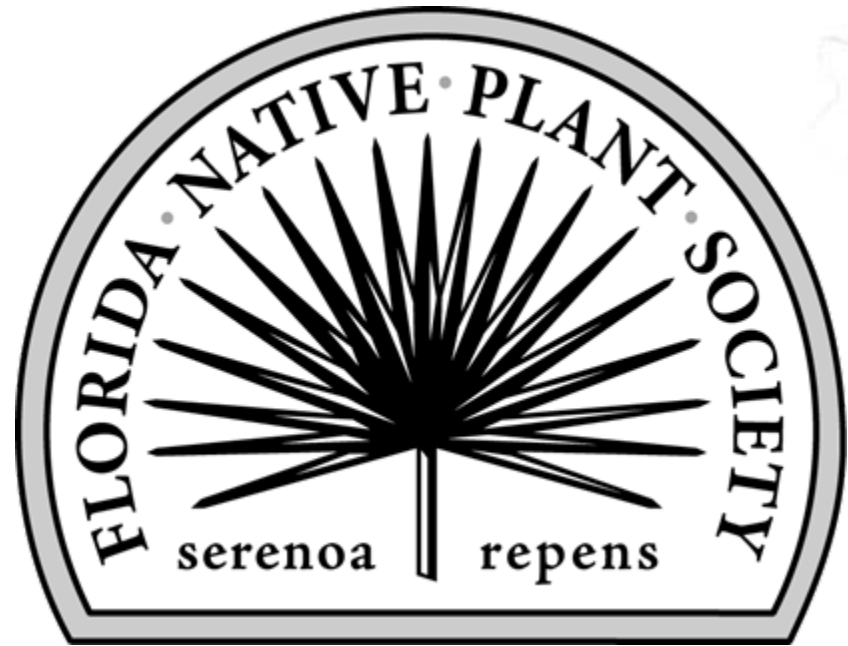


Florida Native Plant Society



Native Plant Owners Manual

Hydrangea quercifolia – Oakleaf Hydrangea

Mark Hutchinson

Putting things in perspective

All seasonal references are applicable to the eastern panhandle of Hernando County where the plants portrayed in this presentation grow. This area happens to be a cold spot in central Florida due to the Brooksville Ridge and approximates a Hardiness Zone of 8a or 8b, average annual low temperatures ranging between 10 and 20 °F.

Any reference to medicinal or culinary use of plants or plant parts should in no way be considered an endorsement by the Florida Native Plant Society of any sort of experimentation or consumptive use.

Please do not attempt to rescue any native plants without first reviewing the [FNPS Policy on Transplanting Native Plants](#)

Special thanks to Lucille Lane, Shirley Denton, Kari Ruder and Brooke Martin

Oakleaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea family





Hydrangea quercifolia



Navigation Links

(for use in open discussion)

[What's in a Name?](#)

[Biological Classification – Tree of Life](#)

Where does this plant grow?

- [In North America](#)
- [In Florida](#)

What this plant needs to -

- [Thrive](#)
- [Propagate](#)
- [Live a long life](#)

[Life Cycle](#)

[References](#)

‘View/Full Screen Mode’
recommended

Throughout this
presentation, clicking
this symbol will return
you to this page.



Oakleaf Hydrangea, graybeard, oak leaf hydrangea, oak-leaf hydrangea

Hydrangea (hy - DRAIN - juh)

From the Greek '*hydra*,' (water) and '*aggos*,' meaning vessel, goblet, or jar - referring to the cup-shaped fruit. The Greek mythological multi-headed creature called the Hydra lived in the waters of the swamps

quercifolia (kwer - se - FOH - lee - uh)

Latin meaning "leaves like the oak tree"



Biological and Genetic Relationships

Hydrangea quercifolia Bartram - oakleaf hydrangea

└─ *Hydrangea* L. - hydrangea

└─ Hydrangeaceae (hydrangea family)

