Description: Robust deciduous tree to 130 feet with a rounded, spreading crown and smooth, grayish bark that develops fissures with age. The oblong leaves have three to seven lobes on each side and with them appear catkin-like flowers. It is hardy to zone 4. It is in flower from April to May, and the seeds ripen from September to October. The flowers are monoecious and are pollinated by the wind. It is noted for attracting wildlife. In autumn the fertile female flowers produce the familiar greenish-brown acorns sitting in their cups.

Cultivation: Prefers a good deep fertile loam which can be on the stiff side. Young plants tolerate reasonable levels of side shade. Succeeds in heavy clay soils and in wet soils so long as the ground is not waterlogged for long periods. Dislikes dry or shallow soils but is otherwise drought tolerant once it is established. Tolerant of exposed sites though it dislikes salt-laden winds. It is a very important food plant for the caterpillars of many species of butterfly, there are 284 insect species associated with this tree. It has often been coppiced or pollarded for its wood in the past, though this should not be done too frequently, about once every 50 years is the average. The tree flowers on new growth produced in spring, the seed ripening in its first year. Older trees have a thick corky bark and this can protect them from forest fires, young trees will often regenerate from the base if cut down or killed back by a fire. Intolerant of root disturbance, trees should be planted in their permanent positions while young. Hybridizes freely with other members of the genus. Immune to
attacks by the tortix moth. This species is notably resistant to honey fungus.

Seed - it quickly loses viability if it is allowed to dry out. It can be stored moist and cool overwinter but is best sown as soon as it is ripe in an outdoor seed bed, though it must be protected from mice, squirrels etc. Small quantities of seed can be sown in deep pots in a cold frame. Plants produce a deep taproot and need to be planted out into their permanent positions as soon as possible, in fact seed sown in situ will produce the best trees. Trees should not be left in a nursery bed for more than 2 growing seasons without being moved or they will transplant very badly. The young bark is carefully pared from the trunk or from branches which are not more than 4 inches thick. Take care to only take off patches, never to take a whole ring around the trunk, which would kill the tree. The bark is collected in mid-spring or late spring. It must be smooth and free from blemishes. Dry in a slow oven. The acorns are collected in autumn when they drop to the ground.

*R alba:* Prefers a good deep fertile loam which can be on the stiff side. Lime tolerant. Young plants tolerate reasonable levels of side shade. Tolerates moderate exposure, surviving well but being somewhat stunted. The white oak prefers warm summers. Trees take about 30 years before they start to bear good crops of seed, they then have heavy crops about every 3 years with light crops in the other years. They continue to yield commercial crops for about 120 years. The tree flowers on new growth produced in spring, the seed ripening in its first year. Intolerant of root disturbance, trees should be planted in their permanent positions whilst young, though they may require protection for the first winter or two. Hybridizes freely with other members of the genus. Plants in this genus are notably resistant to honey fungus.

Seed quickly loses viability if it is allowed to dry out. It can be stored moist and cool overwinter but is best sown as soon as it is ripe in an outdoor seed bed, though it must be protected from mice, squirrels etc. Small quantities of seed can be sown in deep pots in a cold frame. Plants produce a deep taproot and need to be planted out into their permanent positions as soon as possible, in fact seed sown in situ will produce the best trees. Trees should not be left in a nursery bed for more than 2 growing seasons without being moved or they will transplant very badly.

**History:** The botanical name *quercus* comes from the Celt words *quer* (good) and *cuez* (tree), and the common name of *chen* (beautiful). In Norse, Greek, Roman and Celtic mythologies the oak tree is the symbolic dwelling place of the principal male god, and signifies both strength and fertility. For the Vikings, the oak was Thor’s sacred tree and offered protection from lightning. In Celtic Britain the oak was initially worshipped by the Druids. In Roman times, the oak was held sacred to Jupiter, king of the gods, and a crown of oak leaves, awarded to a man who had saved the life of a fellow soldier, was considered the highest military decoration.

With the establishment of Christianity, gospels were commonly preached beneath its shade and an area of North London still bears the name Gospel Oak. In medieval folklore, touching an afflicted part of the body with a nail, and then driving the nail into an oak was considered a cure for illness. The leaves were once applied to cuts.

