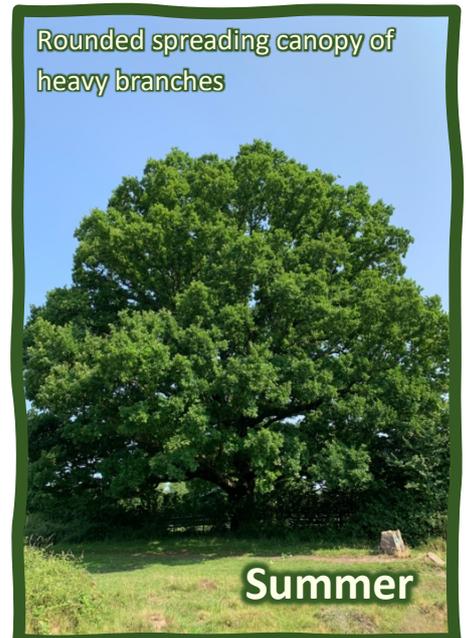
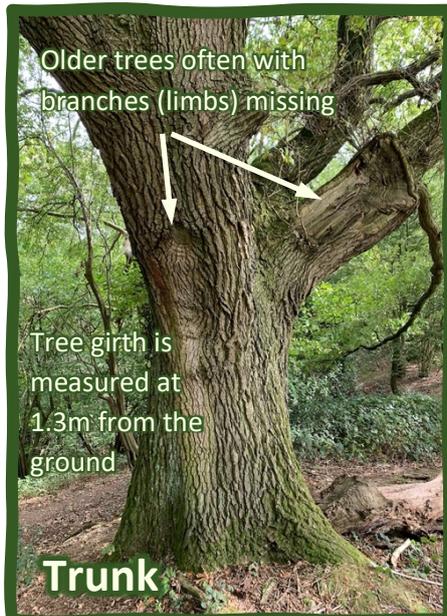
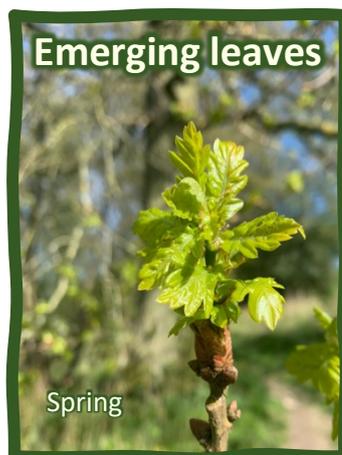
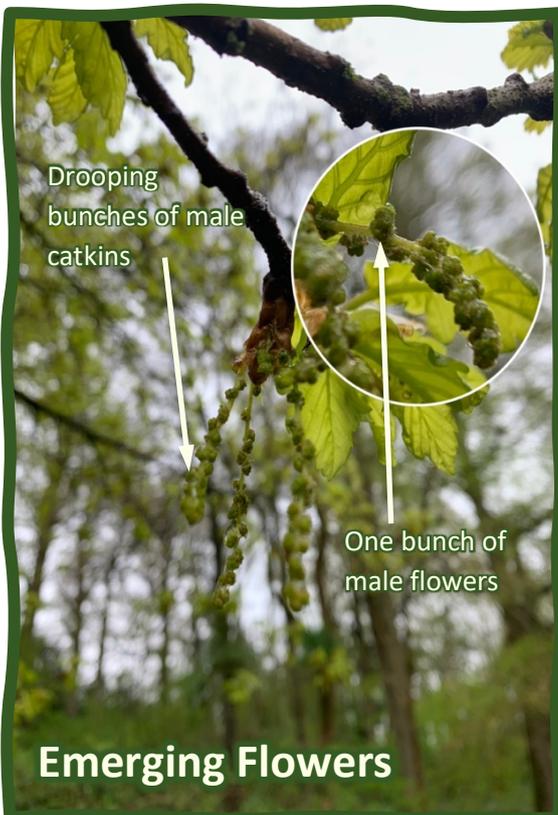
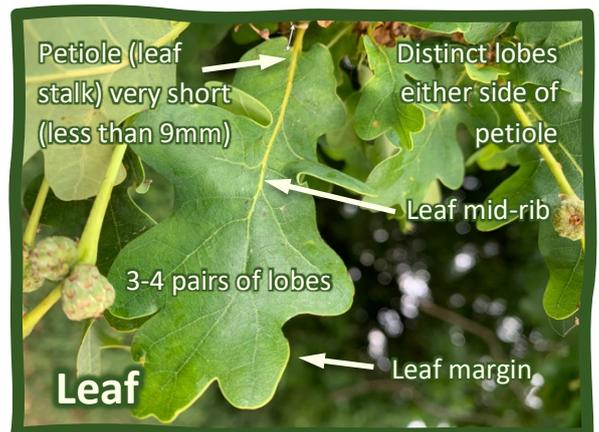


