



Wendy Brockman shows her paintings of oak leaves.

Autumn Oaks

Wendy Brockman

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Oak trees have inspired artists for hundreds of years and continue to be the subject of much contemporary artwork. Providing an ongoing variety of color and form, oaks are beautiful throughout the year and especially dramatic in autumn. In 2006 I painted Autumn Oaks, a series of ten watercolor paintings of oaks in fall color. Each piece represents a different species and expresses its individual personality and seasonal characteristics. All of the pieces in the Autumn Oaks series, except Dwarf Chinquapin oak, were painted from studies of trees growing at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, Minnesota. Guy Sternberg generously provided a clipping of Dwarf Chinquapin from his oak collection at Starhill Forest Arboretum. The Autumn Oaks collection was exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society show in London in February of 2007. Since then, several pieces have been accessioned by various botanical art collections.

As a botanical and natural history artist, my work is an ongoing process of exploring and documenting elements in our environment. Primarily self-taught, I credit my development as an observer and as an artist to a rural childhood spent close to nature. Combining concepts of creative expression and observation, my work is realistic and emphasizes both artistic and factual details. My goal is to encourage viewers to pause and appreciate the truth and beauty found in art and nature. The success of this work depends upon my ability to communicate on an aesthetic as well as an informative level. Consequently, I have developed a painting style rooted in the realistic accuracy of traditional botanical and natural history paintings. Autumn Oaks reflects the clarity and elegance inherent in this genre.

Working from my Minnesota studio, I paint from carefully observed drawings and specimens to capture the features and nuances of my subjects. I work almost exclusively in traditional watercolor on calfskin vellum. Vellum, sometimes known as parchment, is a treated animal skin highly prized for its superb painting surface and archival qualities. Available in a variety of subtle shades of cream, honey and brown, every skin is different, with colors ranging from light even tones, to dramatic shades of sepia with unusual markings. Because of its organic properties, vellum can be an unpredictable and challenging material to work with. It is a demanding surface possessing a translucent quality that makes ordinary watercolor glow with a unique luminosity. Both difficult and forgiving, vellum is a material that insures that with care, fine watercolor paintings will last for centuries.

Editors' Note: We urge everyone viewing Autumn Oaks to look closely and appreciate the diverse beauty of America's native oak species. In addition to original paintings, the images are also available as reproductions and on note cards. For more information please contact Wendy Brockman at www.wendybrockman.com. Wendy's full color illustrations can be seen on the back cover of this journal and the inside front cover.