**Constituents:** up to 20% tannin, gallic acid, ellagitannin, quercid acid, quercine, red dye, waxy fat, gum, pectin, sugar, phosphoranes, pectic acid, talcum, starch in the acorns, quercetin in the glycoside quercitrone and purpurogaline

**Properties:** astringent, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, hemostatic; acorns after they have been shelled, ground into a meal and soaked in running water for a few hours become a nutritive tonic.

**Energetics:** astringent, bitter, neutral
Meridians/Organs affected: spleen, stomach, intestines

Medicinal Uses: The bark’s powerful astringency is helpful for acute diarrhea and dysentery, while its antiseptic action is useful for treating throat infections, relaxed uvula and chronic cough. The bark is used as a substitute for quinine to allay a fever, while it is highly astringent, an infusion being taken for diarrhea and dysentery. As a gargle, the decoction can be used in tonsillitis, pharyngitis and laryngitis. It can be used as an enema for the treatment of hemorrhoids and as a douche for leucorrhea. It is primarily indicated for use in acute diarrhea, taken in frequent small doses. Powdered oak bark may be sniffed to treat nasal polyps, or sprinkled on eczema to dry the affected area. When rubbed onto the gums, it strengthens them and a decoction of the bark or galls applied to the face and neck removes wrinkles. It is used topically for sores, ringworm, poisonous swellings and deep skin ulceration, internally for poisoning by strychnine, veratrine and other vegetable alkaloids. The tannins seem to bind with the proteins and amino acids of the weeping tissue to protect them from pathogenic invasion. A poultice of powdered oak bark and wheat flour combined with a little boiled water draws out slivers and other foreign substances. The quercin in oak makes it adjunctive to bioflavenoid which helps strengthen the capillaries. A wash of oak, or oak combined with witch hazel bark, is an excellent nighttime compress for varicose veins and broken capillaries under the skin. It also is made into a suppository for hemorrhoids.

Oak leaves are prepared in infusion for douches to treat vaginal infections; gather them before Midsummer. A tea of the buds in a valuable tonic for liver: steep two teaspoons per cup of water for 20 minutes.

Roasted acorns are used for rachitic children and in cases of swollen spleen in adults. Powdered acorns, mixed with softly boiled egg, are used in diarrhea and bladder complaints. Powdered bark and fresh leaves cleanse and contract fresh wounds. An ointment made with lanoline or Vaseline, using the finely powdered bark, heals bedsores. Oak galls are very astringent. They are used, in small quantities, in place of bark.

Combinations: often given with ginger before meals.

Dosage:
Of the bark: Decoction: put 1 tsp of the bark in a cup of water, bring to the boil and simmer gently for 10-15 minutes. Drink 3 times a day. Tincture: take 1-2 ml 3 times a day. For diarrhea, boil a tablespoon or two in milk. Of the leaf: use two teaspoons per cup and steep for twenty minutes.

Homeopathy: Homeopaths use Quercus glandium spiritus (a tincture of acorns) for edema, splenetic dropsy, liver problems and gout and to take away the craving for alcohol in alcoholics.

Flower Essences: Q robur: For those that are iron-willed, inflexible, overstriving beyond one’s limits. Oak flower essence teaches such persons the positive attributes of surrender and acceptance of limitation. Through Oak the naturally strong capacities of the soul are balanced with the inner feminine Self, which learns to yield and to receive help from others when necessary.

Toxicity: Do not take oak bark internally for more than 4 weeks at a time.

Cosmetic Uses: The galls are present on the leaves and shoots are formed by the gall-wasp which lays its eggs on the leaves the larvae feeding on the tissues and secreting a fluid which results in the formation of a round mass like a marble but perforated. They make a dye to color hair black and make an internal or external astringent and a healing ointment.

