

## Station 10: Oaks

Red oaks (*Quercus rubra*) and white oaks (*Quercus alba*) are found throughout Hayes Woods. White oaks and red oaks are easily distinguished by the lobes of their leaves. White oaks have rounded lobes with no bristles and red oaks have pointed lobes with bristle tips.

Oaks serve as keystone species that support a wide variety of organisms. Their large, spreading canopies provide essential shade and shelter for many animals, including birds, mammals, and insects. Oak trees produce acorns, which are a critical food source for various wildlife, such as squirrels, deer, and numerous bird species. Oaks support an outstanding diversity of insects, including caterpillars, which serve as important food for many birds. The presence of oaks can enhance biodiversity by creating habitats for numerous organisms, from fungi and lichens to larger mammals. Additionally, oak forests contribute to soil health by promoting nutrient cycling and preventing erosion with their extensive root systems. Their role in carbon sequestration helps to mitigate climate change. Overall, oaks are foundational components of many forest ecosystems, providing ecological stability and resilience.



White Oak



Red Oak