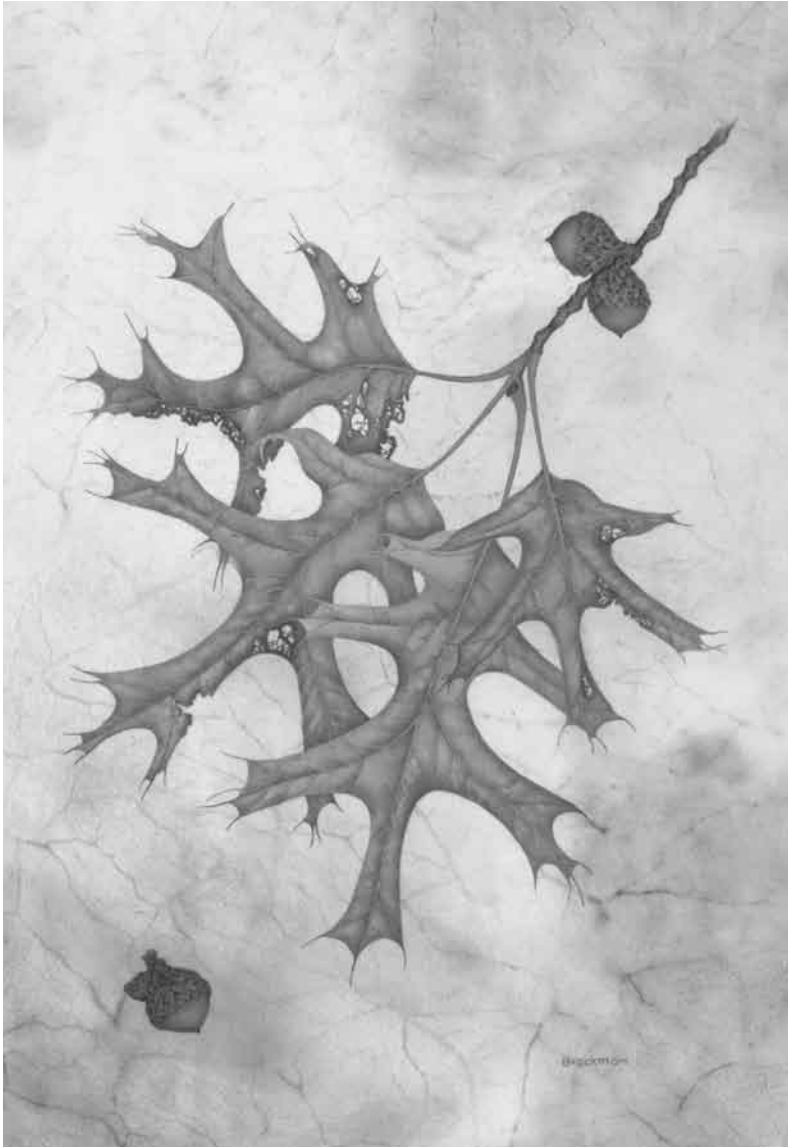
Quercus alba

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Quercus bicolor

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Quercus coccinea

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Quercus imbricaria

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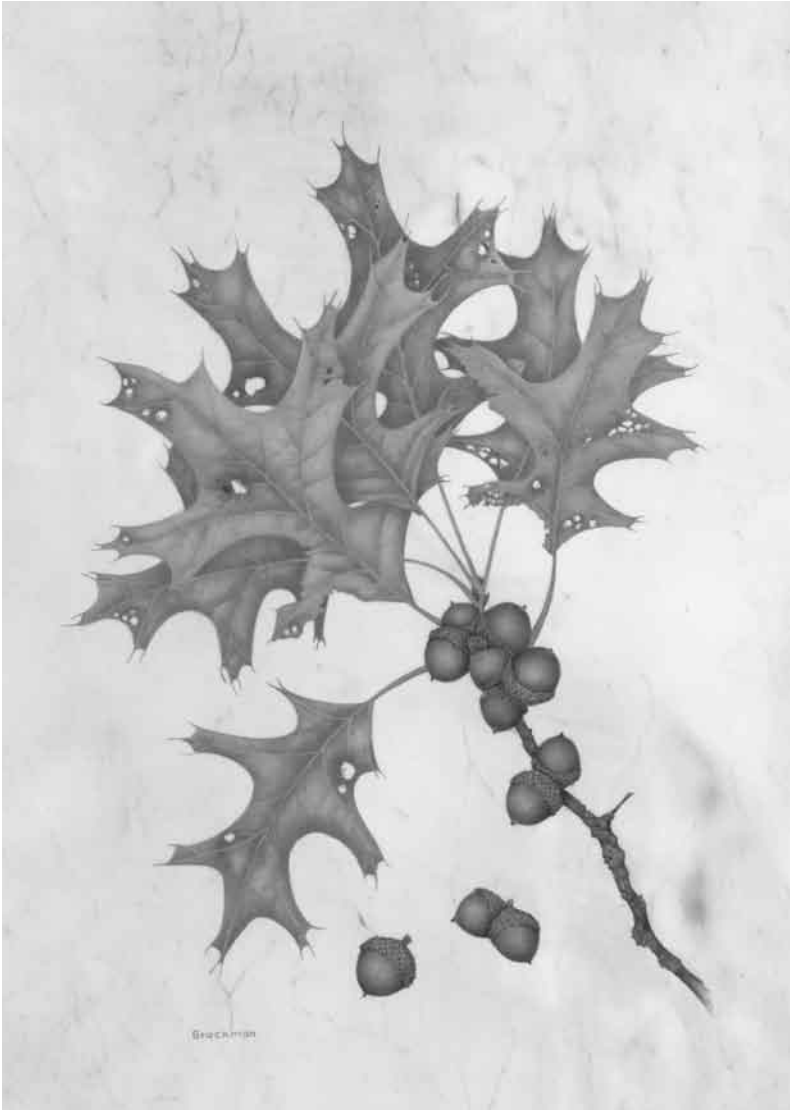
Quercus macrocarpa

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Quercus montana

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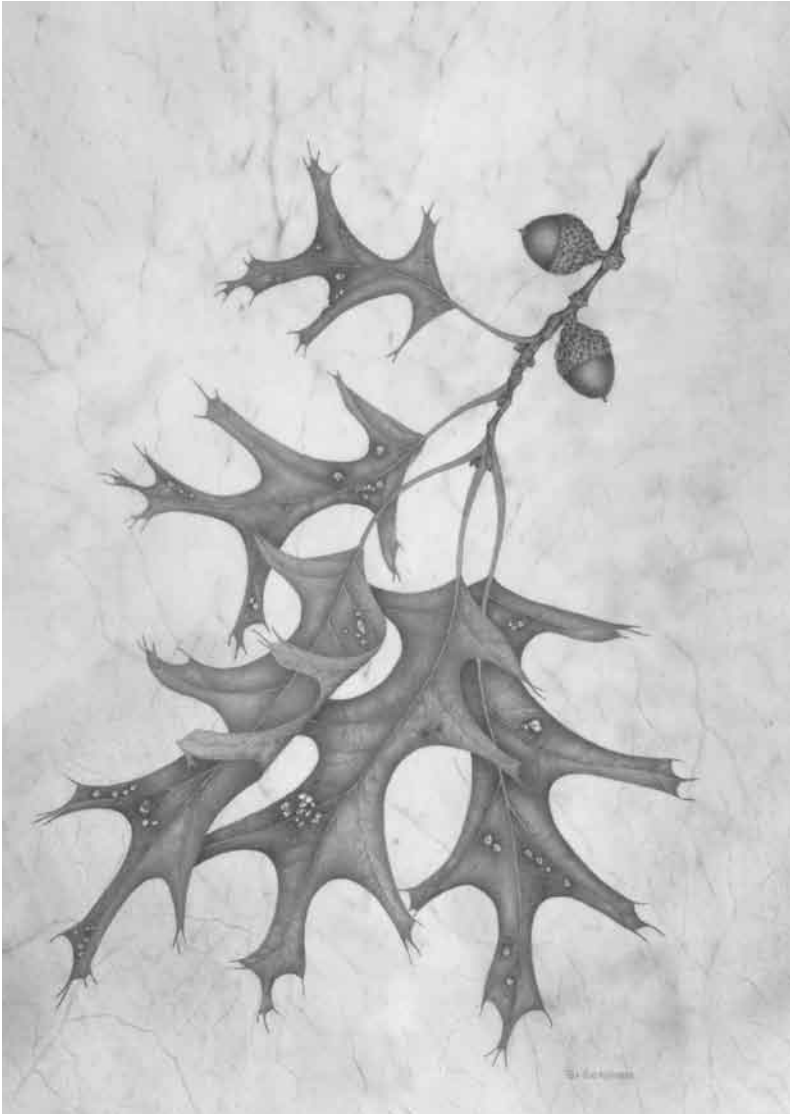
Quercus palustris

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Quercus rubra

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