



## Collecting and Planting White Oak Acorns:

- Most acorns will be growing in the tops of the trees on the south side. Birds and squirrels eat nearly ripe acorns so a tree with lots of green acorns might not have many that actually fall to the ground for you to collect.
- White oak acorns **drop from the tree starting in mid-Sept.** in the northern part of the US and late Oct. or early Nov. in the southern US. If there is a late-summer drought, acorns could drop up to 2 weeks earlier than normal.
- Acorns that drop first from a particular tree are immature, unfilled, diseased, or gall/insect infested. **These acorns will not produce a seedling once planted.** BE PATIENT. Move the acorns that drop first away from your collection tree. The wildlife are happy to eat these. Wait until the acorns are all dropping at once to collect because these are the good ones that will produce a seedling.
- **Do not collect acorns that have "pin holes"** on the outside of the acorn because they are infested with insects.
- **Do not pull acorns off the tree** like you would an apple. Acorns that are still attached to the tree are not mature and unlike fruit such as apples which can ripen once you pick them, acorns will NOT "ripen" to maturity once they leave the tree. Acorns pulled off a tree are immature and will not produce seedlings.
- **Do not collect acorns that have their caps still attached or have caps that do not slip off easily.** Most of these acorns were blown off the tree by wind or were thrown down by birds and squirrels before they were mature and they won't produce a seedling when planted. However, sometimes mature acorns will drop with their caps on. If you pick up an acorn with a cap and the cap falls off easily when you touch it, then that acorn is mature and can be planted. If you have to pull on the cap to get it to come off, do NOT collect that acorn because it is not mature. Leave those for the wildlife.
- Once you decide it is time to collect, the acorns **need to be picked up as soon as possible after they have fallen** because the root will start to grow within a few days. You can still collect and plant white oak acorns that have an emerging root as long as the root is very short (less than ¼ inch) but be super gentle handling these acorns and plant them immediately. The emerging root shown in photo #4 is a little long and susceptible to being broken. If that happens the acorn will die.
- If you are not ready to plant, **put your acorn collection in a plastic zip-lock type storage bag and put it in a cool place** such as the door in your refrigerator or a basement. You want the acorns to stay cool and moist but they also need oxygen so don't close the bag up all the way. Heat and drying out will kill the acorns.
- You can collect over time from the same tree by adding newly collected acorns to the bag in your refrigerator or basement.
- When you are done collecting acorns, fill a bucket with water and gently put the acorns in the bucket. The **acorns that sink are more likely to germinate and produce seedlings.** Throw away all the acorns that float because they will not produce a seedling. You don't need to do this step with acorns that have roots emerging because they are already germinating and can produce a seedling.
- **Plant the acorns in moist soil with the pointy end facing down and cover the acorns with no more than ½" of soil.** It is best to cover the planted acorns with a thin layer of dead leaves or other similar mulch to help hide them from animals, to keep the soil moist, and to insulate the acorns from cold temperatures.