Oregon White Oaks (*Quercus garryana*)

An Icon of the Pacific Northwest

Oregon white oak is one of only two native oaks in the state and is a key part of the region's natural and cultural heritage. These trees provide critical habitat and high-protein acorns for wildlife, such as western gray squirrels, slender-billed nuthatches and a host of insects. Many of the mature trees we see today are over 500 years old, a testament to their resilience and slow growth.

Adaptations for Survival

- **Drought-Tolerant:** Deep taproots enable them to withstand hot, dry summers.
- **Fire-Resilient:** Thick bark protects mature trees from wildfires.
- **Wind-Firm:** Extensive root systems anchor them securely.

Ecological and Cultural Importance

Oregon white oak savannas, with their wide-canopied mature oaks, have been maintained for millennia through Native American burning practices because of their importance as sources of food and wildlife habitat.

A Species in Decline

Once abundant, Oregon white oak habitat now occupies less than 10% of its historical range. Because of their increasing rarity, it's important to protect older trees remaining on the landscape and plant new oaks.

Threats to Oregon White Oaks

- Cutting of mature oaks to make space for development, farming, and other land uses.
- Lack of Indigenous burning practices on the landscape.
- Competition from faster growing trees like bigleaf maple and Douglas fir.
- Aggressive grass and weed cover, which make it hard for acorns to germinate and grow.
- Spread of the invasive Mediterranean Oak borer beetle.

How to Help

Buy wood where you burn it
The Oregon Dept. of Forestry recommends moving wood no more than 10 miles before burning it.

Record and monitor oaks on iNaturalist
Help scientists and community members find and study oaks. Download the iNaturalist app to log oaks in our project, "Oregon oaks of the Willamette Valley."

Plant an oak sapling and protect mature oaks

Learn more about the MOB.
Visit ODA.Direct/MOBalert to learn more about identifying and reporting Mediterranean Oak Borer and wmswcd.org/species/mediterranean-oak-borer/ to learn more about local efforts and events to help stop the spread.

Oregon White Oaks

What they are, why they matter, how to protect them, and where to find them in your community

Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

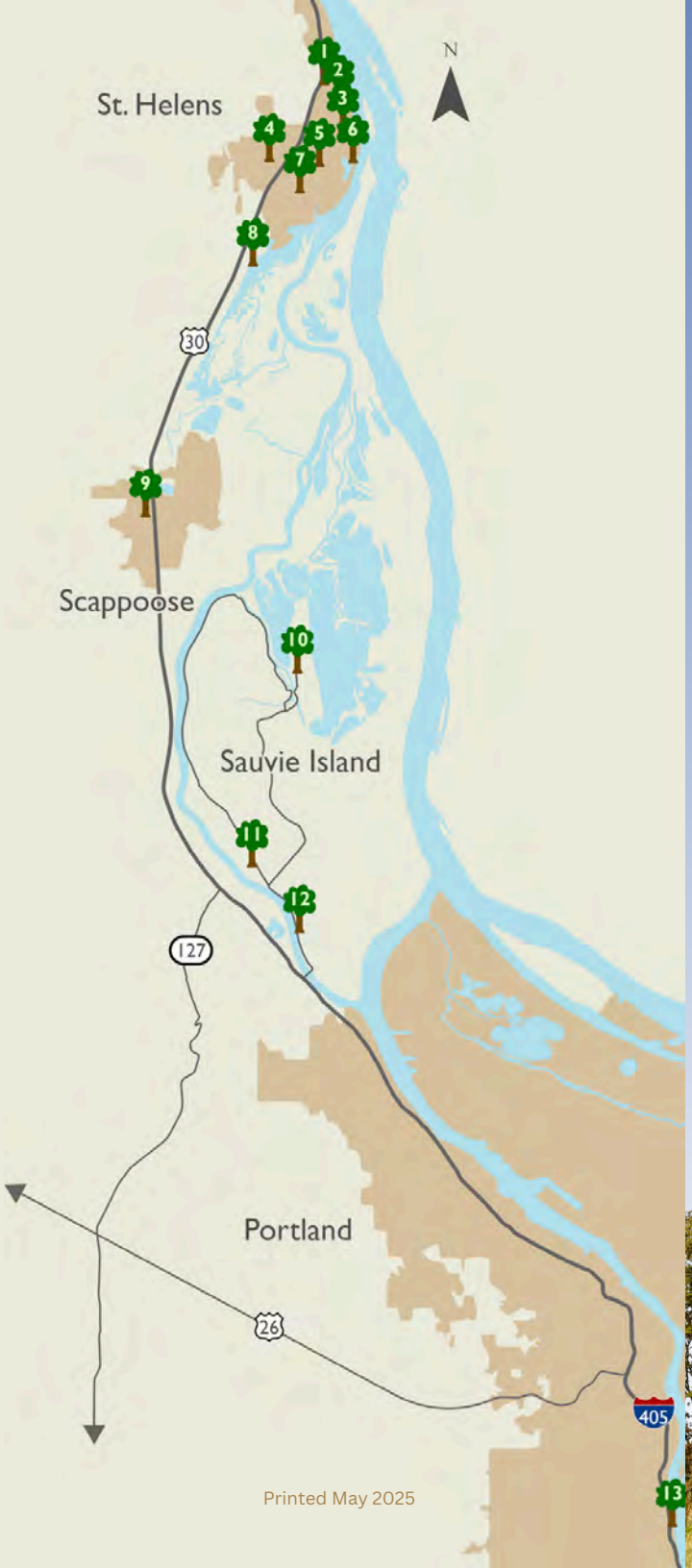
Visit local OAKS

1. Dalton Lake Nature Preserve
2. Columbia Botanical Gardens
3. Godfrey Park
4. Campbell Park
5. Heinie Huemann Park
6. Nob Hill Nature Park
7. McCormick Park
8. Scappoose Bay Marina*
9. Chief Concomly Park
10. Oak Island Nature Trail*
11. Bybee-Howell Park
12. Wapato Access Greenway
13. Willamette Park*

*Parking fee or permit required

Honoring the land

This land has been and continues to be the homelands of the Clackamas Chinook, the Willamette Tumwater, the Wasco-Wishram, the Watlata, the Multnomah, and other Chinookan peoples, as well as the Tualatin Kalapuya, the Cayuse, the Molalla, the Yakama, and other tribes and bands of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. They are the original stewards of the the white oak ecosystems our communities appreciate and rely on. Be mindful of this legacy of care when recreating in this region.



Printed May 2025

How to ID Oregon White Oak

- **Size:** They can grow up to 60 ft high or more, with a trunk diameter up to 40 inches.
- **Shape:** Most oaks have one trunk but occasionally they have two or more. The crown/canopy often has a mushroom shape. Twisted and corkscrewing branches gives the Oregon white oak a distinct, contorted look that becomes more noticeable with age.
- **Bark:** On a mature tree, bark is often grey with a rough texture and thick furrows.

- **Leaves:** Have a leathery texture and deep rounded lobes (creating a finger-y look), with shiny dark green tops and yellowish green underneath. Leaves turn brown and fall in the late fall. Leaf photo from Yakima Valley College.

Find our iNaturalist group, "Oregon oaks of the Willamette Valley" to join a community of oak appreciation.