

IOWA STATE SYMBOL



WILD ROSE

The Iowa Legislature designated the Wild Rose as the official state flower in 1897. It was chosen for the honor because it was one of the decorations used on the silver service which the state presented to the battleship USS Iowa that same year. Although no particular species of the flower was designated by the Legislature, the Wild Prairie Rose (*Rosa Pratincola*) is most often cited as the official flower.

Wild roses are found throughout the state and bloom from June through late summer. The flower, in varying shades of pink, is set off by many yellow stamens in the center.



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STATE BANNER OF IOWA

Iowa was almost 75 years old before the state banner was officially adopted by the Legislature. Creation of a state banner had been suggested for years by patriotic organizations, but no action was taken until World War I, when Iowa National Guardsmen stationed along the Mexican border suggested a state banner was needed. The guardsmen said regiments from other states had banners and they felt one was needed to designate their unit. This prompted the state's Daughters of the American Revolution to design a banner in 1917. The Legislature officially adopted the design in 1921.

Iowans, with the memory of the Civil War still fresh in their minds, had not adopted a state banner because they felt a national banner was the only one needed. Approval of the banner was aided by patriotic organizations that launched a campaign to explain that a state banner was not meant to take the place of the national emblem.

The banner, designed by Mrs. Dixie Cornell Gebhardt of Knoxville and a member of the D. A. R. (Daughters of the American Revolution), consists of three vertical stripes of blue, white, and red. Gebhardt explained that the blue stands for loyalty, justice, and truth; the white for purity; and the red for courage. On the white center stripe is an eagle carrying in its beak blue streamers inscribed with the state motto: "Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain." The word Iowa is in red letters just below the streamers.

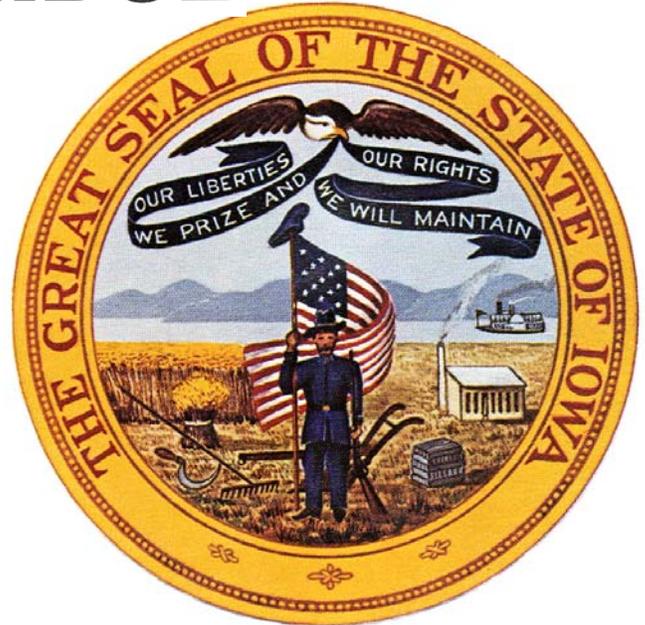
All schools must fly the state banner on school days. The banner may be flown on the sites of public buildings. When displayed with the United States flag, the state banner must be flown below the national emblem.



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GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF IOWA

One of the initial acts of the first Iowa Legislature in 1847, was to create the Great Seal of Iowa.

The two-inch diameter seal pictures a citizen soldier standing in a wheat field, surrounded by farming and industrial tools, with the Mississippi River in the background. An eagle is overhead, holding in its beak a scroll bearing the state motto: "Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain." The motto was the work of a three-man Senate committee and was incorporated into the design of the seal at their suggestion.

The Great Seal cannot be used without the permission of the Governor. The state seal is retained in the custody of and under the control of the Governor, who uses the seal for official documents and functions.



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EASTERN GOLDFINCH

The Iowa Legislature designated the Eastern Goldfinch, also known as the Wild Canary, as the official state bird in 1933. It was chosen as the state bird because it is commonly found in Iowa and often stays through the winter.

Seeds from dandelions, sunflowers, ragweed, and evening primrose are the main source of food for the Eastern Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*). In late July or early August, they build their nests from plant materials and line them with thistledown. The pale blue-white eggs of the Eastern Goldfinch incubate for two weeks and the young birds leave the nest when they are two to three weeks old.

