floodplains, wet soils, wildlife

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Adapted to floodplains, this oak can handle “wet feet,” making it ideal for soggy soils and low areas.

Its acorns are almost entirely enclosed by their cups—hence the name “overcup.”

FUN FACT

Because its acorns float, overcup oaks spread naturally via rivers and floodwaters!

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1-2x/week) and deeply** during the first one to two years to encourage strong root growth.
- **Maintain a 2-3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Leave the trunk's root flare visible to avoid rot.*
- Avoid soil compaction or construction near roots.
- **Prune during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and maintain strong structure. *Avoid warm-season pruning, and never top.*

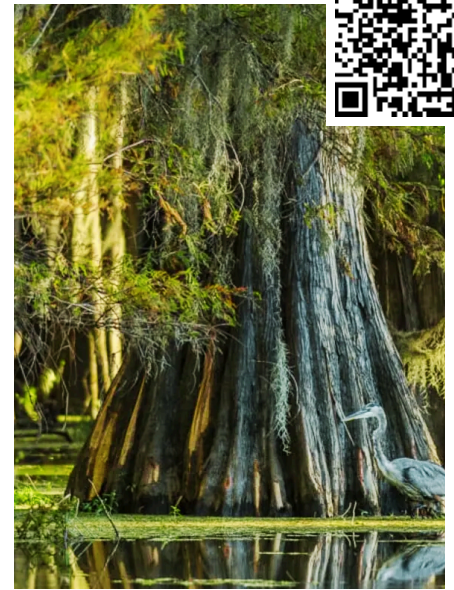
ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Overcup oaks supports wetland wildlife with food and shelter. Strong roots reduce erosion and improve flood resilience, making it ideal for restoring lowland and riparian habitats. Beyond stabilizing soils, the tree's tolerance for prolonged flooding helps sustain wetland ecosystems.

WHERE TO PLANT

Ideal for low, flood-prone areas, stormwater basins, or sites near wetlands and streambanks. Well adapted to wet soils, the overcup oak thrives where many other trees won't, helping manage runoff and reduce erosion.

It prefers full sun but tolerates partial shade, and is a strong choice for both naturalized and urban landscapes—*just avoid drought-prone sites. that dry out quickly*



BALD CYPRESS

Taxodium distichum

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous conifer
- **Size at Maturity:** 50–70' tall × 20–30' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Pyramidal when young, broadening with age
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun
- **Water Needs:** Medium to high; thrives in wet soils, flood-tolerant
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—waterfowl
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Rain gardens, wet sites, stormwater mitigation, wildlife habitat

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Bald cypress stands tall and elegant—even in standing water!

Its feathery, fern-like foliage turns russet-orange in fall before dropping, and its buttressed trunk and “knees” add a sculptural flair.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A powerful **stormwater sponge!** Its roots stabilize streambanks and filter pollutants.

Offers nesting for herons and habitat for amphibians in wetland settings.

WHERE TO PLANT

Ideal for low-lying areas, retention ponds, or places that flood periodically. Will grow in average soil but prefers wet feet.

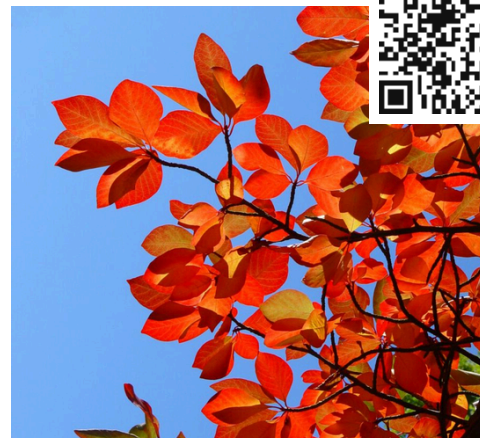
Needs full sun and space to show off its form.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1-2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1-2 years to encourage root growth.
- **Maintain a 2-3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Leave the trunk's root flare visible to avoid rot!*
- Avoid soil compaction or construction near roots.
- **Prune minimally**—focus on removing dead wood.

