



Want to try growing a tree from an acorn? Here's what to do!

Resources

- ✧ Acorns
- ✧ Plant pot, large yoghurt pot or the cut bottom of an empty plastic bottle
- ✧ Saucer or something to put underneath your plant pot
- ✧ Stones
- ✧ Sand (desirable but not essential)
- ✧ Soil or peat free compost
- ✧ Plastic bag or food bag
- ✧ Elastic band
- ✧ Chicken wire (desirable but not essential)

What to do

- 1 Developing acorns are green and turn brown when fully ripe. They begin to fall from the trees in October, particularly during strong winds and/or after the first frosts. Keep a watchful eye on your tree - once the cold air sets in that is the time acorns will begin to drop. The "first fall" acorns (these often fall with the first autumn winds) should be discarded as they are not fully ripe - The main fall is approximately 2 weeks later.



- 2 Acorns are 'recalcitrant,' which means they are highly perishable. Once they have fallen from the tree they will germinate, usually 5-15 weeks after dropping. To give your acorns the best chance of germinating and avoid drying out (which will kill them) you need to sow them straightaway.



- 3 Think about what sort of container you're going to grow your acorn in. You can use a plant pot or why not try using a large yoghurt pot or cut the bottom off an empty plastic bottle? Your pot needs to be a minimum of 15cm in height.



- 4 Ensure there are holes in the base of your pot and put a handful of stones in the bottom along with some sand (desirable but not essential) to help with drainage. Place a saucer under the pot to capture any escaping moisture.



- 5 Put in approximately 10cm of soil or peat free compost into your pot so that it's about two-thirds full.





- 6 Place your acorn on top of the soil and cover with a layer of soil about as thick as the acorn.



- 7 Cover your pot with a plastic bag and fasten it. This will keep the seed moist without watering. Leave your pot in a cold frame, an unheated greenhouse or somewhere outside where it will get sunlight but some shelter from winds. Do not take your pot inside – the central heating will dry out your seedling. Ideally, place some chicken wire over the pot to deter predators such as mice over the winter.



- 8 Roots will grow during the winter and shoots will begin to emerge in spring. As soon as you see the seedling appear (this process is called germination) remove the plastic bag. Make sure you water the seedling once or twice a week. The soil should be moist but not wet.



- 9 Keep watering your seedling and if in a cold frame/greenhouse, take it out when the weather warms. In the autumn, a year after you collected the acorn, the sapling can be moved to a bigger pot to continue to grow for one to two years, or it can be planted in the ground. Remember oak trees grow to be 20-40 metres tall! Make sure you plant your sapling away from houses and infrastructure where it will get adequate sunlight and room to grow.



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