Powers: Fertility, Protection, Longevity. The oak is a tree of the sun, and sacred to Brighid and the Dadga. Druids do not celebrate unless in the presence of an oak, yew, ash, or other sacred tree. Oak symbolizes abundance, fertility, longevity, protection, and the ability to withstand the lightning blasts of spiritual awareness while remaining firmly rooted in the material, or earth plane. Oak is classic wood for staves and wands after asking the tree’s permission. Do this in the dark of the saxing or full moon. A gift is left for the tree in exchange. All parts of the tree are powerful protective charms, which bring healing. Acorns bring fertility and abundance to any endeavor. Carry one for good luck.

The oak produces a wood for building that is incredibly strong yet pliable. It also makes the hottest blaze for heating the home. Oak wood was used for crypts in the Hallstatta and LaTene cultures, Celtic cultures distinguished by their unique styles of art. Sprays of oak, along with mistletoe, have been found in an ancient coffin. The oak is portrayed as a supernatural tree in the story of Lleu, whose mother forbade him to marry an ordinary female. The magus Gwydion created the maiden Blodeuwedd of oak blossoms, broom, and meadowsweet for Lleu; but she betrayed her intended by taking a lover, who stabbed Lleu with a spear. Lleu then transformed himself into an eagle and flew to a magical oak tree to escape. On Gaulish monuments, the Celtic thunder deity, Taranis is often pictured in conjunction with oak trees. An oak, covered with mistletoe, is depicted on a silver cup discovered in Lyons. The pig, sacred to the Celts and a symbol of sexual and agricultural fertility and prowess in battle, relishes acorns. The most powerful mistletoe grows on oaks.

The Goddess Brighid is associated with the oak tree. A cross made of oak twigs and bound with a red thread is placed wherever one needs to ward off evil. The wood of oak can be carried for protection. Acorns are used to increase fertility (of projects, ideas or in human reproduction) and to ward off pain. They are planted in the dark of the moon to bring financial prosperity. Oaks should be cut down in the waning moon. Be certain to give the tree spirit three days’ warning so it can vacate and find a new home. Plant an acorn nearby to facilitate this process.

Burn oak leaves to purify the atmosphere. The wood makes excellent all-purpose wands. The acorn is a fertility nut of the highest powers, being carried to help conceive and to promote sexual relations. Hung in windows, it protects the house. Several hundred years ago, witches wore necklaces of acorns to symbolize powers of nature. This was especially popular during the winter months, when such a reassurance was comforting during the winter snows. Men carry the acorn to increase their own sexual attractiveness and prowess or to cure impotency. When you gather leaves, acorns or branches, pour a little wine on the roots of the oak. Gather the acorns during the day, leaves and wood at night. Fell oaks only in the waning Moon.

Spells:

Good Health Spell: Carry an odd-nubered quantity of acorns in a green or red charm bag to maintain good health.

Lightning Protection: Carry an acorn to protect from storms and lightning, especially when venturing outdoors.

Love Oracle: Gather well water and place it in a crystal bowl. Take two acorns; name one for each member of the party. Charge them with your query. Drop the acorns into the bowl of water. If they remain together, so will the couple.

Summoning Spell: Find an empty acorn cup still attached to an oak leaf or twig. Gather ash seeds. Murmur over them “Acorn cup and ashen key bring my true love back to me.” Place them under your pillow on three consecutive Friday nights, repeating the incantation each time. If your beloved has not returned by then, it’s time to consider the possibility that this is not your true love.
Youth and Beauty Spell: Three acorns, especially if they’re found attached to one another, preserve youth and enhance beauty. A gold or silver charm depicting three acorns will work, too. Charge the three acorns under the New Moon and wear them in your hair.

Other Uses:
Thanksgiving Potpourri
1 cup sage leaves
1 cup lovage leaves
½ cup pumpkin seeds
½ cup squash seeds
1 cup Indian corn
2 cups goldenrod
½ cup sunflower
1 cup evening primrose pods
2 cups basil leave and flowers
2 cups hickory nuts
2 cups acorns

After the festivities, it can be stored for later use as a winter bird feed. The leaves will blow away and the remaining nuts and seeds are attractive birds and squirrels (Cooking with Sage)

