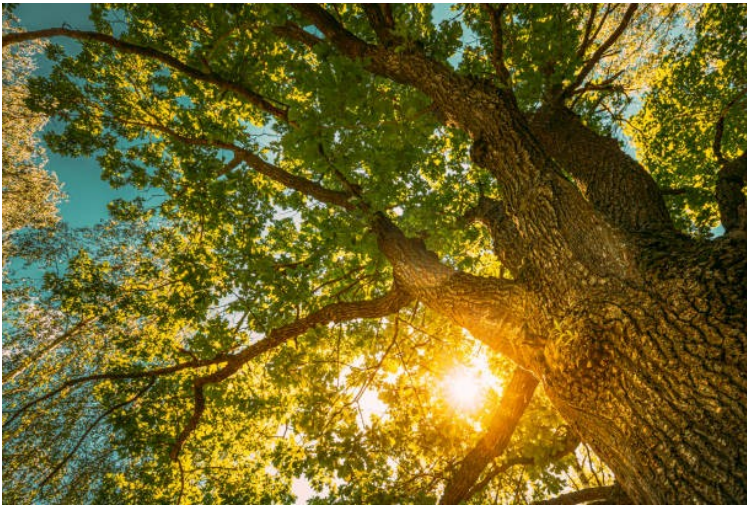


The Oaks



Description:

Saying “Oak” is imprecise: it isn’t a species, but a genus. The genus *Quercus*, belonging to the *Fagaceae* family, includes about 500 species, of which a dozen are present in Italy. In general terms, with a few exceptions, the most famous oak trees share characteristics that unite them, for example their unmistakable fruits: **acorns**. Oaks are a **key** genus in a wide range of habitats, from the Mediterranean to the subtropical rainforest. Oaks have unisexual flowers and are **monoecious** plants, meaning the same plant bears both male and female **flowers**. The male flowers are grouped in yellow **catkins**, the female ones are green. The **fruit** is the **acorn**.



Oak story:

We can distinguish its **natural history** (it is a key species for its effect on the ecosystem) and its **cultural history** (it has had a huge impact on human history).

There is an aura of sacredness around these plants, in fact they have been venerated and considered a symbol of long life, majesty and strength, as well as being considered the king or queen of trees.

In ancient Greece, for example, the oak was the tree sacred to Zeus.

The Romans, on the other hand, used to give a crown made of oak branches to those who had shown great value in war, defending a citizen.

In the Catholic religion, the oak is linked to the figure of the Madonna, so much so that in some places in Italy the cult of the "Madonna of the oaks" had spread.

In particular, in Tuscany it is possible to follow a real itinerary through the places where these sacred oaks stand, where the Madonna would have appeared or performed miracles.

One of these places is located in Lucignano, where the Sanctuary of Hail Mary of Oak is located.

The oak tree produces a fruit in the summer, this fruit is called acorn; nowadays we no longer see animals that eat this fruit, in fact there are some but we see few of them. Nowadays things have changed, in fact from a nutritional point of view the acorn is classified as a dried fruit composed of carbohydrates and fats. The consumption of sweet acorns is selected because they are very tasty and in fact many years ago it was called superfood.

Superfoods are foods that have the presumed beneficial properties for health and are often called functional foods or nutraceuticals.

Another project that aims to protect the English oak

In Lombardy there are 718 million trees. And if the most numerous species is the **black hornbeam**, the English oak has the highest average volume per individual, with 0.53 cubic meters per plant. This is reported in the Report on the State of Forests in Lombardy edited by **ERSAF** - Regional Agency for Agriculture and Forestry Services. The same agency has long since launched a project for the protection of the English oak. After drafting a Cultivation Plan, the ERSAF staff of the Regional Forestry Nursery of Curno (Bergamo) collected and sowed 100 kilos of seeds of this species, coming from woods selected as "seed woods". The collection areas involved the territories of Pumenengo and Sorisole (Bergamo), Capriano del Colle (Brescia), Monza and Misinto (Monza Brianza), areas distant from each other in order to guarantee greater genetic diversity.

The sowing completed in November 2018 gave life in spring 2019 to new oak seedlings that are now growing in the nursery in a space specifically dedicated to them.

Their final destination will then be to enrich **the genetic heritage of the existing woods and recreate new woods in the Lombardy Natura 2000 sites and in the Regional Ecological Network**, through LIFE actions, improving the state of conservation of the oak forests of community interest, including the Habitats.

The seedlings, 15 thousand in total, will be able to leave the "Nursey" only starting next September.

Sites where we searched for information:

Fruit of the oak: <https://www.sadenda.com/frutto-della-quercia-tutte-le-proprietà-e-gli-usi-delle-ghiande/>

Oak information: <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quercus>

Bye: Istituto Comprensivo Castiglione Uno - Lower Secondary School Beschi - Class 3^F - Castiglione delle Stiviere Mantova