International Oaks
The Journal of the International Oak Society

…the hybrid oak
that time forgot, oak-rod baskets,
pros and cons of grafting…

Issue No. 25/ 2014 / ISSN 1941-2061
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Graphic design: Marie-Paule Thuaud / www.lecentrecreatifducoin.com

Photos. Cover: Charles Snyers d’Attenhoven (Quercus macrocalyx Hickel & A. Camus);
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Charlie Buttigieg

Oak Open Day, Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, United Kingdom, July 29, 2013
Hugh Angus

Quercus senescens Hand.-Mazz.?
Béatrice Chassé

Oak Open Day, Pavia Nusery, Belgium, September 22, 2013
The Art of Grafting
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Oak Open Days, Aiken Oak and Horticultural Tour, USA, November 1-3, 2013
Roderick Cameron

In Search of Vietnam’s Elusive Oaks: Chassé-Colin-Snyers Vietnam 2013 (CCSV13)
Béatrice Chassé


ERRATA ISSUE No. 24
p. 18, photo caption: Hoperski Forest, Russia
p. 37, line 18: 148 rue de l’Abbé Grout
p. 205, Photo 3: Charles Snyers d’Attenhoven
Q. senescens Hand.-Mazz.

I had suggested to Allen that it would be nice to deliver a small message from him as part of my welcome address for the Hillier Oak Open Day. He readily agreed, writing a text expressing fond memories of his career at the Gardens as well as pointing out a few oaks that were decisive in developing his passion for this genus. And, he gave us a mission!

“There is a tree I would like people to look at and discuss when you get to it. It is the Q. senescens on the road front in Lower Brentry.

I collected seed of both Q. rehderiana Hand.-Mazz. and Q. senescens Hand.-Mazz. in Yunnan from a mixed population. I still remember the plants in the nursery. The Q. senescens were very small and all died before planting. The Q. rehderiana were more vigorous and one of them (with very hairy undersides to the leaves) was eventually planted in Brentry Woodland. But, this species should have leaves more or less glabrous beneath so I sent a piece to Zhou Zhekun in Kunming who said it was Q. senescens. (Note: this is the label on the tree in lower Brentry today.) It was only a young plant and growing quickly and we had no Q. senescens plants to compare it with but I know this plant came from the batch of Q. rehderiana and was very different to the Q. senescens that came from my seed. In my opinion it is likely to be a hybrid between Q. rehderiana and Q. senescens. Please discuss!”

None of the participants had ever seen either species growing in the wild, so the first thing that had to be done was to get a good description of both and try and pick out the main characteristics that could distinguish the two.

Q. rehderiana: the acorns are on a very long peduncle (as much as 13 cm/5 in); mature leaves are mostly entirely glabrous with spiny teeth and are often arranged in rosettes and slightly upright.

Q. senescens: the acorns are on a very short peduncle (1-3 cm/.39-1.18 in); mature leaves have a thick grey (yellow at the end of the season) tomentum on the underside (Mme Camus notes on her original drawing that the tomentum is so thick that one can not see the veins) and mature leaves are generally without teeth.

No decisive conclusions were drawn this day at the Gardens. After a recent trip to China, Allen has since reported that the question remains open after discussion with Dr. Min Deng as well. According to her, it could be a hybrid but that a DNA analysis would be needed for a definitive answer.

Béatrice Chassé
16-19/ Quercus senescens Hand.-Mazz.?