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## Letter to the Editor

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Dear Mr. Wright:

Firstly, many, many thanks and congratulations to yourself and all those involved in setting up the Society. This is actually a somewhat belated scribbled reply to your No. 2 Journal last autumn. I've really enjoyed the Journal and particularly enjoy and appreciate the personal comments on the individual species and cultivars such as by J. R. P. van Hoey Smith.

Conference

Yes, I am interested in attending, but could only decide nearer the time and I would put the present chances at less than 50/50. My thoughts are that the timing should be when the fall colours are at their most impressive, as it would be a long way to come to see bare branches. I would have an international conference, say, every five years, certainly no more frequently, so they (the conferences) are special and people will make an effort to come. I'd love to see one here in Europe, say Holland, sometime.

Suggestions

Please can you publish a membership list with addresses, ideally with a brief note of member's particular interests, skills and professional dealings with oaks? This could possibly be in the form of a booklet to go with the Journal and be fully updated every five years. In the meantime details of new members and such could be an item in the Journal.

I would strongly urge you to encourage and introduce Life membership, which would save a lot of paperwork and build up a sound base for the Society with a small capital fund to earn interest or whatever. It has to be the way forward as I see it, but don't set the fee too low. Members in countries with weak currencies could perhaps have a lower, possibly honorary, discretionary membership fee, such as Romania.

I am a farmer with a growing collection of oak species and varieties of my own. I have about 100 species and cultivars to date, but my problem is that I'm in the cold centre of England and don't know how many would survive a cold winter. Also I am often planting trees I've never seen and can only guess at how they will grow and survive here, and where they would like to be planted, such as heavy ground, light ground, a frost hollow, shelter, damp or dry soil, south facing, open sunny sites and so on.

Best wishes and many thanks.

Jamie Friend,  
Winnington Grange  
England

Dear Mr. Wright:

I have just received issue No. 2 of the International Oak Society and I am writing to you to congratulate you on this.

Unfortunately there seems to be some breakdown of communication between this end of the Oak [IOS] and yours. I have been hammering at the door of the Society and screaming for oak seed but I have heard nothing. Whilst I do receive a lot of seed commercially, nevertheless, there are some species which I urgently require and cannot get, for example, *Q. sadlerana*, *Q. oglethorpensis*, *Q. brewerina*, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The articles on germination of acorns need a lot of clarification. The best descriptions and guide that I have is the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Handbook No. 450, Seeds of Woody Plants in the United States, (1974). This gives a very lucid explanation and helps to clear away many of the myths of acorns which are written. For example, "the embryo has two fleshy cotyledons and there is no endosperm." Does this not immediately give us some vital information?

If the seed is fleshy and if there is no albumen then it occurs to me that acorns should be sown immediately as possible after collection. It does not seem, therefore, to be a wise practice even rightly to dry acorns in the air. Of course, if one is sending acorns around the world, then, it may occur that the acorns may arrive at their destination dry, unless they have been packed with some damp material to retain moisture.

I do not believe that the moisture content of seed is properly understood by many growers and amateurs. To my mind it is pure logic and stands to reason that nature has provided moisture for a reason and that we destroy the rhythm of nature at our peril.

I have now grown thousands of oaks from acorns. At first, I sowed the acorns in open seed beds but this practice was not satisfactory as the seed beds had poor drainage and our soil is very alkaline. Mice were also a problem. Then I reverted to sowing acorns in pots and growing oaks in containers. This practice has proven satisfactory, but there are a number of points to watch. It is necessary to have a deep pot as the oak has a tap root and it is essential not to let that root girdle round the bottom of a small pot.

Acorns can produce a second radicle, but is there any point in destroying the first radicle for that surely should be the better and stronger one. I agree with the practice of placing acorns in slightly damp peat (not wet peat) and putting them in a polythene bag until they start to germinate, but as soon as they start to emerge, I sow. I do not like to have a bag of acorns with a mass of roots because it is difficult to disentangle them without damage.

Nowadays it is not my practice to refrigerate acorns. I find that fluctuating temperatures, like nature provides, is just as good as any. In my view a fridge can produce a dry atmosphere and unless the acorns are mixed in slightly damp peat, they may dry. Nevertheless, I do accept that many people use a refrigerator with good results.

Let me leave you with one thought. Why do the white oaks germinate in the autumn and the black oaks in the spring? This is an interesting discussion point and perhaps the origin of the plant may have some bearing on it.

I would be very interested in attending the International Oak Society conference. Although I have studied growing oaks from acorns, nevertheless I am the first to recognise that my knowledge is very limited and that I have an enormous amount to learn.

In this country, there are very few established collections of oaks. With the exception of *Q. rubra*, North American oaks are rare. The odd oak may be found here or there in one of the large parks or private gardens. However, in the last five years, I have experienced an enormous upsurge of interest in the genus. Two years ago I exhibited at a plant sale in France and sold 500 oaks. Everyone in France wants an oak as Louis IX gave judgment under an oak tree. Many of the soils in France are very satisfactory for growing these plants.

By the same token, there is also an enormous interest in this country and many people are now starting to make collections of oaks. I would like to know a great deal more about oaks under landscape conditions and certainly it would be interesting to have a lecture by Michael Dirr.

I would suggest that *Les Chenes* by Camus is hopelessly out of date. In my experience it is not difficult but impossible to obtain a complete copy and it is out of print. It may, however, be possible to pick up an odd copy in a second-hand book shop. A number of years ago, Timber Press, Oregon, expressed interest in doing a new book on oaks and they were in touch with Philip McMillan Browse. However, that project did not appear to go on and my recent enquiries of Timber Press say that they are in touch with the Society with a view of writing a new book. What news do you have of this?

Keep up the good work.

With Kind Regards,

J.G.S.Harris, Proprietor  
Mallet Court Nursery  
Taunton, Somerset  
England

◊1 *Can some of our West Coast, U.S.A. members help Mr. Harris with *Q. sadleriana*, and *Q. breweriana*? Does anyone in South Carolina have access to seed of *Q. oglethorpensis*.2. Carolina have access to seed of *Q. oglethorpensis*.*

◊2. *Some of our members have copies of *Les Chenes* and other outstanding oak reference books. Perhaps they would be willing to bring them, for display and review, to the I.O.S. conference? Everyone should plan to bring seed, etc. as well.*

*Regarding the initiative by the Timber Press, a panel of experts (including several I.O.S. members) is moving ahead with this project. It is massive undertaking, and will require several years, but we expect to hear an update and request for the input during the I.O.S. conference. For those unable to attend the conference, we might publish an abbreviated proceedings as a special issue of the I.O.S. journal.*