Loasaceae

Hydrostachys

Mastixia

Mastixioids

Diplopanax

Nyssaceae

Nyssa

Nyssoids

Davidia

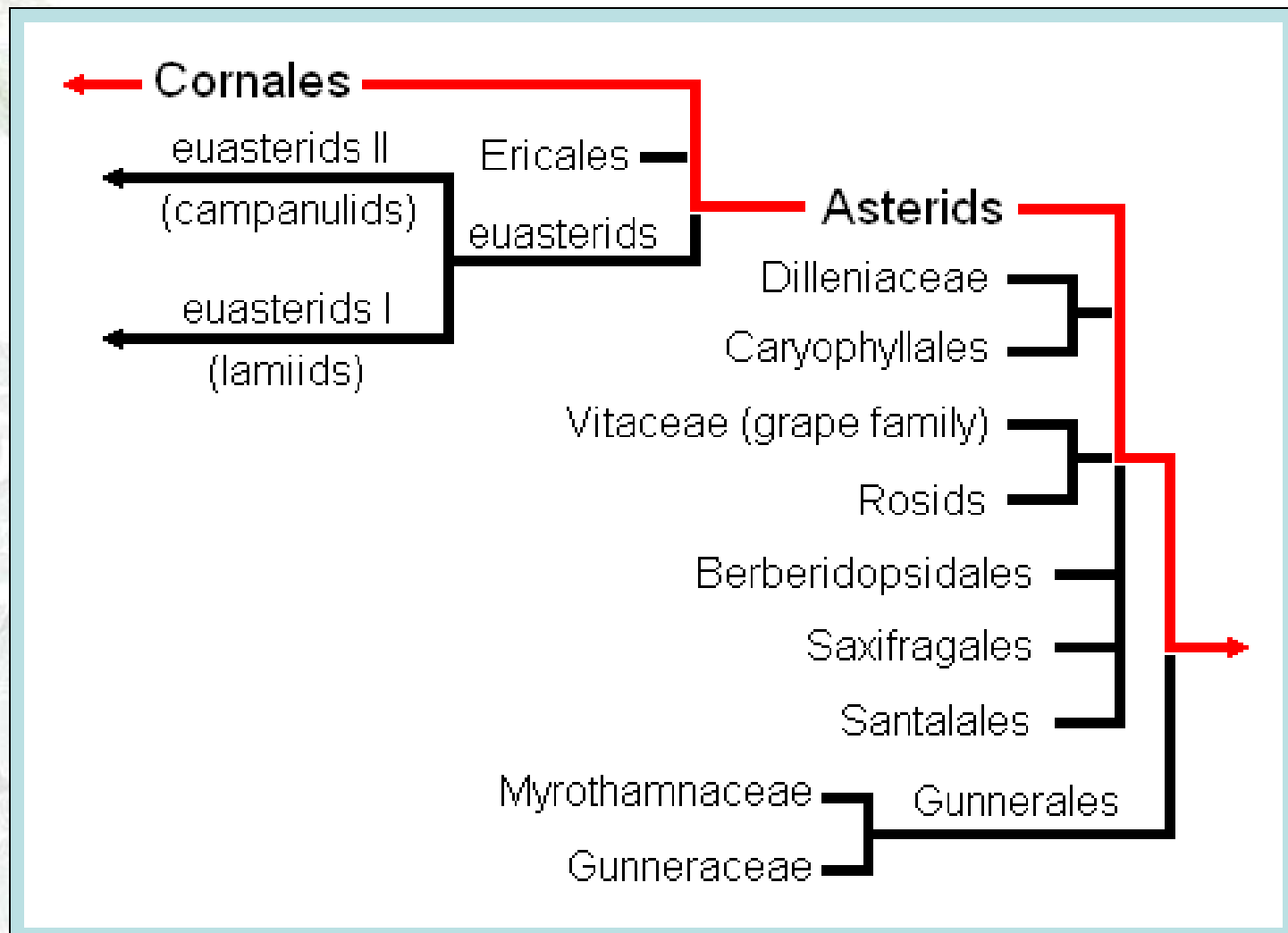
