

## Selecting Planting Sites

Look for planting opportunities on your ranch or around your home. Some tips for a successful project:

- ✓ Keep it simple. A few good plantings are better than too many to maintain or none.
- ✓ Select an appropriate site for the species you are planting. Swale and riparian areas are best for valley oaks and coast live oaks; blue oaks prefer upland sites.
- ✓ Space acorns or seedlings in a natural manner. If possible, use surrounding oaks as a guide. Plant rangeland oaks in small clusters, with a goal of about 40 clusters, of 3 or 4 trees each, spread over an acre. For stream bank plantings, space clusters about 15 to 20 feet apart.

## Collecting and Storing Acorns

For best results, plant acorns from healthy local oaks. Collect in early fall as acorns are beginning to turn brown and some are falling to the ground. Wait two weeks if most acorns are still dark green and caps are difficult to remove.

Before storing acorns, remove any remaining caps. To retard germination and prevent drying, place acorns in sealed plastic bags before storing in refrigerator. Although acorns stored this way should keep for 2 to 3 months, it's best to plant as soon as possible.

## Planting Acorns

Acorns can be planted from early November (after the first rains have soaked the soil) through February. A few pointers:

- ✓ Place acorns in horizontal position and cover with one inch of soil.
- ✓ To facilitate root growth in hard or compacted soils, dig the hole several inches deeper than planting depth; refill the hole with lightly packed, moist soil.

## Planting Seedlings

If large numbers of acorn eating rodents are present in the planting area, you might want to plant seedlings rather than acorns. To grow healthy oak seedlings, follow these guidelines:

- ✓ Use tall, narrow containers to promote root growth. Use well-drained potting mix; keep it moist but not saturated.
- ✓ Seedlings are ready for field planting when they are 4 to 8 inches tall; ideal time for outplanting is late winter or early spring.
- ✓ Plant each seedling in a hole several inches deeper and wider than the seedling itself. Lightly pack moist soil around delicate roots while keeping plant at ground level.



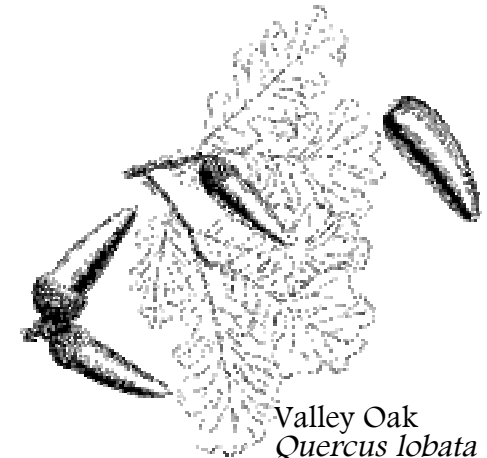
Coast Live Oak  
*Quercus agrifolia*

## Protecting Seedlings

Seedlings need protection from competing vegetation and animals. Keep weeds from stealing soil moisture by clearing a 2 to 3 foot circle around each seedling. Do this by hoeing, mulching or spraying with a contact herbicide. Maintain this clearing for at least two years. Although these practices will reduce the need for irrigation, you should plan to provide a gallon of water per month during the first two summers.

To protect seedlings from small animals and promote growth, use "treeshelters." One of these tall translucent tubes should be pushed 2 to 4 inches into the soil around each acorn or seedling. Support each tube with a stake. Tube tops may be crisscrossed with wire to discourage birds; remove wire when seedling reaches top of shelter. Treeshelters can be left on indefinitely. Fencing or cages can be used to protect seedlings from deer and livestock.

*If you've made it this far, you are on your way toward growing mighty oaks!*



Valley Oak  
*Quercus lobata*

## Our Oak Heritage

San Luis Obispo County owes much of its beauty and character to its native oak woodlands. Oaks enhance rangeland for livestock, provide habitat for wildlife, protect stream banks, yield wood for barbecues and heating, and add value to both rural and urban landscapes. Concern exists, however, about the long-term sustainability of San Luis Obispo County's oak woodlands. Some woodlands have been seriously degraded by urban expansion, intensive agriculture, and other land uses.

To complicate matters, some oak species are not regenerating adequately to replace natural tree loss. Concerned residents are challenged with the development of innovative measures to retain remaining oak woodlands and replant damaged areas. During the past decade, effective planting techniques have been developed. This brochure highlights the best oak planting techniques for our county.



Blue Oak  
*Quercus douglassi*



Prepared by the  
**Native Tree Committee**  
Of San Luis Obispo County

### Reference:

*How to Grow California Oaks*  
D.D. McCreary, Integrated Hardwood  
Range Management Program,  
University of California, Berkeley.

### For more information:

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## How to Plant Acorns & Grow Mighty Oaks

*In San Luis Obispo County*

