



# Oak News & Notes

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL OAK SOCIETY, VOLUME 14, No. 1, WINTER 2010

## The Sixth Triennial Conference of the International Oak Society

**T**he 6<sup>th</sup> International Oak Society Conference, held in the beautiful colonial city of Puebla, Mexico, is now history, and those who were fortunate enough to attend all agree that it was a rousing success. People in attendance hailed from: the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Western and Central Europe, East Asia, Australia, and South America, 14 countries in all.

The conference got off to an elegant beginning with a festive welcoming reception on the evening of October 19<sup>th</sup> sponsored by the Vice Chancellor of Science and Post-graduate Studies of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Dr. Pedro Hugo Hernandez Tejada. The formal greeting was by Dra. Maricela Rodriguez Acosta, of the herbarium and botanic garden of the Benemérita University, who was the organizer and chair of the conference. There followed a delightful concert by a duo of young guitarists who serenaded us with a medley of traditional and modern Mexican music. The concert took place in the beautiful Salon Barroco, the former chapel and sacristy of the College of the Holy Spirit, founded by Jesuits in 1578. The building is now a part of the University. The evening ended with refreshments and conversation in the hall just outside of

the chapel, offered by the Vice Chancellor of Culture of the University of Puebla, Dra. Lilia Cedillo.

The conference, which began the following morning, brought together a distinguished body of researchers who presented papers on their research on oaks. Not surprisingly, many of the presenters were Mexican, and

their topics treated such varied issues as oak populations in different parts of Mexico, the conservation and restoration of oak forests in Mexico (a critical issue, given the pressure of growing human population on the living resources of the nation), and several papers on the genetics of different species and hybrid oaks.

Most of the papers were in Spanish, but ably translated into English by a simultaneous interpreter.

Contributions from American and European presenters were understandably less cohesive, including reports on oak collections at different arboreta and papers similar to some of the Mexican contributions concerning particular oak species in the U.S. and Europe.

One particularly topical presentation was by Piers Trehane from the United Kingdom. Trehane has worked

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**Five IOS members received awards at the 6th International Conference in Puebla. Left to right, they are Michel Timacheff (Belgium), Antoine le Hardy de Beaulieu (Belgium), Thierry Lamant (France), Matthew Strong (USA), and Ronald Lance (USA).**

## From the Editor

It seems to me that a section with this name would be a useful addition to the Newsletter, since it can be used for announcements and other communications which are really not substantial enough to warrant an article.

For now, the editor would like to invite contributions from the membership. These could be announcements concerning local events which might be of interest to the wider audience, or other things of interest to the oak community: there is really no limit on what that might be. Contributions from the members should be brief (250-300 words), and written in whatever language you write best in. The editor will deal with putting it into English and doing the usual editorial tasks.

One kind of article which would be of interest to all members, I am sure, is sketches of particular oak species, similar to the article which appears on page 4 concerning *Quercus urbanii* Trel., a striking oak which people in attendance at the conference in Mexico were able to see in its native habitat. I hope that many of you will submit such an article: tell us about your favorite oak! Remember, one of the main purposes of the Oak Society is to help each of us to learn more about the oaks of the world!

I recently found an interesting website while surfing the net: [Encinos.org](http://Encinos.org). It has many detailed color photographs of oaks, including especially leaves and acorns. Give it a visit if you haven't already done so!

Another fantastic website which is definitive for its region is [www.californiaoaks.org](http://www.californiaoaks.org). Together with supplied links, you can learn everything there is to know about the status and kind of oaks in California.

A graduate student in Great Britain is beginning a research project on possible hybrids between *Q. robur* and *Q. cerris*; he expects to do DNA analysis in the summer of 2010. If you know of, or suspect, such a hybrid, please contact Mr. McGinn at: [k.j.mcgin@student.reading.ac.uk](mailto:k.j.mcgin@student.reading.ac.uk).

Last but not least, a hearty thanks to Doug McCreary and all of the other outgoing board members!

ART

## Tour Committee On The Move!

Not wasting any time, the new Tour Committee has already put together an impressive palette of activities for 2010 and 2011, from 1 day events to 7 day tours. "We think it is important that there be enough opportunities for IOS members to meet in between the triennial conferences.