# PLANT ID: common oak

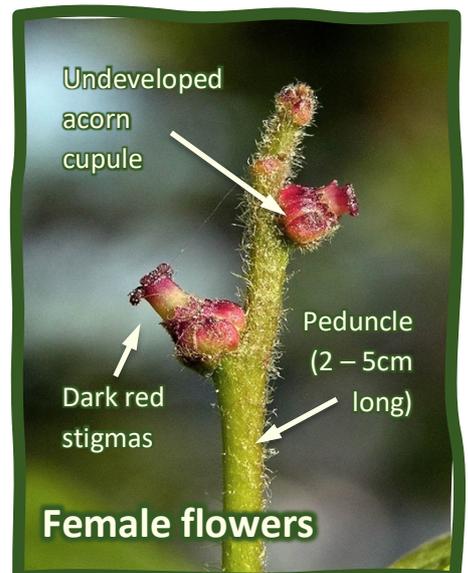
*Quercus robur* L.



**Wildlife friendly**  
Oaks host some 400+ species that live and feed within it and include insects such as wood-boring beetles and moths; and mammals and birds such as jays, mice, squirrel, wild boar, badger and bat.



Children used to use the acorns as ammunition for their catapults



# PLANT ID: common oak *Quercus robur* L.

## Did you know?

Trees can survive for up to 1000yrs of age. They are considered to have three distinct life stages each lasting 300yrs - growing, living and dying. With age the trunk of the tree becomes hollow and forms a stout cylinder that helps the tree to withstand extreme storms.

## Silk button gall wasp

*Neuroterus numismalis*

**Oaks contain tannins which are toxic to humans in their raw state.**

Leaves become a dull darker green

Leathery to the touch

Peduncle (acorn stalk)

**Summer**

## Leaf features



Galls are caused by parasitic wasps *Cynipidae* injecting chemicals into oak twigs

## Oak apple gall

Oak gall

Twig

Oak bud

## Fruit

Acorns usually grow in pairs or 3s

Acorn shapes can be variable

## Helpful ID Tips

Sometimes difficult to get a confident identification of, as it hybridizes easily with sessile oak and so there are lots of trees that exhibit features of the two species in one tree.

To separate them you should sample a range of leaves from around the tree and study their petiole length, presence of auricles, depth of leaf edge lobing and the length of peduncle of the acorn.

Long pendulous peduncle (acorn stalk)

Cupules look like thick woolly hats

Immature acorns still with green stripes

**Fruit acorn**

## Reproduction strategies:

**Pollination:** pollinated by insects and the wind.

**Seed dispersal:** spread by mammals and birds, especially the European jay (*Garrulus glandarius*).

# PLANT ID: common oak

*Quercus robur* L.

## Fact File:

**CURRENT STATUS:** Least Concern of becoming extinct  
**LOCATION:** Widespread across Europe and U.K.

## ALIASES

Also known as English oak, European oak, pedunculate oak or the Truffle oak.

## Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

A member of the Beech family – *Fagaceae*. A tall (up to 40m) deciduous tree with a stout trunk and a rounded spreading canopy of heavy branches that appear to spiral towards the branch end. All oak trees are easily recognized by their distinctive ‘acorns’ which are a major common feature to them all.



**Flowers:** April – May  
**Flower Structure**

Often inconspicuous and overlooked early in spring the yellowish male drooping bunches of **catkins** exist close to the very small female globular flowers at the end of new shoots.



**Fruits** in September – October.

Oak’s fruits are called acorns and are often found in pairs together on a long common stalk (peduncle) up to 8cm long. Each one sits in a scaly looking cup that looks like a woolly hat called a **cupule**. Often variable in shape and roundness. Olive-green stripes visible when young before turning dark brown.



### Leaf

Oaks are often the last trees to gain their leaves in spring. Very short or absent petiole (occasionally up to 9mm long), base of leaf having distinct lobes (auricles) either side of the leaf stalk. Dull dark green leaf with 3-4 pairs of unequal lobes often more than 50% from mid-rib to leaf edge. Autumn leaves are an orange-brown.



### Habitat

It grows naturally in woodland and within hedgerows; but has also been extensively planted in both woodlands and parks. Grows in a variety of lowland places below c. 1300m altitude (in the Alps).

## What to look for



Each season has something to offer. Winter for its silhouetted structural splendour; spring for the freshness of the yellowy-green leaves; summer for its deep green leaves and shade and September to October for its Acorns.

