

Delaware Facts and Symbols

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Delaware Facts and Symbols

Statehood:

December 7, 1787

State Capital:

Dover

State Location:

On the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, Delaware is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay, as well as by the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Delaware's location affords easy access to the major metropolitan areas of the Northeast. Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Baltimore are all within a 2-hour drive.

State Government:

Delaware became a state in 1776, just two months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The capital was moved from New Castle to Dover in 1777. Delaware's first constitution was adopted in 1792. The current constitution was adopted in 1897. It has been modernized with many new amendments since that time. Today, Delaware has a cabinet form of government.

The [General Assembly](#), Delaware's lawmaking body, is comprised of a State House of Representatives, whose 41 members are elected for two-year terms, and a State Senate, whose 21 members are elected for four-year terms. Half of the Senate seats are contested in each general election.

The [State Supreme Court](#) consists of a chief justice and four associate justices. All members are appointed by the governor, with confirmation by the Senate, for a term of 12 years.

Area:

Delaware ranks 49th in the nation with a total area of 1,982 square miles. New Castle County is 438 square miles. Kent County is 594 square miles. Sussex County is 950 square miles. Delaware is 96 miles long and varies from 9 to 35 miles in width.

Climate:

Delaware's climate is moderate year round. Average monthly temperatures range from 75.8 to 32.0 degrees. Average temperature in the summer months is 74.3 degrees. About 57% of the days are sunny. Annual precipitation is approximately 45 inches. Temperatures along the Atlantic Coast are about 10 degrees warmer in winter and 10 degrees cooler in summer. The average growing season varies from 170 to 200 days.

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Elevation:

Highest -- 447.85 ft. above sea level near Ebright Road in New Castle County.
Lowest -- sea level along the coast.

Population:

2000 Population Estimate - 783,600; 45th among the states; Density: 401 persons per square mile. For additional information, please visit the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) web site.

Chief Products:

Agriculture -- broilers, soybeans, corn, milk.

Fishing Industry -- crabs, clams.

Manufacturing -- chemicals, food products, paper products, rubber and plastics products, primary metals, printed materials.

Mining -- sand and gravel, magnesium compounds.

State Seal:

The state seal was first adopted on January 17, 1777, and contains the coat of arms. It also bears the inscription around it "Great Seal of the State of Delaware" and the dates 1704, 1776 and 1787. Descriptions of the contents of the seal are as follows:

The Wheat Sheaf -- was adapted from the Sussex County seal and signifies the agricultural vitality of Delaware.

The Ship -- is a symbol of New Castle County's ship building industry and Delaware's extensive coastal commerce.

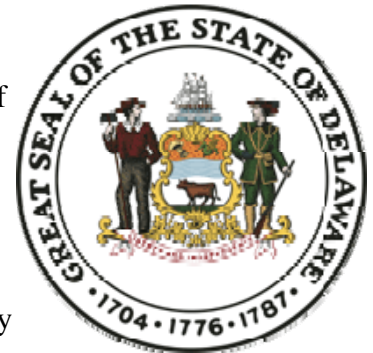
The Corn -- is taken from the Kent County seal and also symbolizes the agricultural basis of Delaware's economy.

The Farmer -- with the hoe represents the central role of farming to the state.

The Militiaman -- with his musket recognizes the crucial role of the citizen-soldier to the maintenance of American liberties.

The Ox -- represents the importance of animal husbandry to the state economy.

The Water -- (above the Ox) stands for the Delaware River, the main stay of the state's commerce and transportation.



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The Motto -- was derived from the Order of Cincinnati, and approved in 1847.

The Dates -- 1704, the year that Delaware established its General Assembly; 1776, the year that our independence from Great Britain was declared; and 1787, the year that Delaware became "the First State" by being the first colony to ratify the United States Constitution.

*Delaware Code [Title 29 § 301](#)*¹

State Flag:



Adopted on July 24, 1913, the state flag has a background of colonial blue surrounding a diamond of buff color in which the coat of arms of the state of Delaware is placed. Below the diamond are the words "December 7, 1787," indicating the day on which Delaware was the first state to ratify the federal Constitution. Because of this action, Delaware became the first state in the Union, and is, therefore, accorded the first position in such national events as presidential inaugurations. According to members of

the original commission established to design the flag, the shades of buff and colonial blue represent those of the uniform of General George Washington as shown on a specific plate from an official U.S. Army publication.

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 306](#)

State Colors:



Colonial blue and buff

State Motto:

Liberty and Independence

State Nickname: "The First State":

Delaware is known by this nickname due to the fact that on December 7, 1787, it became the first of the 13 original states to ratify the U.S. Constitution. "The First State" became the official State nickname on May 23, 2002 following a request by Mrs. Anabelle O'Malley's First Grade Class at Mt. Pleasant Elementary School.