It is our goal to have at least one event per year in both Europe and in the United States," explains Dirk Benoit from Belgium, long-standing IOS member and new Director of the Tour Committee. Also, from now on all of these events will be open to non-IOS members. "It is a good way to attract potential new members" says Dirk.

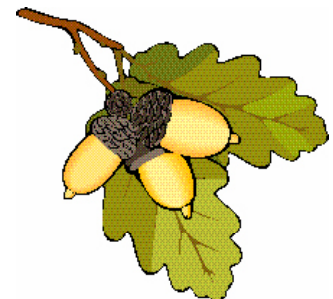
If you have an idea for an "oak event" that you would like to organize, please contact Dirk ([dirk.benoit@telenet.be](mailto:dirk.benoit@telenet.be)). The Tour Committee exists to organize events, of course, but also to assist and encourage members who would like to do so.

The tentative schedule of events (see page 5) will be finalized shortly, with specific dates and other details. Check the website periodically, as it will be posted there first. If you are already interested in attending one or more of these events, or would like to propose an event yourself, please contact the Tour Committee.

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Oak News & Notes  
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to the editor!





## 2009 to 2012: Thoughts for the Future

The end of such a pleasant and interesting adventure such as was the International Oak Society's 6th Triennial Conference in Mexico is a sad time indeed. But the sadness doesn't last very long as we all move back to our daily activities which, to a greater or lesser extent for each of us, have to do with trees — especially oaks. The knowledge and experiences shared and the new discoveries made during our Mexican explorations will change the way we see trees — indeed for some of us, perhaps even the way we see the plant kingdom in general. The best part of such an event, (and certainly what gives it such a rich context), is the interaction between members from all over the world. This has been said many times but it is so true that it is worth repeating to convince even more members to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> International Oak Society Conference which will be in France in 2012. Thierry Lamant has been designated Conference Chair.

### A MOVE AWAY FROM PAPER

Based on discussions in Mexico there seems to be agreement that the IOS should move towards producing fewer paper publications in order to reduce costs (not only in printing but in postage) and energy consumption. It was agreed that *Oak News & Notes*, for example, could be sent as an electronic file that members would receive as an e-mail. Similarly, the Membership Directory should be available on-line. For members who can't or don't want to have these documents exclusively in electronic form, we will always be able to provide a print out. Please let our Member-

ship Director, Rudy Light, ([resident@pacific.net](mailto:resident@pacific.net)) or the newsletter editor, Allan Taylor ([tayloralro@comcast.net](mailto:tayloralro@comcast.net)), know if you will still need to receive these documents in printed form. *International Oaks* will of course continue to be a paper publication (and also available on the website in PDF format). We are going to increase the quality of *International Oaks* by introducing some colour photography.

Also, it is felt that there are far too few European contributions to the Journal. Those of you in Europe who would like to submit articles should not feel daunted by the language for there is a lot of linguistic competence that we can rely on within the Board. Coordinating the transition from paper will take some time and hopefully by end 2010

we will no longer need to budget for full scale printing of the newsletter and membership directory. If we no longer need to spend in areas where convenient, effective alternatives exist then these funds could be made available for important projects relevant to oaks in the broad sense of the word.

### NEW MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CATEGORIES

Membership dues have been raised (see the membership enrollment form which you can print out from the website) and two new membership categories have been created: Benefactor and Institutional. They are very modest increases and here again, it is hoped that the additional funds thus created may be put to good use in the oak world. I would

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*The new IOS Board. Pictured from left to right are Charles Snyers d'Attenhoven, William Hess, Béatrice Chassé, Dirk Benoît, Allan Taylor, Allen Coombes, Guy Sternberg, Rudolph Light, and James Hitz.*



# Quercus urbanii Trel.

*Quercus urbanii* Trel., the *encino cucharilla*, is one of the most extraordinary Mexican oaks. More than spoon-shaped, as the Mexican common name implies, the huge leaves (up to 30 cm long and 34 cm wide) are sometimes folded nearly completely in half. I have seen only one herbarium specimen and it gives a very distorted image of the leaf but the fruit stalks are quite recognisable.