Camptotheca

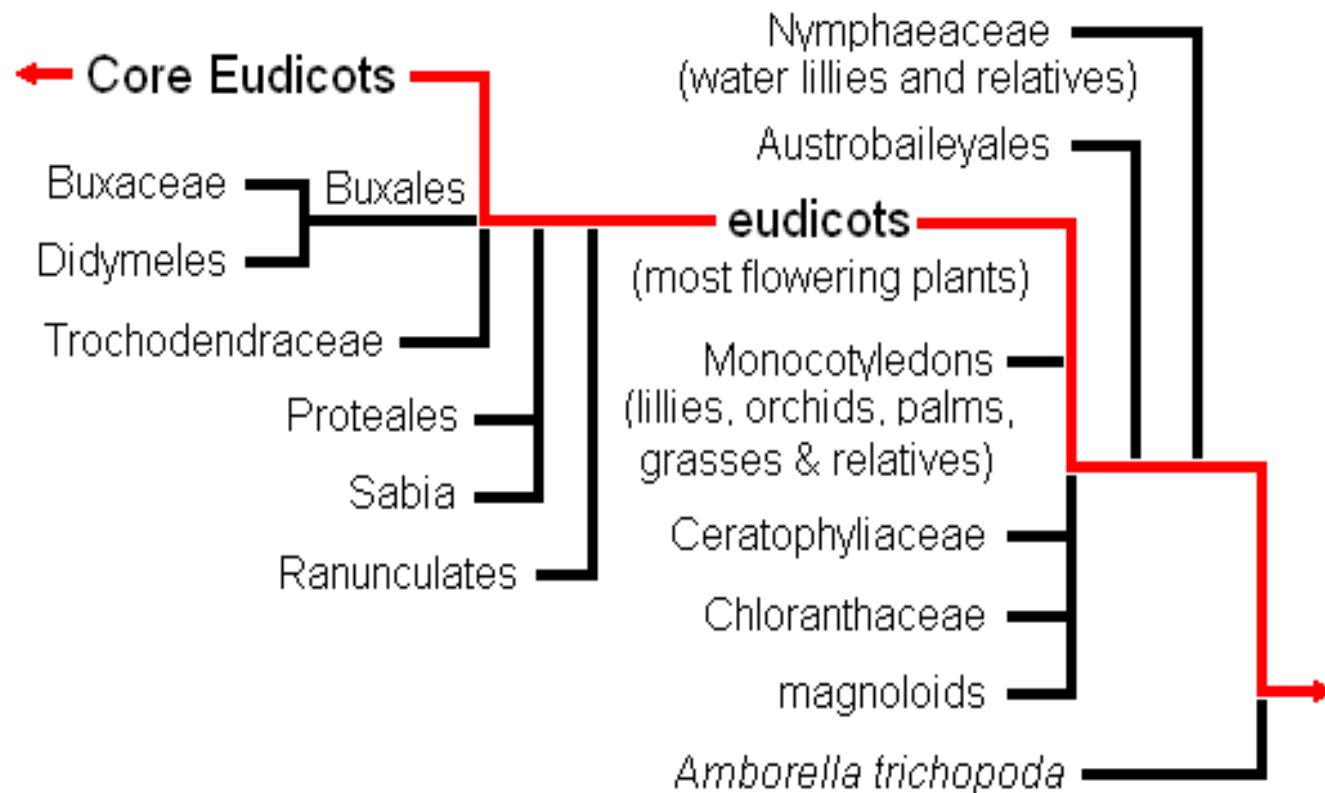
← Grubbiaceae

← Cornaceae (including dogwoods)

