

And the winner is ...

Red Oak. Red Oak is definitely the tree that Islanders want for their forest emblem. At least, 794 of 1999 votes cast said red oak, and even the classy white birch with 425 votes was a poor second.

The results of the great forestry emblem vote, released by the local branch of the Canadian Institute of Forestry in mid December, reveal some other tastes in trees too. First there is the sweet tooth that like the Sugar Maple, nostalgia that remembers Christmas past, and appreciation for White Spruce hedgerows. History buffs went with original forest cover with the Yellow Birch, or recalled ship building with the Eastern Larch. Red spruce? Well 50 people appreciate the red spruce, that's apparent.

While Islanders favour the red oak above all native trees, the vote seemed to illustrate that there is a wide appreciation of forests, trees and forestry uses on P.E.I. If all goes well, the mighty red oak, symbolic of all trees, should be officially designated as our forestry emblem in the next sitting of the Legislature.

For the record, here's the way the trees stack up:

Red Oak	794	White Spruce	109
White Birch	425	Yellow Birch	95
Sugar Maple	332	Eastern Larch	68
Balsam Fir	126	Red Spruce	50
		Total	<u>1999</u>



- Rosemary Curley

Debbie Hearn, chairperson of the committee which was struck to promote the naming of the provincial tree, noted a number of the reasons which were given as to why the red oak was selected. These included: it is easy to spell (that's right!); it is a scarce tree hence has a better chance of being protected if made the provincial tree; it would be a tribute to the late Island poet Milton Acorn; more trees will be planted and the acorns will feed the squirrels; it is pretty; my wife told me to vote but I like some other species better.

The more common reasons given though related to the historical importance of oak to the ship building trade in the 1800's and the traditional presence of oak on the Provincial crest and coat-of-arms.

"We hope that the attention which has been given to the selection of a Provincial Tree will lead to greater awareness of the historical and future importance of forests to our Province. Although red oak may not become a significant component of future reforestation programs, I imagine that many people will plant red oak as ornamentals near their homes so as to have a living symbol of their pride in their province, says Ms. Hearn.