Trelease was honouring Ignatz Urban when publishing this name. Ignatz Urban (1848-1931) was a world-renowned German botanist known for his contributions to the flora of the Caribbean and Brazil and for his work as curator of the Berlin Botanical Garden. Many other taxa honour this man's work : *Tetrazygia urbanii* Cogn; *Cyathea urbanii* Brause; *Kickxia ur-*

*banii* Pitard; *Podocarpus urbanii* Pilg. All are spelled correctly with a double 'i' at the end – as is also the correct way to spell *Q. urbanii*, although William Trelease himself spelled it — incorrectly — with only one 'i' at the end (*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 60, p. 32, pl. 2, 1921).

## DESCRIPTION

*Between 4 and 20 m with deciduous foliage of extraordinary size, Q. urbanii Trel. is found in Durango, Guerrero, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacan, Nayarit, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora and north Zatecas.*

The range of this species differs according to author. Here I am following le Hardÿ et Lamant, *Guide illustré des chênes*, Editions du 8ème, 2006.

On 18 October 2009, the participants of the IOS pre-conference tour visited El Parque Recreativo El Huizteco in the state of Guerrero where masses of *Q. urbanii* grow at 2200 m. Growing along with it were *Quercus scytophylla*, *Q. magnoliifolia*, *Q. obtusata* and others.

Although there were no ripe acorns, we were happy to find the characteristic yellow-tomentose fruit spikes replete with next year's acorns. (*Q. urbanii* is one of the oaks of section *Lobatae*, whose acorns mature in two years.)

Béatrice Chassé

## PHOTOGRAPHS

1. The young leaves exhibit extraordinary colour due to the presence of reddish glandular hairs on the upper surface.

2. The amazingly sculptural mucronate tips.

3. This photograph illustrates the unusually large leaf of this taxon.

4. *Q. urbanii* in a habitat which is common for it (rocky, mountain slopes) in El Parque Recreativo El Huizteco (Guerrero, Mexico) where all of these photographs were taken.

5. *Quercus repanda* Bonpl. Picture taken near Zacapoaxtla, Puebla.



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## Thoughts for the Future

like to encourage members to bring to our attention projects worthy of consideration (research, conservation activities, important publications, etc...).

### BILL HESS, IOS TREASURER, TO RETIRE

Bill Hess, our IOS Treasurer for many years, has indicated that he wishes to retire at the end of his current term (2012). Todd Lasseigne, from North Carolina, has expressed an interest in serving as treasurer. We hope that he will still be interested in 2012, and will stand for election at that time.

### OPENING DOORS

There are many people to be thanked for the professional organization and smooth-running of the Mexico conference but, of course, no one quite so much as Maricela Coombes. As already suggested by Kunso Kim from the Morton Arboretum, perhaps this is only the beginning of fruitful exchanges between Mexico and the International Oak Society.

There are many places in the world where "botanising" is not an easy thing to do — most of these places are of course the richest in the world in terms of botanical interest. It is important that organisations like the IOS do what they can to increase collaboration and cooperation with these countries.

*Béatrice Chassé*

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## Tour Committee On The Move!

### Proposed Schedule of Events 2010-2011

(to be confirmed)

2010

*Europe*

1. Kew Garden Collection (London, England): organized by Shaun Haddock; 1 day, date to be determined.
2. Private Collection; Michael Dumont (Belgium); organized by Charles Snyers; 1 day, October date to be determined.
3. Hybrid oaks in southwestern Spain; organized by Francisco Vasquez; 3 days, date to be determined.

*United States*

1. Oak Discovery Day, UC Davis Arboretum, Shield Oak Grove. May 2, 2010. For more information, email Emily Griswold at [ebgriswold@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ebgriswold@ucdavis.edu) or check the arboretum website at <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>. Emily encourages IOS members planning on attending the event to contact her in advance to schedule a VIP tour.
2. "4 Oaks" and Dan Keiser's private collection (Minnesota, USA); 1 day, date to be determined.



