



SPECIES

Photos: Richard Thornbury, Hans Pixabay

Common/ Sessile oak (*Quercus robur*)

Information: Andy Lester

All about the common oak

- Oak trees are one of the most important native trees in the UK; of which there are two species: common or pedunculate oak, which is more widely found in southern forested areas and sessile oak which is more common in some of the northern upland areas.
- One tree can produce several million acorns in its lifetime. About one in 10,000 acorns grow up to become a mature oak. Although quite a lot of saplings grow, most get shaded out, eaten or outcompeted.
- A typical mature oak tree can reach up to 45 metres in height.
- Oak trees are one of the oldest trees still around. The species is thought to have appeared on the earth up to 65 million years ago.
- A veteran oak tree is typically one over 150 years old and some oak trees will be 700 years old.

Why do common oaks need our help?

They are resistant to a degree of climate change. However, droughts are getting worse and rainfalls are getting heavier; oak trees are not adapted to very extended periods of drought and heat, or extreme rains and storms.

A changing climate also increases the risk of more insect borne diseases or viral infections. The latter has the potential to wipe out whole oak forest areas. This has already been seen in mainland Europe, with oak trees struggling to survive.

How can we help?

- Plant oak trees! Especially when planning to plant woodland areas, as long as the soils are suitable: ideally needs to be slightly acidic and free draining.
- They will best grow in areas where there aren't extremes of temperatures or rainfall such as South Midlands, East Anglia, parts of Southern England and if planting in the Uplands it is best to plant on sheltered sunny slopes.
- Do not plant lots of oaks together in one place but interplant with other native woodland species to make them more disease resistant.
- Oaks are very slow growing trees, so will take a long time to reach their mature size. Therefore it is important not to plant faster growing species too close to oak trees, to avoid the oaks being shadowed out which would cause them to die back.

DID YOU KNOW? Common oak trees are often described as the rainforest tree of temperate areas; surveys have shown that a single oak can contain as many as 300 different species of wildlife from insects to fungi, birds, small mammals and more!

How do I monitor and record?

- Count the number of oaks on your land each year and monitor the change in the numbers that survive year to year.
- If you are creating an oak tree nursery and planting them out, monitor how many survive once planted out.
- Enter records into iRecord.

Learn more

- treegrowing.tcv.org.uk/identify/pedunculateoak/
- woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/english-oak/
- woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/sessile-oak/
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at naturalist@arocha.org