

# Fun Facts

## Oaks are “keystone” species.

This means if oaks weren’t around, other plants and animals might not be around either. Red-headed woodpeckers and flying squirrels depend on oaks’ large cavities to raise their young. Over 500 insects live and feed on oaks, which means Wilson’s warblers, American redstarts, common yellowthroats and other insect-eating migrants rely on oaks’ “fast food” stops along the way.

## The oak is the national tree of the United States

In 2001 the National Arbor Day Foundation sponsored a nationwide vote, and the oak won. Oaks are a symbol of strength and endurance.

## An oak can soak up 50 gallons of water in one day.

This means oaks can play an important role in flood-control efforts.

## Only one acorn in 10,000 will grow into a tree.

Deer, squirrels and other wild animal eat *a lot* of acorns, and acorns that don’t end up as meals need special conditions to sprout. They must remain at certain temperatures for four to eight weeks. If the weather is too warm or too cold, the process cannot start.

## The Pechango oak in California is about 2,000 years old.

That makes it the oldest oak in the U.S. Oaks in DuPage live to be about 250.

## Don’t stand under an oak in a storm.

Lightning can strike anywhere, but oaks seem to be struck by lightning more often than other trees, although no one knows why. Some scientists think it’s because oaks tend to be the tallest trees on the landscape. Others think an oak’s rough bark traps more water than smoother bark on other trees, making oaks better conductors of electricity.

## Wildlife are picky when it comes to acorns.

Oaks belong to one of two groups: white (white, swamp white, bur, chinquapin) and red (northern red, pin, black). White oak acorns have fewer tannins, which means they taste better to wild animals. When white oak acorns are scarce, though, animals will eat more red.

Oaks are the foundation of our ecosystem.

They’re dramatic and beautiful, but they also provide food and shelter for birds, insects, and other wildlife year-round.

Oaks can live to be 250 years old, but the county’s population is aging. By planting saplings now, we can ensure there will be mature oaks to replace them.

