



Mighty Acorn Hunt: How-To Guide

Timing is everything when it comes to finding healthy, viable acorns. Late September and early October are the perfect time to take a walk around your neighborhood or local park and harvest acorns.

Grab your friends and family members and head outside with these hunting helpful tips:

HOW TO: SPOT AND IDENTIFY OAK SPECIES

- Oaks fall into two groups: white oaks and red/black oaks.
- Leaves: Oak leaves often have lobes. White oaks have rounded lobes, while red oaks have pointed lobes.
- Bark: White oaks typically have light, flaky bark. Red oaks have darker, ridged bark.
- Choose the best oak: Old, full-crowned oaks produce the most viable acorns. Wide crowns, thick trunks, balanced branching usually indicate resilience. Avoid non-natives (like English Oak) — they don't support as much local wildlife.



TIP – USE YOUR PHONE TO IDENTIFY TREES!

iPhone: Open the Photos app, select your tree photo, tap the info ('i') button, and look for 'Look Up – Plant'.

Android: Use Google Photos, tap the Google Lens icon on your tree photo, and it will suggest possible matches.



HOW TO: COLLECT ACORNS

- Acorns are usually ready in early fall (late September - October), when they begin to fall naturally.
- Collect safely and responsibly! Avoid busy roadsides and stick to public land, or your own private property.

WHAT IS A MAST YEAR?

A mast year refers to a period when certain tree species produce an unusually large amount of their fruits or nuts, known as a "mast". This phenomenon occurs every few years and is a natural reproductive strategy for trees (particularly oak and beech), to ensure the future generation of these species.

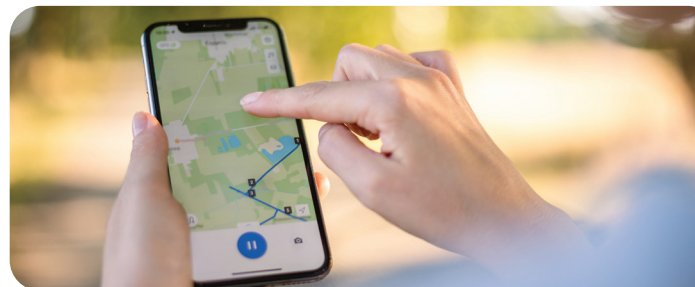




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HOW TO: MAP YOUR OAK TREES

- When you find oak trees, mark their locations using your phone's GPS, a paper map, or an app like Google Maps.
- This will make it easy to return the same trees year after year.



HOW TO: IDENTIFY HEALTHY ACORNS

- Collect acorns that are brown, firm, and free of cracks.
- Avoid acorns with holes; this is often a sign that a weevil has burrowed inside, making the acorn non-viable. Discard any acorns with visible holes.
- Avoid collecting too early—green acorns are usually not mature.
- **Perform the float test at home:** Place acorns in a bowl of water. Healthy, viable acorns sink, while non-viable acorns will float. Discard any acorns that float. **Extra tip:** double check any acorns that sink for holes; water will fill any holes making them sink and appear healthy.



HOW TO: STORE ACORNS OVER WINTER

- Label your acorns by species and place in a sealed Ziploc bag with a damp paper towel; check paper towel every couple weeks and replace if needed.
- Store in the refrigerator (34-40 degrees F° is ideal); this cold stratification process is necessary for spring germination.



DID YOU KNOW?

White Oak acorns germinate in the fall: You can either plant healthy White Oak acorns this fall or store them with your other species in the fridge. All acorns should remain refrigerated until February or March.

HOW TO: GROW YOUR OWN OAKS

Join the Mighty Acorn Society in Spring 2026 and we'll guide you through the potting and planting process!

Visit monarchresearch.org for more info about joining the Mighty Acorn Society.