FUN FACT

Though it looks evergreen, it's not! The “bald” in bald cypress refers to its **bare winter branches—a rarity among conifers.**



BLACKGUM / TUPELO

Nyssa sylvatica

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 30–50' tall × 20–30' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Pyramidal when young, rounded with age
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun to part shade
- **Water Needs:** Medium; tolerates wet or dry sites once established
- **Growth Rate:** Slow to moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—bees, birds, mammals
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Shade, fall color, wildlife habitat

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1-2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1-2 years to encourage root growth.
- **Maintain a 2-3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. Leave the trunk's root flare visible to avoid rot!
- Avoid soil compaction or construction near roots.
- **Relatively low-maintenance**, blackgum trees require little pruning—just remove any dead, damaged, or crowded branches in late winter if needed.

WHERE TO PLANT

Prefers moist, acidic soil but tolerates a range of conditions. Its deep taproot makes it wind-firm but hard to transplant—plant small and let it grow. Choose a site with full sun to partial shade and give it space to develop its naturally upright, pyramidal shape.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

A Carolina classic, blackgum trees ignite in autumn with brilliant scarlet foliage—**one of the earliest and brightest fall shows in the Southeast!**

FUN FACT

The name “tupelo” comes from the Muscogee (Creek) language, meaning “tree of the swamp.”

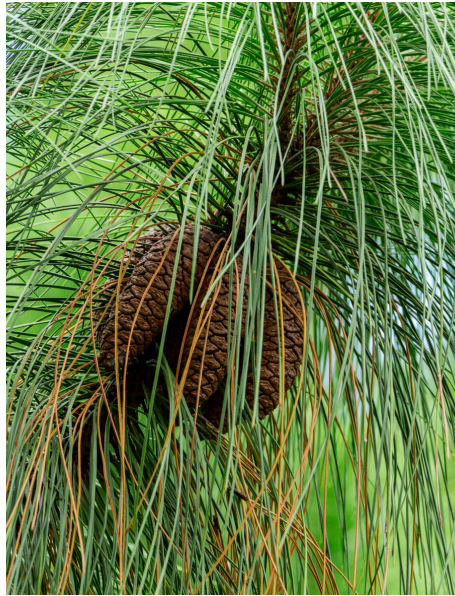
Its nectar produces a prized honey—Tupelo honey.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Early fall berries are a high-energy feast for birds and mammals—including wood ducks, robins, wild turkeys, and black bears.

Spring flowers attract native pollinators, while dense foliage offers nesting cover for songbirds.

In wetland or low-lying areas, deep roots help stabilize soil and reduce erosion.



LONGLEAF PINE

Pinus palustris

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Evergreen
- **Size at Maturity:** 60–100' tall × 30–40' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Open, airy, tall crown
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun
- **Water Needs:** Low once established
- **Growth Rate:** Slow at first ("grass stage"), then moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—birds, especially red-cockaded woodpeckers
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Legacy, drought-tolerant landscapes, habitat restoration

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

This is the tree that built the South—literally.

Once dominating millions of acres, the longleaf pine is a fire-adapted icon of the coastal plain, offering unmatched resilience and ecological value.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Supports rare and endangered species, including the red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise.

Its deep roots stabilize soil and improve drought resilience.

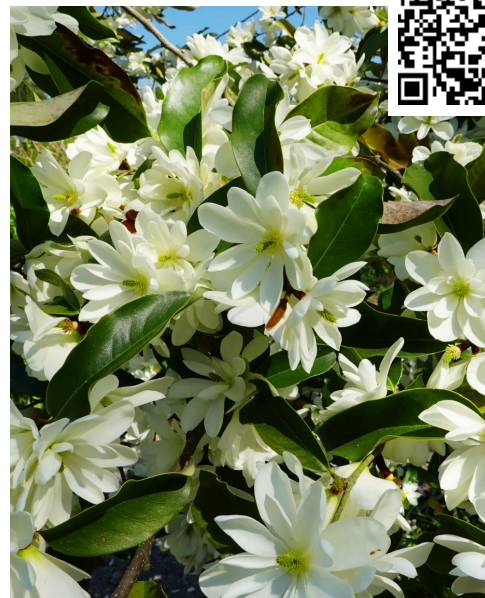
WHERE TO PLANT

Needs sandy, well-drained soil and full sun. Longleaf pine doesn't like wet feet or shade. Best suited for restoration sites or large open landscapes.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Requires patience**—young trees spend years in the "grass stage" to build root strength.
- **Avoid pruning lower limbs early on**—they're critical for photosynthesis and trunk strength as the tree matures.
- **Keep grass and weeds away from the base** with mulch or regular maintenance to reduce stress and encourage growth.

