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# WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • January 2004

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## The Next Meeting is January 12

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The next meeting will be Monday, January 12, **7:15 p.m.**, at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). Kresge Theater is on the top floor of the Grace Library and is accessed from the upper campus. Place a note on your dashboard saying "Botanical Society Meeting," or use your parking permit.

Our speaker, **Ed Divers**, will present Edible Wild Plants. Ed is an avid explorer of this region's cultural and natural features, and a storyteller and naturalist. He leads unique and memorable hikes for the Sierra Club and the American Youth Hostel.

If it appears that there will be hazardous driving conditions the night of the meeting, please call telephone number (724) 872-5232 after 5 p.m. for a recorded message indicating whether the meeting will be cancelled.

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## Dues reminder

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The Botanical Society is now collecting annual dues; rates are \$10 individual and \$15 family. Students pay half-rate. Make your check payable to BSWP and send it to:

BSWP, Loree Speedy  
279 Orr Road  
West Newton, PA 15089  
(724) 872-5232; [loree@winbeam.com](mailto:loree@winbeam.com)

If you wish, include your phone and e-mail address. The checks will be forwarded to our Treasurer Kim Metheny.

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## Forest Trees

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*The following is excerpted from "A Geography of Pennsylvania" by Charles B. Trego, published in 1843 by Edward C. Biddle of Philadelphia. Charles B. Trego was a geologist and naturalist and a member of the American Philosophical Society. He writes at a time when European settlers had recently cleared valleys and ridgetops; in twenty years the only large area of remaining virgin forest would be in north-central Pennsylvania. The text demonstrates how the wood culture stemming from Pennsylvania forests affected the lives of the settlers, providing homes, tools, food and fuel.*

It is not intended in this article, nor would it be consistent with the plan of our work, to give more than a mere outline of the varied and extensive series of vegetable productions which constitute the Flora of Pennsylvania. Our attention will, therefore, be chiefly confined to a brief notice of the more useful kinds of forest trees, and such plants as are most common or specially worthy of consideration on account of their connection with agriculture, arts, manufactures, commerce and medicine.

The Oak, in its various species, is one of the most really useful, not only in Pennsylvania, but in most parts of the United States as well as in Europe. It seems, like iron ore in the mineral kingdom, to have been multiplied by nature in proportion to its utility; being found almost everywhere, and everywhere supplying the wants of man for a vast variety of purposes. Its wood is used by the shipbuilder, by the civil engineer and architect, the cooper, the coachmaker, the wheelwright, the millwright, in the construction of farming implements, for

fences and for fuel. The bark is used in tanning leather, in dyeing, and forms a considerable article of export to foreign countries.

White Oak (*Q. alba*) is the most esteemed of this noble family of trees; its wood, being compact, strong, tough and durable, is adapted to a greater variety of purposes than any of the other species. It is found throughout the State; but in the northern and western counties the wood is not so compact and tough as in the southeastern districts. This may be the effect of a difference of soil, or because the forests are thinner and the trees more widely separated from each other in the older settled counties. Even the best of our oak timber has not so close a grain as that of Europe.



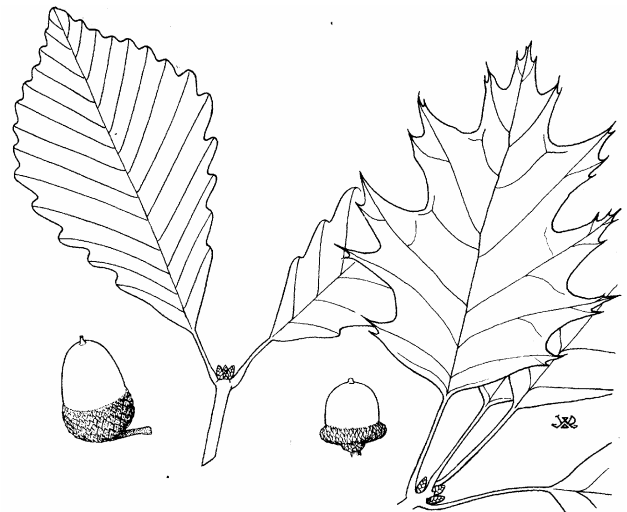
Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*) and White Oak (*Q. alba*) - Illustration from *Flora of West Virginia*, Part II, 1953 by P. D. Strasbaugh and Earl L. Core

Post Oak, or Iron Oak [*Q. stellata*], seems to be chiefly confined to the eastern part of the State, and is less abundant than the White Oak which it so much resembles that it is generally taken for a variety of that species. It does not grow to so large a size as the White Oak; the wood has a finer grain, the acorn is smaller, and the lobes of the leaf wider and obtuse at the termination.

Swamp White Oak [*Q. bicolor*] is not abundant and grows only around swamps, or in low and very moist grounds. It is less esteemed than some of the other species.

Swamp Chestnut Oak [*Q. michauxii*] grows in swamps and wet grounds, bears great resemblance to the Rock Chestnut Oak, and is frequently confounded with it. The leaves are similar, but the acorn of the rock chestnut oak is more slender and pointed.

Rock Chestnut Oak [*Q. prinus*; *Q. montana*] is not generally diffused throughout our forests, but is chiefly found on rocky ridges and declivities. It is very abundant on many of the mountains in the interior of the State. The wood is said to be excellent for fuel, and the bark is highly esteemed by tanners.



Rock Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) and Red Oak (*Q. rubra*) - Illustration from *Flora of West Virginia*, Part II, 1953 by P. D. Strasbaugh and Earl L. Core

Laurel Oak or Shingle Oak (*Q. imbricaria*) is rare east of the mountains; but west of them is more common.

