

The National Forest Company

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THE NATIONAL
FOREST

Grow a Tree from Seed



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What do you need to do?

This leaflet provides you with information on when to collect acorns and how best to nurture and care for them during the first two or three years of life. At this stage they will be big enough to transplant and survive in the wild.

Once you have collected and potted your acorns, return the Seedling Pledge form to the National Forest Company and we will keep your details on our database. At an appropriate time, we will invite you to a community tree planting event in The National Forest.



Planting events

The National Forest Company holds a **Grow a Tree from Seed** planting event once a year between November and March (the tree planting season). This is a fantastic day, with people and families of all ages coming along to plant their young trees. Everyone has a story to tell about their trees and we love hearing them!

Volunteers will be on hand at the planting site and will show you what to do and help you if needed. It really is a great occasion, people are really enthusiastic and can't wait to go out and start collecting more acorns!

So, why not get collecting and join us at a future event? That way you can do your bit to help make The National Forest grow.

“Tall oaks from little acorns grown”

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1385

The National Forest is situated at the very heart of England, encompassing parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire – covering 200 square miles in total. It is an ambitious project which aims to link the ancient forests of Needwood in the west and Charnwood in the east with new woodland areas, for the benefit and enjoyment of the nation. By taking part in the Grow a Tree from Seed scheme, you can make a pledge to contribute to this exciting project. You can help by collecting acorns and caring for them for about two years, until they are strong enough to bring to one of our special tree planting days in The National Forest.



Did you know?

After the Battle of Worcester in 1651, the future King Charles II hid from pursuing Roundheads in an oak tree at Boscobel House. This became known as The Royal Oak. Many pubs throughout the country have this name and this is why!

Oaks were grown, in times gone by, for their superior timber qualities for use in house and ship building. Lord Horatio Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory, is made mostly of oak and is the only surviving warship that saw action in the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary War and the famous Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Did you know?

Oak trees are native to England and feature heavily in our history, legends and folklore – maybe that's why we have a soft spot for them.

The oak was sacred to the Celtic people and amongst other things, they made magic wands from the wood.

The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is estimated to be between 800 and 1,000 years old and is reputed to be where Robin Hood and his Merrie Men hid from enemies during the Middle Ages.

Why Oak trees?

Oak trees are the most widely planted tree in The National Forest. We are trying to create a native, indigenous woodland and, when mature, oaks will form a magnificent feature in the landscape and support and enhance over 250 species of wildlife. If you grow oak trees from native seed we will always be able to find a suitable site for you to plant them. It may also be possible to plant other native trees (e.g. birch or ash), but unfortunately we do not plant non-native species such as horse chestnut or sycamore.

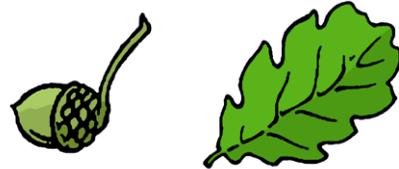
Why don't you grow a tree from seed?

You can help create The National Forest by growing young oaks from acorns you have collected yourself. Why not have a go by following these simple steps?

Step 1

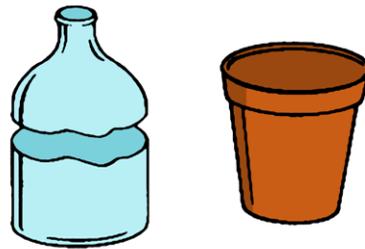
During October and November, you need to go out and collect the acorns you are going to grow. Try to collect from the healthiest trees you see, so that yours will grow strong. Also try to collect from mature trees in groups, not isolated individuals.

Remember to send in your Seedling Pledge.



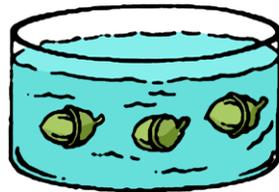
Step 2

You will then also need to consider what sort of container to grow them in. You can use a plant pot, but why not try using a large yoghurt pot or cut the bottom off an empty plastic bottle?



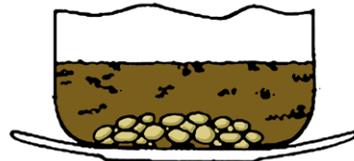
Step 3

Soak the acorns overnight in warm water. Then carefully peel off the outer shell. Try not to damage the inner seed (called the kernel), as this is the part of the nut that will grow into a tree.



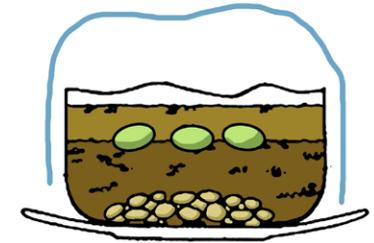
Step 4

Cut some holes in the base of your pot and put some stones at the bottom to help with drainage. Then put in some soil or peat free compost so that the pot is about two-thirds full. Finally, stand the pot on a saucer.



Step 5

Place three acorns in your pot (a single acorn may not survive) and cover with a layer of soil. Cover your pot with a plastic bag and put it in a sunny place on the windowsill.



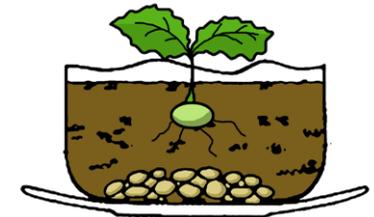
Step 6

As soon as you see the seedlings appear (this is called germination) remove the bag. Make sure you water the seedlings once or twice a week and keep the soil moist.



Step 7

When the seedlings grow to a height of approximately 75mm, choose the seedling that looks the strongest as this has the greatest chance of survival. Remove the other two seedlings, which could then be replanted into new pots. The remaining seedling now has more room to grow.



Step 8

Keep watering your plant and place the seedling and container outside in the summer. The following autumn, a year after you collected the seeds, the sapling can be moved to a bigger pot. The sapling then needs to grow for one, or maybe two, more years, after which time it will be strong enough to be planted out - either in The National Forest, your own garden or school grounds.