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 318](#)

OTHER NICKNAMES:

"The Diamond State":

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Thomas Jefferson gave this nickname to Delaware, according to legend, because he described Delaware as a "jewel" among states due to its strategic location on the Eastern Seaboard.

"Blue Hen State":

This nickname was given to Delaware after the fighting Blue Hen Cocks that were carried with the Delaware Revolutionary War Soldiers for entertainment during Cockfights.

"Small Wonder":

This nickname was given to Delaware due to its size and the contributions it has made to our country as a whole and the beauty of Delaware.

State Song: "Our Delaware"

The official state song consist of a poem "Our Delaware" containing three verses in honor of each county of the State, written by George B. Hynson; a fourth verse in praise of the State and pledging the loyalties of its citizens, written by Donn Devine; and a musical score composed specifically for the state song by Will M. S. Brown". To view the lyrics of the state song, please select the following:

["Words & Music to the Delaware State Song"](#)

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 303](#)

State Flower: Peach Blossom



Passage of the act to adopt the Peach Blossom on May 9, 1895, was prompted by Delaware's reputation as the "Peach State," since her orchards contained more than 800,000 peach trees yielding a crop worth thousands of dollars at that time.²

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 308](#)

State Bird: Blue Hen



Adopted on April 14, 1939, the Blue Hen chicken had long been used as a motif in numerous political campaigns and in many publications. During the Revolutionary War, the men of Captain Jonathan Caldwell's company, recruited in Kent County, took with them game chickens that were said to be of the brood of a famous Blue Hen and were noted for their fighting ability. When not fighting the enemy, the officers and men amused themselves by pitting their Blue Hen chickens in cockfights. The fame of these cockfights spread throughout the army and when in battle, the Delaware men fought so valiantly that they were compared to these fighting cocks.³

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 304](#)

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State Tree: American Holly



Adopted May 1, 1939, the American Holly (*Ilex opaca Aiton*) is regarded as one of Delaware's most important forest trees. Often called Christmas holly or evergreen holly, the tree has dark, thorny-leaved foliage and red berries. In Delaware, the tree can reach a maximum of 60 feet in height and a trunk diameter of 20 inches.⁴

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 305](#)

State Bug: Lady Bug



Adopted April 25, 1974, the Lady Bug was chosen by the Legislature after an intensive effort on the insect's behalf by Mrs. Mollie Brown-Rust and her 2nd grade students of the Lulu M. Ross Elementary School in Milford, Delaware.⁵

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 309](#)

State Fish: Weakfish



In recognition of sport fishing's overall recreational and economic contributions to the state of Delaware and of the specific values of the weakfish (*Cynoscion* genus) as a game and food fish, the state Legislature adopted the weakfish as Delaware's State fish in 1981. This fish is also known as sea trout, gray trout, yellow mouth, yellow fin trout, squeteague, and tiderunner.⁶

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 311](#)

State Beverage: Milk



Milk was made the official State beverage on June 3, 1983.⁷

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 312](#)

State Mineral: Sillimanite



[Sillimanite](#) is widespread throughout the schists of the Delaware Piedmont and occurs as large masses and steam-rounded boulders at the Brandywine Springs State Park. Sillimanite is suitable for lapidary work and under the name Fibrolite, it was recognized by geologists in Delaware prior to 1830.⁸

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 310](#)

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State Herb: Sweet Golden Rod



Adopted June 24, 1996, Sweet Golden Rod (*Solidago odora*) was named Delaware's State herb. Members of the International Herb Growers and Marketers Association of Delaware suggested that the herb "*Solidago Odora*", commonly known as "Sweet Golden Rod", because of its beautiful golden blossoms, would be especially appropriate as the designated herb.

Sweet Golden Rod is both indigenous to Delaware and widespread throughout the State where it is commonly found in our coastal areas and along the edges of marshes and thickets.⁹

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 313](#)

State Fossil: Belemnite



On July 2, 1996, [belemnite](#) was named as the official fossil of Delaware. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School (Wilmington) third grade Quest students of Kathy Tidball suggested honoring the ancient and noble belemnite as our State fossil.

The belemnite was, in essence, a squid with a conical shell. It is an extinct member of the phylum Mollusca, which includes clams, snails, squids and octopuses. Belemnite fossils can be easily found along the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, which is where the Quest Students collected specimens during a field trip.¹⁰

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 314](#)

State Butterfly: Tiger Swallowtail



Adopted on June 10, 1999, the Tiger Swallowtail (*Pterourus glaucus*) was declared the State's official butterfly. The tiger swallowtail, a large, yellow, black-striped butterfly, is indigenous to Delaware and can be seen in deciduous woods, along streams, rivers, and wooded swamps, and in towns and cities throughout Delaware. Three butterflies were chosen by students of the Richardson Park Learning Center as possible State butterflies; then 1,611 out of 3,175 public and parochial students all over the State voted to suggest to the Legislature that the tiger swallowtail be named the State's butterfly.¹¹