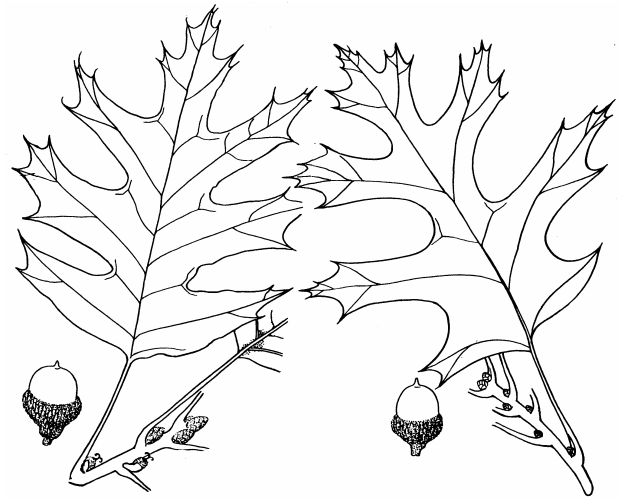
Scrub Oak [*Q. ilicifolia*] is very abundant on barren mountain ridges, seldom growing more than six or eight feet in height, and so close that it is often difficult to find a passage through the thickly intermingled branches. So thickly does this shrub grow, and so nearly uniform is its height, that when viewed from a distance, many of the barren wastes, containing hundreds of acres, appear as if covered with grass, with here and there a solitary pine tree rising high above to relieve the monotony of the scene.

Spanish Oak [Southern Red Oak] (*Q. falcata*) is much less common in Pennsylvania than farther south. Its wood is not considered of much value; but the bark is greatly esteemed for the manufacture of leather, and commands a high price.

Black Oak [*Q. velutina*] grows abundantly in most of our forests, and is one of our largest trees. The wood is of a reddish color, and coarse-grained; it is not very durable but is used for fencing, firewood, staves and shingles. It is from this species that the *Quercitron bark* is obtained, which is exported in large quantities, and used in dyeing wool, silk, etc., a yellow color. When used by tanners it imparts a yellow tinge to the leather.

Scarlet Oak (*Q. coccinea*). This tree is confounded with the true Spanish Oak [Southern Red Oak], being called Red Oak in the northern States, and Spanish Oak in the south. The leaves of the Spanish Oak are very downy underneath, while those of the Scarlet Oak are smooth and shining on both sides. The leaves of the Scarlet Oak begin to change color with the first cold weather, and after a few frosts they turn to a lively red, and not to a dull tint like the true Red Oak. It is a large tree; the timber is reddish, of a coarse texture and its pores are entirely empty. Not being so durable as the White Oak, it is but little used in building, or in wheelwright work, but chiefly employed for staves, fuel and fencing.

Red Oak (*Q. rubra*) has leaves somewhat resembling the Spanish Oak, but not downy on the underside. In autumn they turn to a dull red and then fall. It bears acorns abundantly, which are very large, and contained in remarkably flat cups, the scales which are so closely united that the surface is nearly even. The texture of the wood is coarse, with large and empty pores; it is strong, but not durable, and therefore, little used in buildings. The bark has a thick cellular texture, with a thin outside covering, and as well as that of the Scarlet Oak, is much used by tanners.



Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*) and Scarlet Oak (*Q. coccinea*) - Illustration from *Flora of West Virginia*, Part II, 1953 by P. D. Strasbaugh and Earl L. Core

Pin Oak (*Q. palustris*) is common in low and wet places, and leaves much like those of the scarlet oak, but considerably smaller. The small limbs along the body of the tree die as it advances in age and drop off at a little distance from the trunk, which gives it the appearance of having pins driven into it. The bark is smoother than that of most other oaks.

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## Conservation of Native Plants Aids in Pursuit of Eagle Scout Ranking

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In July 2003, members of the Botanical Society voted to donate \$200 for a boy scout's community project that protects and highlights native plants.

David Machesney, a Boy Scout in Troop 368 at St. Teresa Parish in Perrysville, is constructing a deer exclusion fence in North Park. The exclusion fence will protect native plants from the browsing effects of deer. Once the enclosure is built, he will remove all non-native plants and reintroduce natives. Botanical Society member Esther Allen will help David choose the appropriate plants. The North Park naturalist can use this area for educational purposes.

We applaud David for choosing native plant conservation and education and wish him the best in his pursuit of the Eagle Scout ranking.

## Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – January 2004

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West Newton, PA 15089

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### **WILDFLOWERS - Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania**

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WILDFLOWERS is published monthly by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. We welcome short articles of botanical interest, drawings, and notices of botanical events and group activities. Send to the editor at the above address. Deadline for submissions is the 23th of the previous month.

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### **The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information**

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The Botanical Society was founded in 1886. The object of the Society shall be to bring together those who are interested in Botany and to encourage the study of this science and a knowledge of plants. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individual and \$15.00 for family. Students can join at half-rate. To join, mail your name, your address, and check payable to "Botanical Soc. of W PA" to Loree Speedy, 279 Orr Road, West Newton, PA 15089. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:15 p.m. sharp, at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome to the informative program and business meeting.

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### **Wildflowers of Pennsylvania – Ordering Information – 400 pages of text and 612 color photographs**

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Wildflowers of Pennsylvania can be purchased for \$20.00 (plus \$1.40 sales tax for PA residents). Forward your check, made payable to Botanical Society of Western PA, to Dr. Haywood at the address below. If you order by mail, add \$2 postage and handling for one book, \$3.00 for two, \$4.00 for three, \$4.50 for four. Send your request to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM, Ph.D., 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165 (412) 578-6175; mjhaywood@carlow.edu