



## Plants & Architecture

The people's choice

English oak

*Quercus robur*

### Why it was chosen

English oak is a relatively hard wood, but it is easy to work with when still green. It has been used for thousands of years because it is very resistant to weather and beetles.

Many oak-framed buildings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century are still in use today and thanks to sustainable timber schemes, oak-framed buildings are today enjoying a revival.

### What it is

English oak is one of Britain's most common trees. It has distinctive lobed leaves, usually grows to a height of 30–40 metres and can live for 1000 years or more.

The seed of the oak tree is the acorn. Acorns are the favourite food of squirrels and jays who bury them to store them for the winter. Those that are forgotten survive to form new trees.

Oak belongs to the *Fagaceae* family and is related to beech and sweet chestnut.

### Where it grows

English oak grows throughout Britain. Oak trees are very common in old woods which were managed to provide timber.

### Did you know?

Of all British trees, the oak supports the largest number of insects and invertebrates, over 500 species. Oak apples are formed by the larvae of the gall wasp. The apples appear in April or May and the wasps emerge in June or July.

### What the scientists say

Oak timber is made of long tubular cells, like a bundle of tiny drinking straws all stuck tightly together. Scientists are studying how this complex architecture gives wood its remarkable structural properties, with a tensile strength greater than steel.

**Plants  
& Us**