

AN OAK COMMON IN FRANCE - THE ENGLISH OAK
(*Q. robur* L. and *Q. pedunculata* Ehrh)

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The English Oak is found in almost all the French territories except in the extreme South (Mediterranean region) and in the mountains above 1000 m high. It grows in a large part of temperate Europe. It puts up with different climates, in oceanic as well as in continental climates, and grows in all types of soils - acid and alkaline. However, it is often replaced by *Q. pubescens* in chalky and hot sites. The species is able to colonize in the same dry or damp ground, but it only reaches a large size (30 or 40 m high) in rather deep soils with a little dampness and in luminous exposure.

There are many natural oak plantations located in very superficial grounds, the roots of *Q. robur* are able to grow in the clefts of the rocky soils where, however, it may reach a rather large size. The part played by this oak in the improvement of poor soils due to the dead leaves is important and allows the installation of a more exact species. The tree sprouts vigorously after falling and then the few shoots that were thrown out are also able to attain a large size.

Although it is quite hardy here, it is frequent to see marks of frost on old trunks - on poor soils. It is used as a reserve of copse because it is a very good wood for fuel.

The old specimens isolated along the road or in the pasture have a big and rather short trunk with a typical rounded crest. The large trees found in the forests produce a more long trunk. The wood is searched for framework because it is very tough and not very attacked by insects.

In our country, the only tree able to overtop and to eliminate the English Oak is *Fagus sylvatica*. The acorns produced by the big trees are often abundant and are eaten by rodents, wild boars and some species of birds (Jay). The English Oak is able to live for several centuries. There is a variety of *Q. robur* not very rare and found in the eastern part of France (*Q. robur* var. *tardissima*), called here June Oak, because it unfolds its leaves about one month after the type and is never injured by spring frost.

Many other varieties are met in the collections and I think the most striking are:
-*Q. robur* 'variegata' - leaves variegated with white
-*Q. robur* 'condordia' - leaves bright yellow
-*Q. robur* 'asplenifolia' - leave pinnatifid
-*Q. robur* 'fastigiata' - of columnar shape

The English Oak makes hybrids with almost all the other oaks located in its area:
-*Quercus x semilanuginosa* = *Q. lanuginosa* x *Q. robur* (= *pubescens*)
-*Quercus x apennina* = *Q. pubescens* x *robur* x *sessiliflora*
-*Quercus x intermedia* (*Q. x rosacea*) = *Q. robur* x *Q. sessiflora*
-*Quercus x andegavensis* = *Q. robur* x *Q. toza*

I grow in my garden a handsome small tree called *Quercus x Hickelii*, a hybrid between *Q. robur* and *Q. montana*.

The following comparative chart is a recapitulation including notes about two oaks often discussed: English Oak and Durmast Oak. Δ

	ENGLISH OAK (<i>Q. robur</i> L. , <i>Q. pedunculata</i> Ehrh.)	DURMAST OAK (<i>Q. petraea</i> Liebl., <i>sessiliflora</i> Salisb.)
Shape	- Irregular with curving branches.	-Less irregular with a differentiated top
Leaves	-very short petioles -limbs becoming wider near the top of the leaf -two rounded auricles at the base -dark green and sometimes glaucous - not bright, not leathery	-petioles 1 - 2 cm long -limbs becoming wider at the middle of the leaf -no auricles at the base -shiny green, rather leathery
Acorns	-ovoid cylindrical -borne by long peduncles	-ovoid globular -borne by very short peduncles