2011

*Europe*

1. Tour to NW Greece; organized by Dirk Benoit; approx. 7 days, autumn date to be determined.
2. Private Collection: Arboretum Herkenrode, Philippe de Spoelberch (Belgium); organized by Charles Snyers; 1 day, date to be determined.

*United States*

3. Polly Hill Arboretum (Martha's Vineyard, USA); organized by Tim Bolland; October date to be determined.



*Acorn of Quercus insignis Martens & Galleotti.*

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## Sixth International Oak Society Conference

for a number of years on an on-line data base of names for oak species, hybrids, and cultivars. You can get an idea of Trehane's work by going to [www.oaknames.org](http://www.oaknames.org), or clicking the link "oak names data base" on the IOS homepage.

Not to be slighted either are the numerous very informative posters set up in the lunch area in the arboretum for each of the three days of the conference. Almost all of these also concerned issues of interest to research on Mexican oak species, and all were attractively presented.

One of the many highlights of the conference was the banquet, held in Haras del Bosque, a private residential development outside of Puebla. The food, as usual, was excellent, but the highpoint of the evening had to be the power-point presentation by Prof. Robert Bye and his wife, Dr. Edelmira Linares, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, on the role of trees in Mexican culture, going back to the indigenous heritage which underlies so much of modern Mexican life. After hearing that lecture I understood the significance of the giant bronze kapok tree which stands in the courtyard of the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City: to the Maya, this giant tree is the tree of life, whose roots penetrate to the underworld and whose branches hold up the heavens, sheltering all of humanity in its shade.

Also at the banquet, special service awards were presented to five of our members. See photo on page 1.

Various topics were treated during the business meeting, including presentation of the new Board and announcement of new dues structure. Regarding these, see page 3.

This year there was some anxiety about whether acorns collected in Mexico and from the seed exchange would be allowed to leave Mexico and/or enter the home countries of conference attenders, particularly the U.S. Both Maricela and Guy provided documents addressing these issues, and in most cases, attenders were able to take their acorns home.

The conference could not have proceeded more smoothly, due to the careful preparation by the organizer and her staff. Travel arrangements, lodging, transportation, meals, the mechanics of the conference, were all meticulously executed. The organizers all deserve a hearty thank you, or, as they say in Spanish, *un aplauso*. I am sure that everyone who attended the conference would join in that applause.

The pre- and post-conference tours showed the same depth of preparation and careful choice among possible alternatives.

The pre-conference tour began in Mexico City the morning of October 17<sup>th</sup>, concentrating on the environs of the capital, and ended on October 19<sup>th</sup> at near-by Puebla. During this three day excursion we were treated to visits to several oak forests in the states of Mexico, Tlaxcala, and Guerrero, some protected, at different elevations, but all high by U.S. standards. For me the outstanding sights were the forest of *Quercus urbanii* above Taxco, in Guerrero state: this tree, growing in rather dry conditions, with its large, spoon or scoop-like leaves (in vernacular Mexican Spanish it is called *encino cucharilla*: 'spoon oak') and its brilliant red new growth make it one of the more striking oaks of Mexico. (See the descriptive sketch and photographs of this oak beginning on page 4 of this newsletter.)

The other sight could be seen only in or near the Valley of Mexico on a clear, bright day at the end of the rainy season: the volcano Popocatepetl, its high crown (17,802' asl) sitting atop a perfect cone surrounded by a halo of clouds, a thin plume of smoke spiraling upward. On Monday morning, October 19<sup>th</sup> we were visiting in the area of another volcano, La Malintzi, and I will never forget seeing "Popo" off in the west every time I glanced up from the ground where the acorns of *Q. laurina*, *Q. castanea*, and *Q. crassipes* lay in thick profusion. If this combination of natural circumstances did not gladden the heart of a nature buff and oak nut, nothing could!

