

How to Grow a Mighty Oak

Plant an oak.... plant the future!



Planting a native oak in your yard is one of the best things you can do for the environment.

Before You Start --Know which oak species you are planting.

The Quercus genus is a huge group of trees with different characteristics and growth habits. In New England, there are 2 general groups:

- **White oaks** grow very large, wood is lighter in color, bark has deeper grooves, and their leaves have rounded lobes. Acorns germinate in fall, then send down a taproot but won't produce the first green shoot above ground until the next spring.
- **Red oaks** grow faster than white but aren't as big. Leaves have bristle tip lobes. Acorns won't sprout until spring; they need a cold period (stratification) to start growth. Leave them in pots outside during winter.

Choose a good permanent planting site in a sunny location away from the house, power lines and other obstacles. Most oaks grow large and need space.

Consider planting 2-3 oaks or more about 10 ft apart. They will interlock roots and be more stable and wind-resistant.



Grow an Oak in 7 Easy Steps

1. Collect lots of freshly fallen acorns from healthy trees in early to mid autumn.
2. Dump your acorns in a large bowl of water and wait a few hours. Discard any acorns that float; they aren't viable.
3. Plant the acorns right away in pots with drainage holes and deep enough for root growthabout 3.0"x 4.0". Fill pots with peat-based potting mix (no fertilizer) and plant 2 acorns sideways about 1 inch deep. Water well.
4. Put pots in protected area outside and keep moist until winter. In spring, start watering again and keep weed-free. Protect the acorns and seedlings from animals with a mesh screen or cage that allows for seedling growth.
5. If both acorns in the pot germinate, remove the weaker one by cutting it off at the base.
6. Transplant seedlings into larger pots (2 quart) with big drainage holes when 5-6" tall. Use a 50/50 mix of potting soil and local soil. Add one tsp. of slow-release fertilizer.
7. Relocate your baby oak(s) to their permanent site when the root system starts outgrowing the container. Dig a hole 3x the width of the pot and plant oak at the same depth. Add organic matter if needed to improve drainage, mulch a wide band around the tree base (keeping mulch away from trunk), and protect the tree well from critters with wire cage or mesh for several years.

Keep your trees watered well and enjoy watching them grow!





"Every oak started out as a couple of nuts
who stood their ground!"

- Henry David Thoreau

Little Compton Garden Club
Garden Club of Buzzards Bay