

# Riverwoods Preservation Council

## How to Grow an Oak Tree from an Acorn

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Growing your own oak trees from acorns is easy and is a great way to produce strong, healthy specimens to add back into your garden. It also provides children with a great opportunity to learn about a tree's life cycle, and the role that they can play in enabling this natural cycle. This activity is an ideal one to begin in the early fall.

### Steps

- 1. Collect green acorns in early fall.** Choose ones that are free of worms, holes, and fungus. Ideally, the acorns should be brown or nearly black.
- 2. Put the green acorns in a bucket of water for a couple minutes.** Discard any acorns that float.
- 3. Take out the remaining acorns.** Place them in a large zipper bag with damp sawdust; you should be able to fit up to 250 acorns in these bags. Put them in the refrigerator for a month or longer, as needed to germinate the new oak.
  - This process is known as stratification, which is simply having a seed exposed to cold temperatures. This primes the seed for sprouting in the spring.
- 4. Keep an eye on their growth.** The root end will begin to crack through around early December (late fall, early winter). Once the root has cracked through, the acorn is ready to be planted.
- 5. Plant each acorn in a 2-inch diameter pot deep enough so the tap root can grow.** Place the acorn about 2-4 inches below the surface with the root facing down. Water regularly. If preferred, just bury the root, and gently tuck the acorn to one side on top of suitable rich, soft soil. This will only work if the tap root is already well established, long, and has detached adequately from the acorn.
- 6. After the oak has grown about 4 inches, which should take less than 6 months, it can be planted into the ground.** In the meantime, continue to care for it in its potted environment.
  - Ideally, the containers should have holes in the bottom that allow for drainage.
  - Alternatively, the acorns can be planted directly into the ground by clearing a 2x2 foot area and placing two acorns into that space, with 1-2 inches of soil on top.
- 7. To transplant the oak seedlings into the ground from a pot, clear a 3-foot circle of all vegetation.**
  - The circle should have full access to sunlight and good soil.
  - Lay a mulch of bark chips about one foot around the tree, but make sure the mulch does not touch the stems.
  - In the middle, dig a hole about 1-2 feet deep and 1 foot wide.
  - Place the oak seedling into the hole, sloping the soil away from the seedling so that the water does not sit at the trunk of the tree. Oaks do not like water sitting on their trunks.
  - Next, pack down the earth and water the seedling. Watch it grow over the years!

## Tips

- Place a stake into the ground with a screen around the seedling so that animals are not able to eat it.
- Even small oak trees lose their leaves in the fall, so don't be discouraged if all the leaves turn brown or fall off. Just wait for spring.
- Look about to see if the acorn came from an attractive and healthy looking tree. Use another better looking tree if the parent tree has problems.

## Things You'll Need

- Acorns (green)
- Plastic bag
- Refrigerator
- Sawdust
- Pot for growing
- Suitable soil
- Watering can
- Water

Source: Wikihow. <http://www.wikihow.com/Grow-an-Oak-Tree-from-an-Acorn> (A video is included at this site).