The post-conference tour, from October 23 through October 25, moved to the east, south-east, and even-

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## Sixth International Oak Society Conference

tually back north and north-west. The goal of the first day was a visit to the Francisco Javier Clavijero Botanical Garden in Xalapa, the capital of the state of Veracruz. A tropical downpour aborted both the visit and our stay at the intended hotel, which flooded. (We were diverted to another hotel which was completely adequate.) But there were two noteworthy positive experiences that day: after dropping sharply down from the state of Puebla, we soon caught sight of Mexico's highest peak—another volcano—Orizaba (also known by its Aztec name: Citlaltepētl) which towers to 18,701' asl. A short time later was a stop to view a magnificent example of *Quercus insignis*, which has acorns the size of small lemons (see picture page 5). Acorns were gathered from several trees, and everyone got two or three to take home. Not hardy in cold temperate climates, of course, but what a conversation piece those acorns are if you don't have a five-story greenhouse!

The following day we headed northwest, with our first stop at a fantastic volcanic barren south of Perote, Veracruz. The cone of the Cerro Pizarro, a volcanic rhyolitic dome, (quite likely the source of the lava), was clearly visible to the northwest. The area is very suggestive of California's Mohave Desert, and can be quite cold and snowy in winter, with temperatures as low as -13° C (10° F) in January. Giant yucca trees (*Yucca periculosa*) towered over rocky ground covered with numerous cactus and desert fern species, with oak trees such as *Quercus grisea* here and there among the rocks. It is also good snake and scorpion country, although we didn't see any. Maricela had a hard time rounding us up and getting us loaded up to continue our journey.

The afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup>, and the 25<sup>th</sup>, were spent in the highlands of northern Puebla state. It was raining most of the time, and the dripping forest was scintillatingly verdant from evergreen trees covered with epiphytes (bromeliads, ferns, and some epiphytic cacti), tree-ferns (probably *Cyathea divergens*), and banks of terrestrial fern species smaller and more profuse than the tree-ferns.

Our destination was the village of Cuetzalan (kway-TSAH-lan, 'the place of quetzals' in Nahuatl, the Aztec language), and it would be hard to imagine a more picturesque Mexican mountain village, located in a part of the state where many people still speak Nahuatl. Built all over a hillside, with houses crowding narrow, cobblestone streets, it was a treat to wander around taking in the sights, including a fascinating *quinceañera* ceremony at the nearby flower-bedecked Sanctuary of our Lady of Guadalupe. The music during the mass was beautiful, and the Mariachi music after the ceremony, including *Las Mañanitas*, the birthday song, was Mexico at its finest.

But the high point of that day was a visit in the afternoon to the homestead outside of Cuetzalan of Amparo Saldoval, a shy indigenous woman, who has in her garden a magnificent, mature *Quercus corrugata*. This tree provided abundant acorns to all; none of us, however, intends to make with our acorns the charming little yo-yo-like toys made from *Q. corrugata* acorns that were on sale everywhere in Cuetzalan.

No less interesting was the Sunday market the following day, where mostly produce was spread out on tables sheltered by large plastic tarpaulins. All of the streets of the town were blocked by the displays, offered by smiling and gracious people who made us feel welcome in their town. Again, quintessential Mexico, and free for the taking!

But we also managed to do some botanizing in the afternoon, when we hiked into a wild area with several oak species. The most captivating because so atypical from what we had seen so far was *Quercus repanda*, a dwarf oak under 40 cm (16 inches) tall. (See photo page 4.) Sad to say, no acorns.

That evening, when we arrived back in Puebla, we bid our old and new friends a sad farewell, confident, however, that we would meet again at the next Triennial Oak Conference in France, in 2012.

Allan Taylor





## NOTICE NOTICE

I am sure that all readers of this newsletter realize that it costs a fair amount to prepare and mail the letter. One possible way to cut down on costs would be to circulate the newsletter electronically: an email with the newsletter attached would be sent to members who are interested in receiving the newsletter in this way. The printed version of the newsletter would continue to be sent to those who do not wish to read the newsletter on line. Additional reasons for electronic circulation are that fewer paper newsletters mean fewer trees sacrificed to make the paper. Moreover, the electronic version can have color pictures where the paper version will have black and white.

Please fill out the form below and return it to the Editor at your earliest convenience. You can mail the form to me at my snail mail address, or you can respond electronically. Both of these addresses appear in the Points of Contact box to the right of this article.

Thank you!

*Allan Taylor*



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### **Oak News and Notes**

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