

2 English Oak *Quercus robur* Also called Common or Pedunculate Oak

The classic English Oak is a deciduous tree growing up to 20–40m tall but usually shorter with a wide spreading crown in open areas. It can live for 1000 years and England has more ancient Oaks than the whole of Europe. The acorns are on long stalks in contrast to the similar looking Sessile Oak.

Did you know?

The round growths found on the trunks and leaves of oaks are caused by gall wasps and were used to make ink for over a thousand years, until the 20th century.

Value to Wildlife.

A mature Oak can host over 2000 species. The buds are the food plants of the caterpillars of purple hairstreak butterflies. The leaves break down in autumn to form a rich leaf mould, supporting the stag beetle, and fungi, like the oakbug milkcap. Holes and crevices in the bark are perfect nesting spots for pied flycatcher, redstart or marsh tit. Bats also roost in old woodpecker holes or under loose bark, and feed on the rich supply of insects in the tree canopy.

Mythology and symbolism.

The oak was sacred to many gods, including Zeus, Jupiter and the Celtic Dagda. Druids practised rituals in oak groves and cherished the mistletoe that grows in oak-tree branches. Ancient kings and Roman Emperors wore oak leaf crowns. In England, couples were wed under ancient oaks in Oliver Cromwell's time. Oak is the emblem of many environmental groups, including the Woodland Trust.

Uses of Oak.

Oaks produce one of the hardest and most durable timbers taking 150 years before it is ready to use in construction. It has been a prized hardwood timber for thousands of years and is still used for flooring, wine barrels and firewood. Leaves, bark and acorns were believed to heal many medical ailments, including diarrhoea, inflammation and kidney stones. Acorns have also been used to make flour for bread making. Tannin found in the bark has been used to tan leather since at least Roman times.



An Oak Gall



Acorns