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 315](#)

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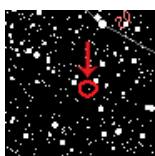
State Soil: Greenwich Loam



Since Greenwich loam (a coarse, loamy, mixed, semiactive, mesic, Typic Hapludult) is commonly found in all counties in Delaware and enhances water quality, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and natural landscape beauty, it was adopted as the State soil on April 20, 2000.¹²

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 316](#)

State Star: Delaware Diamond



On June 30, 2000, the Delaware Diamond, located in the constellation of Ursa Major (Great Bear), with coordinates of right ascension 9h40m44s and declination 48°14'2", was designated as Delaware's State star. It is a star of the 12th magnitude and is the first star on the International Star Registry ever to be registered to an American State. It can be seen with binoculars or a telescope. Twelve-year-old Amy Nerlinger of Wilmington named the star through a contest sponsored by the Delaware Museum of Natural History in the summer of 1999.¹³

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 317](#)

State Marine Animal: Horseshoe Crab



Recognizing its great importance and value, the horseshoe crab was designated as Delaware's official marine animal on June 25, 2002. These invertebrates contain a compound, limulus amebocyte lysate (LAL), that is used to detect bacterial poisons in certain medications, vaccines and medical devices. Chitin, a natural polymer found in the horseshoe crab's shell, is used to make bandages. The horseshoe crab is used in vision studies, because their complex eye structure is similar to the human eye. It is the principal food source for over a million shore birds. Delaware Bay is the home to more horseshoe crabs than any other place in the world.

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 319](#)

State Macroinvertebrate: Stonefly

On May 4, 2005, the Stonefly (Order Plecoptera) was designated as Delaware's State macroinvertebrate, because it is an indicator of the excellent water quality in the State. The designation of the stonefly was a means whereby Delaware State government could recognize the importance of excellent water quality and the vital role played by healthy aquatic ecosystems in Delaware.



Designating a State macroinvertebrate is a highly appropriate means to raise public awareness of water quality issues, and complement citizen action programs like [Delaware Stream Watch](#). Through their participation in the Delaware Stream Watch Program, the designation of the stonefly as the official State macroinvertebrate was supported by the following

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schools:

Gunning-Bedford Middle School, Salesianum High School, Delcastle Technical High School, Dickinson High School Environmental Club, The Independence School, Springer Middle School, St. Andrews School, and The Charter School of Wilmington.

By designating the stonefly as its State macroinvertebrate, Delaware once again demonstrated its leadership as the First State, because currently, no other state in the United States has designated an official State macroinvertebrate to accompany their State symbols, such as their State flag, State flower, State bird, State bug, State butterfly and State marine animal.¹⁴

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 320](#)

State Dessert: Peach Pie



On July 30, 2009, peach pie was designated as Delaware's official State dessert. Peach farming is an important part of Delaware's agricultural heritage, as the peach was introduced to Delaware in Colonial times and expanded as an industry in the nineteenth century. Delaware was the country's leading producer of peaches for part of the nineteenth century, at its peak, shipping 6 million baskets to market in 1875. The fifth and sixth grade students of St. John's Lutheran School in Dover, with the support of the entire student body, suggested that peach pie be adopted as this State's official dessert because of the historical and agricultural significance of Delaware's peach farming industry.¹⁵

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 321](#)

State Fruit: Strawberry



Adopted May 13, 2010, the strawberry is an important product of Delaware's agricultural industry. Delaware strawberries are bred for taste, not to be big or last a long time on a store self.¹⁶

Learn more about strawberries in the "Food for Thought" PSA brought to you by the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 322](#)

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State Wildlife Animal: Grey Fox



Adopted June 10, 2010, the grey fox is a unique and primitive species, believed to be between 7 and 10 million years old, which is indigenous to Delaware. It is a swift and powerful animal capable of running up to 28 miles per hours and the only member of the canid family which is able to climb trees. The fourth grade students at Joseph M. McVey Elementary School, as part of teacher Paul Sedacca's lessons on persuasive writing, suggested that the grey fox be designated as Delaware's official state wildlife animal. Since it does not hibernate, the students said that it is "always ready like our soldiers at Dover Air Force Base".¹⁷

Delaware Code [Title 29 § 323](#)

¹ State Seal used with permission by the Secretary of State of Delaware

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⁶ Image is from an unknown source. The full-sized image is available as [delfact-31-lg.gif](#).

⁷ Image retrieved from Wikipedia.org as [Milk_1_de.jpg](#). This image is available under the GNU Free Documentation License.

⁸ Photo retrieved from the [Delaware Geological Survey](#). Image found [here](#), along with additional information on the Mineral.

⁹ Photo taken by Roger Denome, Stonehill College, Easton, Massachusetts Original located in the [Stonehill College Field Guide](#), under [Solidago Odora](#). Used with permission.

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¹⁵ Government Information Center image.

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