FUN FACT: *Longleaf pine needles can reach up to 18 inches long—and were historically used in baskets and bedding!*



SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA

Magnolia virginiana

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Semi-evergreen
- **Size at Maturity:** 10–35' tall × 10–20' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Upright, airy, multi-stem or single trunk
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun to part shade
- **Water Needs:** Medium to high; prefers moist, acidic soils
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—bees, birds
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Rain gardens, small yards, naturalistic landscapes, habitat

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

This graceful native magnolia produces creamy-white, lemon-scented blooms from spring through summer.

Its leaves are glossy green with silvery undersides, catching light with every breeze.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Flowers feed native pollinators, while red seeds attract birds. Its roots hold wet soils in place, making it a **top performer in storm-prone areas.**

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1–2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1–2 years to encourage root growth.
- **Maintain a 2–3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. Leave the trunk's root flare visible!
- **Avoid soil compaction** near roots.
- **Prune only lightly in late winter if needed**—magnolias dislike heavy cuts.

WHERE TO PLANT

Thrives in rain gardens, woodland edges, and other moist spots.

Tolerates clay soil and some flooding. Can be grown as a small tree or large shrub. *Avoid dry or exposed sites with inconsistent moisture.*

FUN FACT:

Sweetbay magnolia was the **first magnolia described to science in North America**—way back in 1688!



EASTERN REDBUD

Cercis canadensis

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 15–30' tall × 15–25' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Spreading, rounded
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun to part shade
- **Water Needs:** Medium
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—pollinators
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Ornamental, small yards, early blooms, understory, pollinator garden

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Redbuds are among the first to bloom each spring, with vivid magenta-pink flowers bursting straight from the branches. Heart-shaped leaves follow, and pollinators rejoice!

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A top native for early-season bees. Its foliage also supports some butterfly larvae. Seeds are eaten by songbirds and small mammals.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1–2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1–2 years to establish strong roots, especially during dry spells.
- **Maintain a 2–3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. Keep mulch away from the trunk, and leave the root flare visible!
- **Avoid soil compaction** or prolonged soggy conditions.
- **Prune during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and to maintain form. Avoid heavy pruning or topping, which can stress the tree and ruin its natural shape.

WHERE TO PLANT

Perfect for front yards, understory spots, or near patios. **Prefers well-drained soil and some protection from harsh afternoon sun** in hotter microclimates.

Avoid low spots with poor drainage or standing water.

FUN FACT

The flowers are edible! Try them out in a salad.



SOURWOOD

Oxydendrum arboreum

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 25–50' tall × 15–25' wide (often smaller in urban sites)
- **Canopy Style:** Narrow, pyramidal to oval; graceful, layered branches
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun to partial shade
- **Water Needs:** Medium; prefers acidic, well-drained soils
- **Growth Rate:** Slow to moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—nectar for pollinators
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Understory, pollinator gardens, acidic sites, four-season interest, fall color

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Shimmering white lily-of-the-valley blooms dangle delicately in mid-summer.

Seed panicles follow, persisting into winter—while **few native species can rival its fiery scarlet fall color.**

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A premier nectar tree for bees, producing the prized **“sourwood honey.”**

Its summer bloom bridges a seasonal nectar gap, supporting pollinators when few native trees are flowering.

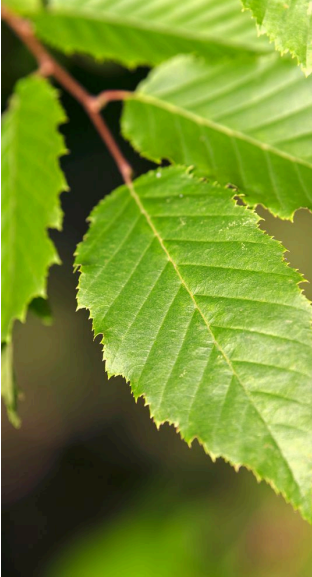
WHERE TO PLANT

Choose a sunny to lightly shaded spot with acidic, well-drained soil (avoid alkaline or compacted sites).