## Best time to see it and use it

- **Winter - early Spring:** Look for the large branches that spiral toward their tips and the clusters of golden-brown leaf buds.
- **Spring - Summer:** The short or absent petiole and distinct auricles.
- **Autumn:** Acorns on long stalks with distinctive green stripes.

## Stem and trunk

Pale grey, rugged in older trees with the trunk tending to disappear in the crown and having heavy branches that spiral on their way to their tips. Often with clusters of young shoots growing (epicormic growth) outwards from the trunk of the tree.

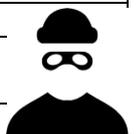
## FOOD WEB

Nectar gathered by insects. Acorns eaten and dispersed by mammals, and birds, especially the European jay.

## IMPERSONATORS: Key similar species are:

Sessile oak (*Q. petraea*) is very similar. Look at the features in the table to help.

Key Feature	<i>Q. robur</i>	<i>Q. petraea</i>
Petiole length	Absent or between 2mm - 9mm	Over 10mm
Presence of auricles	Yes	No
Acorns	In groups of 1, 2 or sometimes 3.	In groups of up to 6



# PLANT ID: common oak *Quercus robur*L.

**What's in a name?** Oak's Latin name - *robur* - means robust, hard or strong and common oak certainly fits this description well.

## Botany glossary (part 1)

**Bark** the thick outer protective layer of a tree trunk.

**Petiole** a stalk of a leaf.

**Leaf mid rib** the centre of a leaf from which side veins run out from.

**Catkins** found mostly on trees and shrubs, consisting of a hanging spike of tiny flowers.

**Lobe** rounded area of the edge of the leaf.

**Peduncle** the stalk of a group of flowers.

## Botany glossary (part 2)

**Gall** abnormal swellings of plant tissue (e.g. as seen on leaves of trees) caused by various parasites.

**Acorn** the nut (fruit) of an Oak tree.

**Auricle** a small lobe or ear-shaped feature that extends (usually) from the base of a leaf.

**Cupule** the cup (woolly hat-like) that an Oak acorn is seated within, which is technically a ring of fused and hardened bracts.

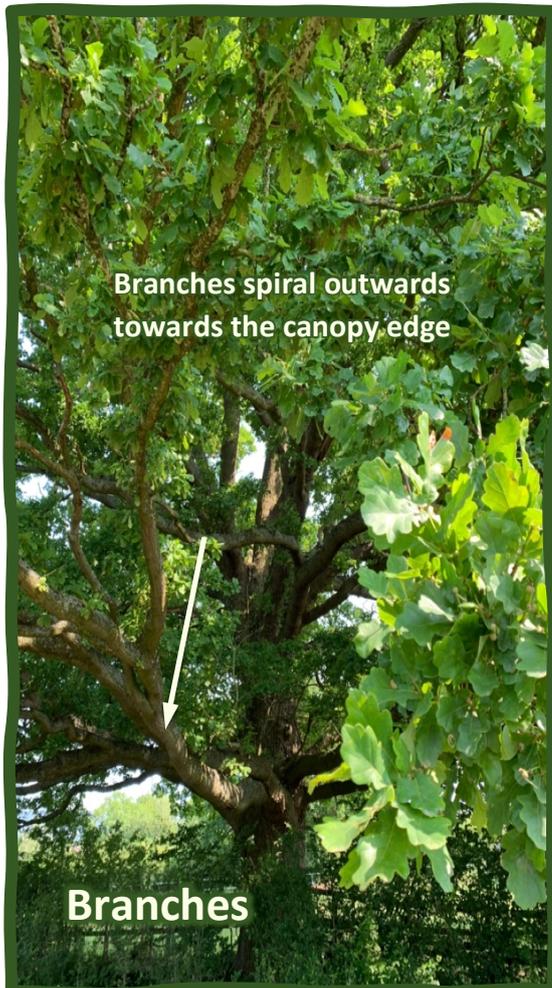
Get up close to the oak by taking a virtual tour using the Pappus film library.



## Edible

Sometimes known as the **truffle oak** on account of its partnership with all three species of European truffle fungi. Special truffle dogs and pigs are used to sniff out the fancy truffles that are attached to the roots of the oak tree.

Branches spiral outwards towards the canopy edge



Branches



Monumental trees

## Oldest - Largest - Tallest

The oldest known tree is the 'Carballo de Cartellos' in Galicia, Spain which is estimated at 2080 years old.

A tree at Kvilleken in Norra Kville, Sweden has the largest trunk girth of 15m.

## Global distribution

Native to the UK and most of Europe where it is found almost everywhere below 1300m altitude.

## Global species risk of extinction (IUCN - Red Data List)