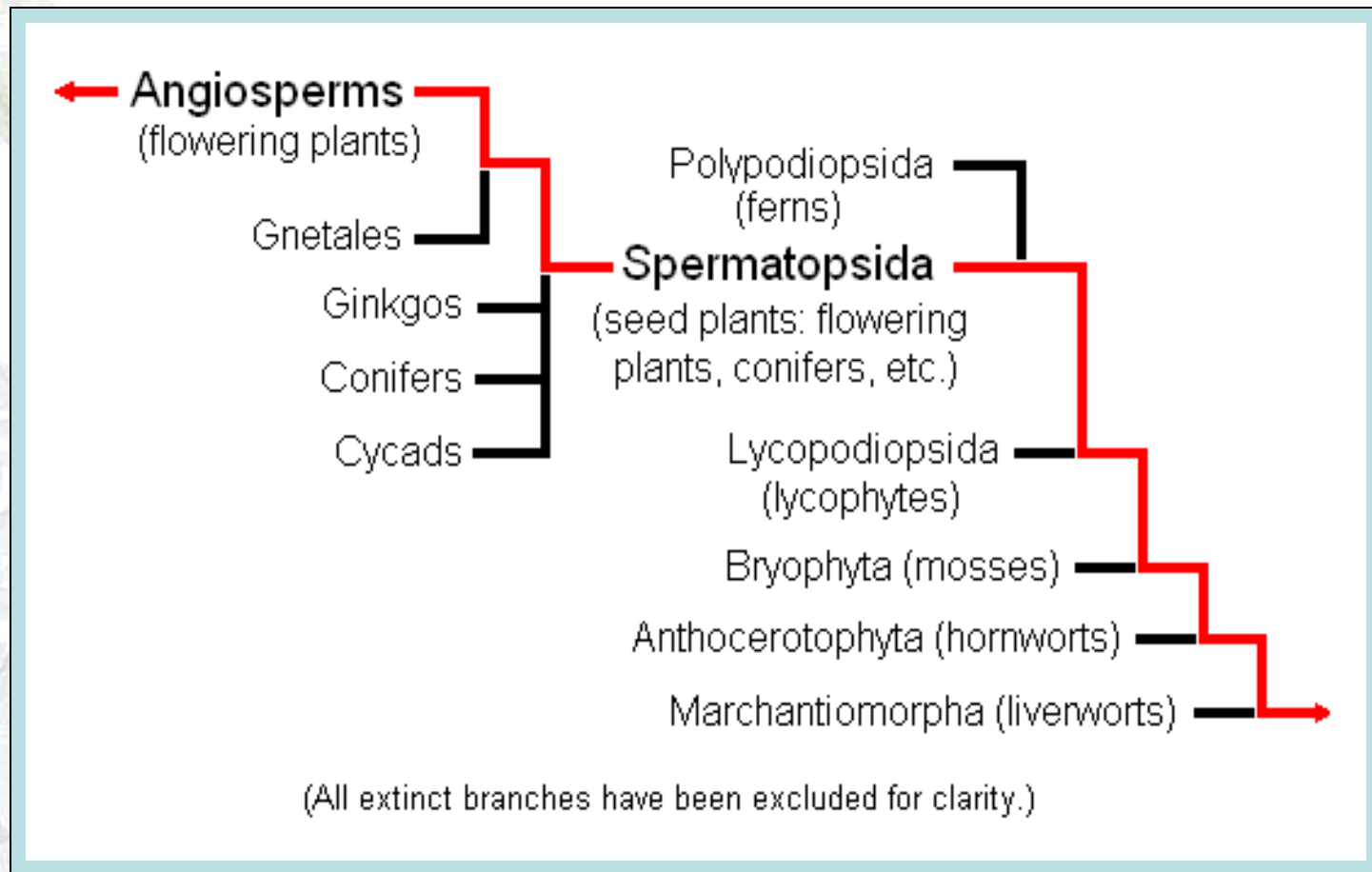
Each species is a leaf on the Tree of Life. Its genetic connections can be explored by following the branches (red line), towards the roots of life.