Excellent near patios or entries where flowers and fall color can be admired.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1–2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1–2 years to establish strong roots, especially during dry spells.
- **Maintain a 2–3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Keep mulch away from the trunk, and leave the root flare visible to avoid rot!*
- **Avoid soil compaction** or construction near roots.
- **Prune during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and to maintain form. *Avoid heavy pruning. Never top!*



AMERICAN HORNBEAM *Carpinus caroliniana*

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 20–35' tall × 20–30' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Low, rounded, finely textured
- **Sun Requirements:** Partial shade to shade (tolerates morning sun)
- **Water Needs:** Medium; prefers moist, well-drained soils, tolerates brief flooding
- **Growth Rate:** Slow to moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—catkins/seeds for birds; excellent caterpillar host
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Understory shade, streambanks, small yards, naturalistic plantings

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Also called “**musclewood**” for its smooth, sinewy trunk, this elegant understory tree brings refined texture and glowing orange-red fall color to shady spaces where few trees shine.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A powerhouse for woodland food webs: supports many native moth and butterfly larvae, offers early catkins for birds, and provides cover for songbirds.

Its dense canopy cools soil and stabilizes streambanks.

WHERE TO PLANT

Thrives in dappled light with consistently moist, well-drained soil—think woodland edges, north/east sides of homes, or along creeks (out of standing water).

Protect from reflected heat and heavily compacted sites.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1–2x/week) and deeply** during the first 1–2 years to establish strong roots, especially during dry spells.
- **Maintain a 2–3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. Keep mulch away from the trunk, and leave the root flare visible to avoid rot!
- **Avoid soil compaction** or construction near roots.
- **Prune lightly during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and to maintain form. *Avoid heavy pruning. Never top.*
- **Avoid high-alkaline or chronically dry soils.**



PAWPAW

Asimina triloba

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 15–25' tall × 10–20' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Upright, oval; forms small colonies by suckering
- **Sun Requirements:** Partial shade (full sun yields more fruit with adequate moisture)
- **Water Needs:** Medium; prefers organically rich, moist, well-drained soils
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—mammals, bugs
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Edible landscaping, woodland edges, small groves, understory

FUN FACT: Pawpaw is the largest edible fruit native to North America.

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1–2x/week) and deeply** during the first two years to encourage strong root growth. Maintain consistent soil moisture, especially during hot or dry periods.
- **Maintain a 2–3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Leave the trunk's root flare visible!*
- **Avoid soil compaction** or disturbance near roots.
- **Prune lightly during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches. *Avoid aggressive pruning, and never top.*
- **Allow (or remove) suckers** depending on whether you want a grove or single-stem tree.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

Big, tropical-looking leaves, burgundy spring flowers, and **custard-textured fruit with notes of banana and mango.**

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

A specialist host for zebra swallowtail butterflies! Flowers are pollinated by flies and beetles. Fragrant fruit feeds raccoons, opossums, foxes—and people! **Foliage is typically deer-resistant.**

WHERE TO PLANT

Give it morning sun and afternoon shade—and fertile, consistently moist soil. Plant two (or more) genetically distinct trees within 15–25 feet for reliable fruit set.



PERSIMMON

Diospyros virginiana

At a Glance

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous
- **Size at Maturity:** 30–60' tall × 20–35' wide
- **Canopy Style:** Oval or irregular
- **Sun Requirements:** Full sun
- **Water Needs:** Medium; drought-tolerant once established; prefers acidic to neutral soils
- **Growth Rate:** Moderate
- **Wildlife Attractant:** Yes—mammals, birds
- **Native to NC:** Yes
- **Ideal Use:** Edible fruit, wildlife gardening

TREE CARE TIPS

- **Water routinely (1-2x/week) and deeply** during the first year to encourage root growth. Mature trees tolerate drought but benefit from occasional watering in dry spells.
- **Maintain a 2-3" layer of mulch** to stabilize soil temperature, conserve moisture, and reduce weeds. *Leave the trunk's root flare visible to avoid rot!*
- Avoid soil compaction or construction near roots.
- **Prune during winter dormancy** to remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches and maintain structure. *Avoid warm-season pruning. Never top!*
- **Plant in full sun for best fruit production.**

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

This low-maintenance native fruit tree offers delicious golden-orange persimmons (when fully ripe!) and fiery fall foliage.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Persimmons feed foxes, opossums, raccoons, deer, and more. Its leaves and flowers also support insects and pollinators.

FUN FACT

Early American settlers used persimmon seeds as a coffee substitute—and folklore says you can predict winter weather from the seed's pattern!

WHERE TO PLANT

Prefers sunny sites with well-drained soil. Great for naturalized areas, edible landscapes, or woodland edges.

Give it space—it may sucker to form small groves. *Avoid overly wet or compacted areas.*