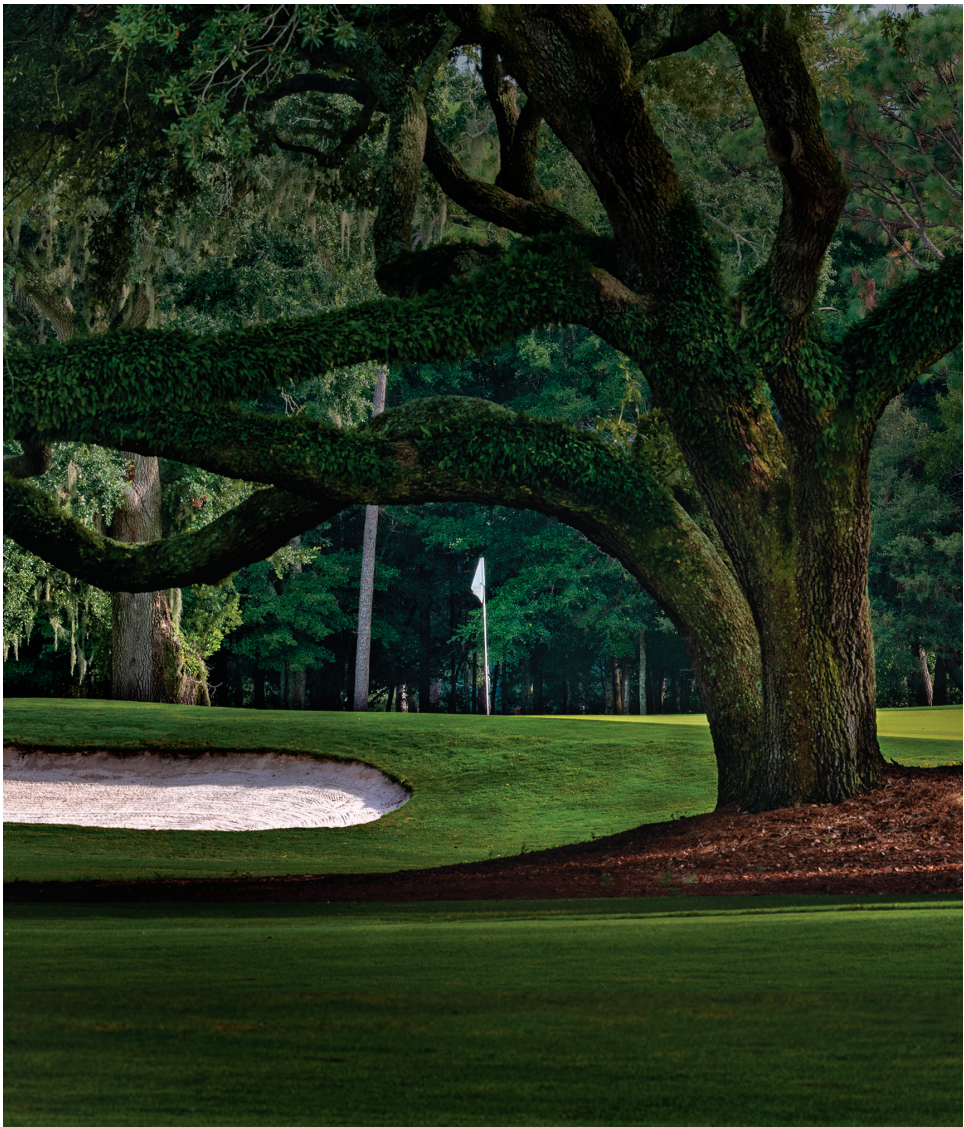


Grand Oaks

- Majestic live oak trees enhance the ambiance of the resort -





AN ICONIC OAK TREE image reflects its significance to the Grand in the above tree logo. Through the assistance of a professional tree service, each live oak on the hotel grounds is numbered and tagged (we have 141 oaks on hotel grounds). The trees are inspected semi-annually, maintained, fertilized, and treated as necessary. Although conservation efforts are a constant and many of the trees have responded well to the care that has been given to them, some of our live oaks have declined due to age and environmental stress. The salvaged wood from removed trees is repurposed and utilized in a variety of ways, including the Front Desk area in the main lobby.