Culinary Uses: Acorns- cooked. Nourishing but indigestible. Chopped and roasted, the seed is used as an almond substitute. It can be dried, ground into a powder and used as a thickening in stews etc or mixed with cereals for making bread. The seed contains bitter tannins, these can be leached out by thoroughly washing the seed in running water though many minerals will also be lost. Either the whole seed can be used or the seed can be dried and ground into a powder. It can take several days or even weeks to properly leach whole seeds, one method was to wrap them in a cloth bag and place them in a stream. Leaching the powder is quicker. A simple taste test can tell when the tannin has been leached. The traditional method of preparing the seed was to bury it in boggy ground overwinter. The germinating seed was dug up in the spring when it would have lost most of its astringency. The roasted seed is a coffee substitute. An edible gum is obtained from the bark. Another report says that an edible manna is obtained from the plant and that it is used instead of butter in cooking, probably the gum.

Basic acorn preparation: Shell out the nut meats and boil for 2 hours to leach excess acids; change the water each time it becomes discolored. Dry the kernels in a slow oven; they will become a rich brown and smell good.

Bread was baked on oak leaves to keep the bottoms from burning

Other Uses: The bark is used to tan hides and smoke fish. A mulch of the leaves repels slugs, grubs etc, though fresh leaves should not be used as these can inhibit plant growth. The bark is an ingredient of 'Quick Return' herbal compost activator. This is a dried and powdered mixture of several herbs that can be added to a compost heap in order to speed up bacterial activity and thus shorten the time needed to make the compost. The bark is very rich in calcium. Oak galls are excrescences that are sometimes produced in great numbers on the tree and are caused by the activity of the larvae of different insects. The insects live inside these galls, obtaining their nutrient therein. When the insect pupates and leaves, the gall can be used as a rich source of tannin, that can also be used as a dyestuff. A black dye and an excellent long-lasting ink is made from the oak galls, mixed with salts of iron. The color is not very durable. When mixed with alum, the dye is brown and with salts of tin it is yellow. Trees can be coppiced to provide material for basket making, fuel, construction etc. The wood is a source of tar, quaiacol, acetic acid, creosote and tannin. A purplish dye is obtained from an infusion of the bark with a small quantity of copperas. It is not bright, but is said to be durable. Wood - hard, tough, durable even under water - highly valued for furniture, construction etc. It is also a good fuel and charcoal. Powdered gallnut is used as a dressing for wounds to prevent “proud-flesh.”

Dye Recipe
½ pot twigs
¼ tsp iron
1 lb wool
Cut up the twigs, cover with water and boil for an hour. Strain out the twigs and add enough water to make up 4 gallons. Dissolve the iron in the dye bath, making sure that it is completely dissolved. Either cool the dye bath or heat up the wool in successively warmer rinses so there will be no sudden temperature change when you put it into the dye bath. Simmer it in the ooze for 45 minutes or so. Cool and rinse until the water runs clear. Color: silver grey, brown, tan. If you use chrome, you’ll get a brown; with an alum mordant you will get tan and without a mordant you’ll get a warm tan.

Recipes:

Acorn Coffee
Boil the acorns whole for 15 minutes and peel the acorns, then split and dry them. After they have dried for a day or so, grind them in a coffee grinder and roast them in the oven or under a grill, watching all the time to see they do not burn; they should be a good, brown, coffee color. Infuse about 1 ½ tsp per cup in boiling water for a few minutes before serving. The taste does not resemble coffee, but it quite pleasant with milk and sugar. (Wild Foods)

Steamed Acorn Bread
1 cup acorn meal
1 cup yellow cornmeal
1 cup unbleached white flour
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
2 cups buttermilk
⅔ cup dark molasses or sorghum
1 cup chopped raisins or wild currants
½ cup sugar-stewed, dried elderberries, well drained.
Mix dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, combine the buttermilk, molasses or sorghum, raisins or currants and elderberries; if you wish, soak the fruits overnight in bourbon or rum. Mix the liquid and dry ingredients and pour into buttered pudding molds or 1-lb coffee cans, well greased and lined with greased wax paper. Seal tightly with aluminum foil and steam for 3 hours in 1” of water in a large, covered pot. (The Wild Foods Cookbook)

Oak Leaf Wine
Activated yeast
9 quarts oak leaves
9 quarts water
6 cups sugar
2 lemons