(Individual species and genus denoted by italics)

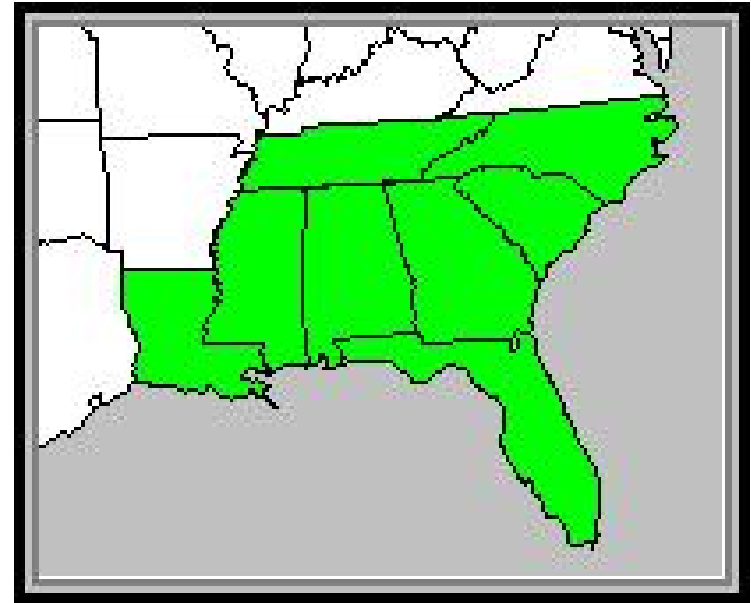


Link to the University of Arizona's [Tree of Life](#).



Species Distribution in the United States

Oakleaf hydrangea, is native to North America, and endemic to the southeastern U.S. Its range extends from the middle of Louisiana, north to the southern edge of Tennessee, and as far east as North and South Carolina, but occurs most frequently in and around Alabama where it is the state wildflower.



(For specific distribution within any of the shaded areas go to the USDA link provided on the reference page, and click the shaded area of interest.)





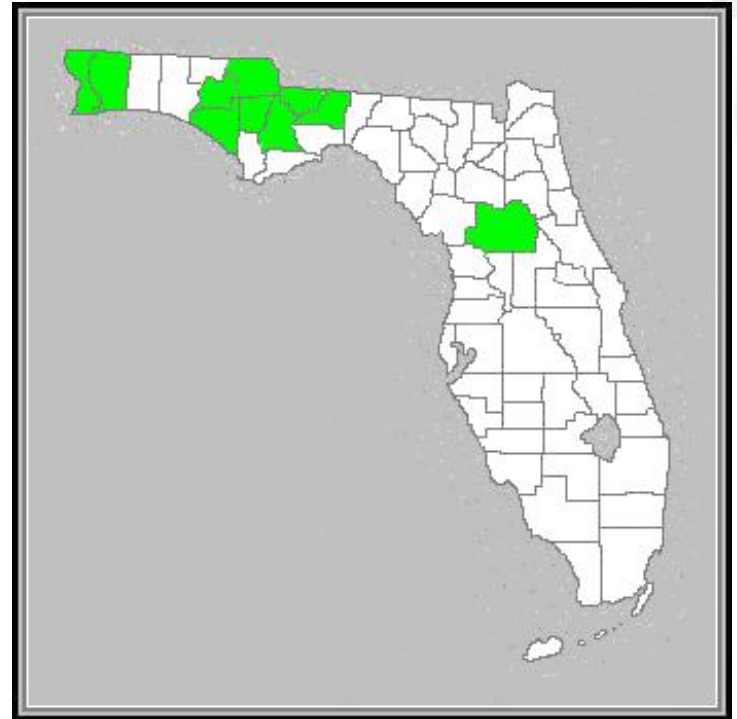
- The USDA, NRCS, lists a total of six species of the genus *Hydrangea* L. within the United States.
- The USDA identifies two species of this genus occurring in Florida, both native. The other - *H. arborescens* is considered endangered.

