

### *Quercus spp.*

Oaks are some of the most prized and desirable shade trees for Brevard County. There are numerous species of oak which are native to central Florida. Among those, two are commonly used in landscapes and are offered at Rockledge Gardens.

The most valued and long-lived among the oaks is **Live Oak** (*Quercus virginiana*). This moderately fast growing, magnificent tree is characterized by its large, spreading, semi-evergreen canopy which often attains more width than height. Maximum height for the Live Oak may exceed 50 feet, although the canopy can exceed 80 feet. Leaves are light to dark green and oblong in shape. Unlike most other oaks, the leaves of the Live Oak are “cupped” or slightly rolled under along the edges. This characteristic helps one identify Live Oaks when trees are very young and look similar to other species. Live Oak has a good salt tolerance and may be used in off-the-dune areas, with some protection from direct salt spray. As trees mature, they will adapt to salt spray and will be “shaped” by easterly winds, growing slightly more towards the west. Live Oaks can be used in the landscape for avenue plantings or in open lawn areas for a large shade tree.

**Laurel Oak** (*Quercus laurifolia*) is another species of oak commonly used in Brevard County. This species grows at a fast rate into an upright, symmetrical tree to about 75 feet in height with a 40 foot spread. The Laurel Oak is considered evergreen and usually keeps most of its leaves in the cooler months. Leaves are two to four inches long and oblong to ovate in shape, with a bright green color. Unlike the leaves of the Live Oak, leaves of the Laurel Oak are flat in appearance. The Laurel Oak has poor salt tolerance and should be used inland for a large shade tree in open lawn areas.

All of the oaks mentioned produce acorns of varying shapes and sizes, and develop from inconspicuous flowers called catkins. The above two species of oak require good drainage and plenty of sunlight for successful growth throughout Brevard County. Once established, little care is needed.

### Planting

Oaks grow well in many different types of soil, but best growth can be expected when trees are set in well-drained, improved soil in full sun. Trees should be placed in the ground at soil level and a three to four foot mulched ring should be left around the base of the tree to conserve moisture and protect the tree from damage from lawn maintenance equipment. Newly

planted trees should be watered thoroughly every day for the first week. For the next two to four weeks, water two to three times thoroughly each week.

### Fertilizing

Frequent light applications of **Espoma Tree-tone** fertilizer will get the trees off to a good start. Apply one-half to one cup per tree every six to eight weeks during the growing season. Larger, established trees can be fertilized in early spring using three to five pounds of **Espoma Tree-tone** per tree. Fertilizer should be applied throughout the entire root zone which includes the area out to and slightly beyond the canopy of the tree.

**Sunniland 6-6-6** can also be applied per bag instructions three times per year.

### Plant Problems

**Mushroom Root-rot.** Disease which attacks the roots and causes premature death of the tree; usually occurs from excess moisture around the root zone. *Solution:* no control available for this disease. Trees should be planted in a well-drained location with little or no chance of standing water or poor drainage.

**Blister Blight, Leaf Curl.** Airborne fungus which distorts leaves, causing them to become crinkled or puckered. This is common throughout Brevard County and is not a serious problem. *Solution:* if fungus spreads throughout the tree **Liquid Copper** or **Systemic Fungicide** may be sprayed to help control and contain this problem. Spray according to the proper application rate as specified on the label. Clean up fallen leaves and remove from area.

**Galls.** Bacteria-infected areas on twigs or branches become enlarged or knotty. Galls are caused by other organisms. Often no control is required. *Solution:* prune out infected branches and dispose of or destroy properly.



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