Pick fresh looking oak leaves that have not been nibbled by insects, wash the leaves and put them in a large basin, pour over 9 pints boiling water, cover the bowl with a clean cloth and leave for 12 hours. Put the sugar in a large saucepan with the remaining water, bring to the boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves, then draw off the heat and add the strained lemon juice. Strain the oak leaf infusion into the fermentation jar, add the activated yeast and shake well. See that the fermentation jar is filled to the bottom of the neck, top up with cold water if necessary, fit the bung and fermentation lock and allow the wine to ferment in a reasonably warm place until a sediment has settled at the bottom of the jar and the bubbles in the fermentation lock have ceased. This takes several weeks, after which the wine should begin to clear, maybe only a clear layer at the top of the jar, but the wine is now ready to be siphoned off through a length of plastic tubing into a second fermentation jar, which you have previously sterilized. Don’t let any sediment from the bottom of the jar get into the siphon tube and, to make up for the small amount of wine left behind with the sediment, top up the new jar with a little cooled, boiled water. It can now be left in a cool place for about three months, or until it has cleared completely. It is then siphoned into sterilized bottles and corked with new, sterilized corks. If the wine has not completely cleared, you should rack it again into a sterilized fermentation jar, top up again, if necessary, with cool, boiled water, fit the bung and fermentation lock again, and leave it for a few more weeks. (All Good Things Among Us)

Park Nuts
3 cups water
4 large garlic cloves, minced
¼ cup lemon juice
6-8 Tbsp curry powder
1 heaping quart of chopped white-oak acorns, leached of their tannin by repeated boiling
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp sea salt or seasoned salt

Bring 2 ½ cups of the water to a boil. Put ½ cup of the water in a blender with the garlic, lemon juice and ¼ cup of the curry powder, and blend until smooth. Add to the boiling water. Add the acorns and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain. Put in a baking dish. Mix in the rest of the curry powder, the olive oil, and the salt. Roast at 300F for 45-90 minutes or until the acorns are dry and well-roasted by not hard, stirring and often. (Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places)

Acorn Waffles
1 cup acorn flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
2 tsp baking powder
2 tsp cinnamon
¼ cup oil
2 eggs
1 ½ cups water

Combine the dry ingredients and mix well. In a separate bowl, mix the wet ingredients together. Then add the wet ingredients to the dry, and mix well. Use the batter in a waffle iron or for pancakes. Serve with mesquite syrup. (A Practical Guide to Edible and Useful Plants)

Acorn-Oatmeal Cookies
½ cup butter
½ cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 ½ tsp vanilla
1 cup acorn flour
½ cup whole wheat flour
1 ½ cups oats
1 tsp baking powder
raisins pecans

Preheat oven to 350F. Cream the butter and sugar together, and stir in the egg and vanilla. In a separate bowl, mix the dry ingredients. Add them to the wet ingredients, and blend well. Stir in the raisins and nuts. Add a little water if needed to hold the dough together, then spoon the dough onto an oiled cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes. (A Practical Guide to Edible and Useful Plants)

Acorn Burgers
½ cup coarse ground acorn meal
1 cup water
1 tsp salt
1 Tbsp butter or margarine
1 onion, chopped
1 egg
oil

Combine acorn meal, water, and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer covered for fifteen minutes, stirring occasionally. Melt butter in a skillet. Add chopped onion and cook until wilted. Combine the onions, egg, and cooked acorn meal in a mixing bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper and mix well. Mold into patties. Heat a little oil in a covered frying pan. Fry patties on both sides about five minutes in a covered pan. (The Tumbleweed Gourmet)

References:
Cooking with Sage, the Madison Herb Society, 1994 Herb Fair

HERBALPEDIA™ is brought to you by The Herb Growing & Marketing Network, PO Box 245, Silver Spring, PA 17575-0245; 717-393-3295; FAX: 717-393-9261; email: herbworld@aol.com URL: http://www.herbalpedia.com Editor: Maureen Rogers. Copyright 2014. All rights reserved. Material herein is derived from journals, textbooks, etc. THGMN cannot be held responsible for the validity of the information contained in any reference noted herein, for the misuse of information or any adverse effects by use of any stated material presented.