**R.K.Godfrey Herbarium (FSU)
#59141 Jackson Co.,
5/15/1960**



Species Distribution within Florida

- *Hydrangea quercifolia*, a perennial deciduous shrub, to small tree, is *vouchered in only ten counties in Florida, primarily in the western panhandle.
- Oakleaf Hydrangea prefers moist, fertile, well-drained soils that are calcareous, (containing limestone) in understory areas of open woodlands.



(*vouchered – indicates that a fully documented dried specimen has been deposited in an approved herbarium)



Plant Structure and Life Cycle



Following winter dieback, spring brings new growth from old canes and new plants emerging from underground stolons, encouraging growth in colonies.

The yellowish-green leaves have three, five, or seven pointed lobes that can grow to as long as twelve inches in well-shaded areas, the leaves will be smaller under less shade.







In April and May, the dramatic cone-shaped flower pods of Oakleaf Hydrangea first appear, usually growing from old wood. The flowers are borne in erect panicles six to twelve inches long and half to two thirds as wide. Generally blooming bottom to top.

Flowers start out creamy white, turning rose pink, and eventually rust brown as winter approaches.





The older stems of Oakleaf Hydrangea exfoliate, their bark peeling to reveal a rich brown inner bark, adding another colorful dimension.

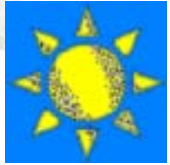
Deer and rabbits love the tender, big leaves of Hydrangea - so keep an eye out. Spraying the plant with a strained solution of mineral oil and garlic is a harmless way to deter these unwelcome guests. Hanging CDs also works.



Having Oakleaf Hydrangea means not having to leave Florida to see striking fall colors.



Growing Conditions



to



• Oakleaf hydrangea prefers broken shade and morning sun.

- Graybeard favors moist fertile well-drained soil
- Very acidic to slightly alkaline – 4.5 to 7.4 pH
- Partial to fair drought tolerance
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 5a: to -28.8°C (-20°F)
to USDA Zone 9a: above -6.6°C (20°F)
- Flowering occurs in late spring and early summer
- Height: 3 - 12 foot (1.2 – 3.6 meters)



Seed Collection and Propagation

There is no known method of effectively collecting the very small seeds of *Hydrangea quercifolia*.

Softwood cuttings can be rooted by dusting the cutting with root hormone, then removing most of the fully developed leaves, cutting the remaining developed leaves in half. Place the cutting in a potting mix and tent the entire moistened assembly with a thin plastic (produce), bag. Keep the bag in place and moist until rooting occurs.

Air layering is another effective way to propagate Oakleaf Hydrangea.



Maintenance and Care



Too much sun will cause sunscald and wilting, always plant in shady areas.

Those beautiful Fall colors eventually give way to quite a mess by the end of Winter (see photo). Come Spring, look the plant over closely once new growth is coming about. Canes or stems that are shriveled and show no new growth should be cut back to solid cane.



Presentation References

- Biological and genetic relationships

University of Arizona [Tree of Life](#)

- North American distribution

[USDA](#) - Natural Resource Conservation Service

- Florida distribution

[Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#)

- Herbarium specimen

[FSU](#) Robert K Godfrey Herbarium

- Propagation and garden use

[Floridata](#)



Presentation References (cont.)

- Nectar Food Plants

Biospherenursery.com

- Growing conditions and general information

[Wikipedia](#) *Hydrangea quercifolia*

[Wildflower](#) Center UTA

- FNPS – Natives for Landscaping

FNPS.org This Link will take you to the profile for this plant on the FNPS website

- [Florida Plants](#) by zone and habitat, use your county name or zip-code to see native habitat classifications and appropriate plants.



- For more in-depth study:

Native Florida Plants: Low Maintenance Landscaping and Gardening. Robert G. Haehle and Joan Brookwell. 2004 (revised edition). Taylor Trade Publishing. ISBN 1589790510.

A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants. Rufino Osorio. 2001. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. ISBN 0813018528.

Grafting, Budding, Cutting, Layering & Other Ways of Propagating Fruit Plants in Florida. 1995. Gainesville: Institute of Food & Agricultural Science. ISBN 0916287092.

