

# Southern Red Oak

## *Quercus falcata*

### Description

Southern Red Oak is a deciduous tree that may grow to 80 feet (25 meters) in height. The bark is gray and furrowed. The leaves are alternately arranged, broadly “U” shaped at the base, densely and permanently hairy on the undersurface, and with 3 to 7 bristle-tipped lobes that tend to have relatively few secondary lobes or teeth. The flowers, appearing from late April to May, are unisexual, with female flowers occurring singly or in pairs and male flowers arranged in much more conspicuous clusters of long, drooping catkins. The fruit is an acorn averaging about 1/2 inch (1.0-1.5 cm) in length, and is covered about 1/3 of its length by a scaly saucer-like cup.



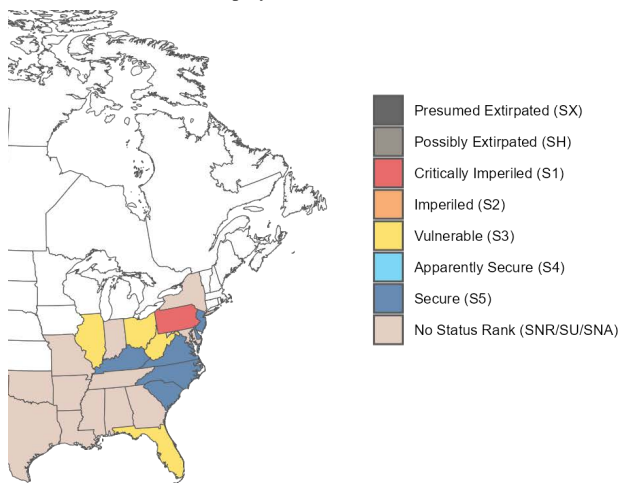
Photo source: PNHP

### Distribution & Habitat

Southern Red Oak has a distribution from New York south and west into Texas and Florida. In Pennsylvania, it represents a southerly species and has been documented historically in a few southeastern counties. The species grows in well-drained woods, thickets, serpentine barrens, and dry slopes.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

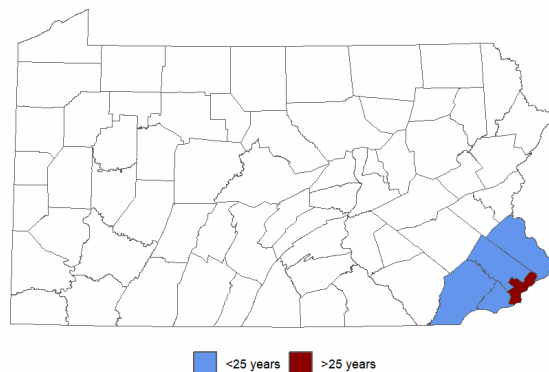
Map by NatureServe 2025



### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers Southern Red Oak to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been confirmed and the small state range. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered. Fewer than 15 populations are known from the state.

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### Conservation Considerations

The known populations of Southern Red Oak are threatened by habitat loss, invasive species, and in some locations, excessive browsing by deer. Establishing buffers around fragmented forested habitat and removal of invasive species will help to maintain populations.

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G5** – Globally Secure; **S1** – Critically Imperiled in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