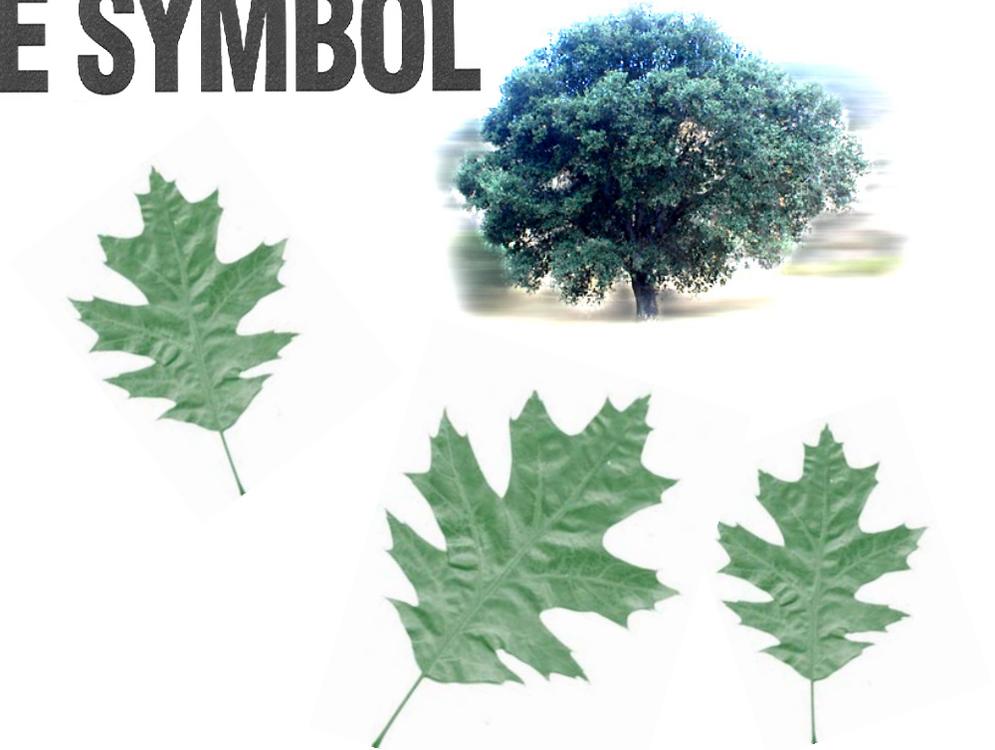
The top of the male's head is topped with black. The bright yellow body has black wings and tail. The female has a dull olive-yellow body with a brown tail and wings. The male goldfinch acquires the same dull plumage in the winter months.



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OAK TREE

The Oak was designated as the official state tree in 1961. The Iowa Legislature chose the Oak because it is abundant in the state and serves as shelter, food, and nesting cover for many animals and birds.

It is difficult to find a tract of natural woodland in Iowa that does not harbor at least one species of Oak. No other group of trees is more important to people and wildlife. Acorns, nuts of Oak trees, are a dietary staple of many animals and birds. Wild turkeys, pheasants, quail, wood ducks, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, blue jays, nuthatches, grackles, and several kinds of woodpeckers are a few of the species that depend on acorns for a significant portion of their diet.



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GEODE

The Iowa Legislature designated the Geode as the official state rock in 1967.

Because Iowa is well known for the presence of the Geode, it was chosen as the official rock in an effort to promote tourism in the state. Legislators who favored making the Geode the state rock pointed out that it is among the rarest and most beautiful of rocks and that Iowa is known worldwide because of the large number found in the state. Other rocks considered for official status were limestone and fossil coral.

In Latin, the word “geodes” means “earthlike.” Geodes are shaped like the earth and average about four inches in diameter. Geodes are found in limestone formations and have a hard outer shell. When carefully broken open, a sparkling lining of mineral crystals, most often quartz and calcite, is revealed.

Southeastern Iowa is one of the state’s best Geode collecting areas. Geode State Park, in Henry County, is named for the occurrence of the Geode.



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