Description: Southern live oaks are majestic trees that are emblems of the South. When given enough room to grow, their sweeping limbs plunge toward the ground before shooting upward, creating an impressive array of branches. Crowns of the largest southern live oaks reach diameters of 150 feet – nearly large enough to encompass half a football field! On average, though, the crown spread is 80 feet and the height is 50 feet. Branches usually stem from a single trunk, which can grow to 5 or 6 feet in diameter. Unlike most oak trees which are deciduous, southern live oaks are nearly evergreen. They replace their leaves over a short period of several weeks in the spring. Sweet, tapered acorns produced by the trees are eaten by birds and mammals, including sapsuckers, mallards, wild turkey, squirrels, black bears, and deer. The threatened Florida scrub jay relies on the scrub form of the southern live oak for nesting. Other birds make use of the moss that frequently hangs from the tree branches to construct nests.

Typical Lifespan: Southern live oaks are fast growing trees, but their growth rate slows with age. They may reach close to their maximum trunk diameter within 70 years. The oldest live oaks in the country are estimated to be between several hundred to over a thousand years old.

Habitat: Southern live oaks grow well in salty soils and in shade, which makes them great competitors against other less tolerant trees. Southern live oaks are confined to warm parts of the country, because of their inability to survive freezing temperatures. These trees grow in the wild, but they're also popular ornamental plants with many Southerners.

Range: As their scientific name *Quercus virginiana* suggests, southern live oaks are found in Virginia and from Virginia south to Florida and west to Texas and Oklahoma.

Life History and Reproduction: Flowers of the southern live oak are not bright and showy like those of some other trees. They are small, brown, and pollinated by wind in spring. Acorns fall in autumn and serve as a food source for many animals.

Fun Fact: Wood from southern live oaks is incredibly tough and durable. The naval vessel USS Constitution was nicknamed “Old Ironsides” after her live oak hull survived repeated cannon fire during the War of 1812.

Conservation Status: Despite their incredibly strong wood, southern live oaks are not used much for timber anymore though they were once the preferred tree for use in shipbuilding. Their biggest threats are several pests and disease, including wilt disease, which is most prevalent in Texas. They are also susceptible to freezing temperatures and acid rain.

Did you know Spanish moss isn't Spanish or a moss? Spanish moss is part of the bromeliad family, which places it in the same plant family as pineapples and succulent house plants. Spanish moss is actually native to Mexico, Central America, South America, the United States and the Caribbean where it can grow in a tropical environment. Here in the U.S., Spanish moss grows from Texas to Virginia generally staying in the moister areas of the south.

If Spanish moss isn't Spanish or a moss, how did it get its name? “Spanish moss was given its name by French explorers. Native Americans told them the plant was called Itila-okla, which meant ‘tree hair.’ The French were reminded of the Spanish conquistadors’ long beards, so they called it Barbe Espagnol, or “Spanish Beard.” The Spaniards got back at them by calling the plant Cabello Francés, or “French Hair.” The French name won out, and as time went by Spanish Beard changed to Spanish moss.”

Epiphyte: a plant that grows on another plant without directly gaining nourishment from it. Spanish moss receives all of its nutrients and moisture from the air and is not considered a parasite to the tree; it only uses the tree for support. The only damage it may cause is by breaking a weak limb. When the moss absorbs moisture, its weight can increase tenfold. If there is enough bloated moss on a thin, weak, or dead limb, it can cause the limb to break off.

Resurrection Fern: The *P. polypodioides* resides in the hardwood forests of southeastern United States in areas including Delaware, Illinois, Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida. This fern can also be found in areas such as subtropical America and parts of southern Africa. The resurrection fern lives on the branches of large trees such as cypresses and can often be seen carpeting the shady areas on limbs of large oak trees. The resurrection fern gets its name because it can survive long periods of drought by curling up its fronds and appearing desiccated, grey-brown, and dead. When it is exposed to water again, it will “come back to life” and look green and healthy. The plant gets its name from this supposed “resurrection,” but it never actually dies during the process. This fern is an epiphyte, or air plant, which means it attaches itself to other plants and gets its nutrients from the air and from water and nutrients that collect on the outer surface of bark. However, it is known to grow on the surfaces of rocks and dead logs as well. It is often found in the company of other epiphytic plants such as Spanish moss.



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