

50 Oak Prompts



Research & Monitoring

1. Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) are the only UK native species.
2. Both oak species migrated north from refugia as the climate warmed following the retreat of glaciers after the last ice age. Northerly colonisation began in GB about 10,000 years ago.
3. The UK has the largest area of ecologically important Celtic Rainforests including oak, covering 70,000 hectares.
4. Oak species are distributed throughout the British Isles, favouring Britain's Southern and Western parts.
5. Plant pests & diseases that threaten oaks, both endemic & emerging, are spreading & exacerbated by climate change.
6. Powdery mildew is a disease that can severely impact young tree growth.
7. In Europe, oak has over 130 species of associated insect pest.
8. Heart-rot is the decay of central tree tissues (heartwood) that are no longer functional in the conduction of water from roots to leaves.
9. Acute Oak Decline (AOD) is more prevalent in warmer and drier sites and is estimated to affect 1/3 of the woodland in England and Wales.
10. 16% of broadleaf woodland in Great Britain is oak. It is the second most common broadleaf tree species in Britain, behind birch.



Practical & Management

1. There are around 121m oak trees in UK woodland & almost 1m in London alone.
2. An oak tree is thought of as ancient when it is at least 400 years old. Read more about Ancient, Veteran and Heritage definitions with the Ancient Tree Forum.
3. The UK has over 49,000 ancient, veteran and notable oak trees, half of which are found in non-woodland ecosystems.
4. Veteran trees support a greater diversity of associated species than younger trees.
5. Some pests and diseases that threaten oaks are Acute oak decline, Root-attacking species of honey fungus, powdery mildews, oak processionary moth and *Xylella fastidiosa*.
6. The health of trees can often be seen in their crowns.
7. If you identify a sick tree, you can report it to Forest Research's Tree Alert.
8. Grey squirrels bark-strip broadleaf trees between April and August each year. This damage stresses and weakens trees, opening them up to infection from pests and pathogens, which can ultimately kill them.
9. The best time to plant an oak tree is during their dormant period in winter.
10. Oak trees are one of the longest-lived trees in the UK, with a potential lifespan of over 1,000 years.



Uses of Oak

1. Over 2300 species of birds, mammals, fungi, invertebrates, bryophytes & lichens use oak trees.
2. 326 obligate species depend on oak for their survival.
3. Broadleaf trees like oak, sequester more carbon in the long term than conifers.
4. Oak has a wide range of functional & decorative uses. It is one of few native timbers which can be used outdoors without preservative treatment, & it is widely grown for the hardwood timber market.
5. The timber of *Quercus robur*, also known as English Oak, is used to make wine barrels.
6. Oak leaves can be used to make wine.
7. Oak galls have historically been used to make ink; examples can be seen in some medieval manuscripts.
8. Acorns have been known to be used to create acorn coffee.
9. Acorns can be used to make acorn flour for use in breads, pancakes and other baked goods.
10. The hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall is made of oak and said to be one of the finest examples in Northern Europe.

Please note, that Action Oak does not advise consuming oak products without proper preparation. Please ensure that all health and safety precautions are taken into consideration, under the guidance of an experienced forager.



Culture & Folklore

1. The belief that Thor sheltered under an oak during a storm gave rise to the household practice of keeping an acorn on the windowsill or carved on a banister to ward off lightning.
2. The ancient Celts believed that the oak tree was a portal to other worlds and that its branches reached up to the heavens, where the gods and goddesses resided.
3. 5000 oaks were used to build HMS Victory.
4. Robin Hood allegedly hid out in Sherwood Forest's Major Oak.
5. The Oaks of Avalon, 'Gog & Magog' are said to mark the traditional point of entry onto the mythic island, and were also part of a ceremonial Druidic Avenue of oak trees running towards Glastonbury Tor.
6. Oak is the national tree of the UK.
7. Yule Logs, decorated for Christmas with holly and mistletoe, were traditionally cut from oak.
8. The social & environmental value of oak is estimated at £250m per year, this excludes aspects such as physical, mental, cultural, symbolic and educational benefits.
9. Tony Orlando's 'Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Old Oak Tree' spent 11 weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart in 1973.
10. There are many famous and notable oak trees around the UK, just some are: The Edward II Royal Oaks at Haresfield and Standish, the Brimmon Oak, Darwin's Oak, and many more.



Action Oak

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3. Action Oak has released publications to help centralise knowledge, some resources include; Knowledge Review, Oak Evidence Summary, and Action Oak Annual Report 2022-23.
4. Action Oak collaborated with Emma Bridge Water in 2020/21 to create a limited-edition mug.
5. Action Oak is supported by Gaze Burvill's Amity Seat in 2023, you can find one at River Cottage HQ and also one in the gardens at Highgrove!
6. Action Oak supports research into various factors that concern oak trees currently categorised into Environmental, Host and Pest focuses.
7. Action Oak uses established professional & citizen science networks to help identify priority areas for action.
8. Action Oak funds research to improve understanding of threats to UK oak trees & to inform best management practices.
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Research & Monitoring

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