



# QUERCUS ROBUR L.

Fam. Fagaceae

## DESCRIPTION

Large deciduous tree of great ecological importance; with an average height of 30-35 m, it can grow as tall as 50 m with a trunk in excess of 2 m in diameter; this long-lived species can exist for up to 500 years.

## HABITAT

Originates between Europe and the Caucasus. In ancient times, in Italy it was mainly found on the Po Plain, where it grew in vast forests along with the Austrian oak (*Quercus cerris*) and the European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*). Today, only fragments of these lowland forests exist, with the best-known being the Gardens of La Mandria.

## DISTRIBUTION

This is the most common species of oak in Europe, as it is typical of temperate to cold climates. It grows at a maximum of 800-1,000 metres, and is not found on the Italian islands.

## FLOWERS

Flowers appear with the leaves, from the end of April into May. The tree has pendent male flowers (at the base of the yearly branches), and female flowers (located at the top of the twig in the axil of the leaves); impollination is anemophilous.

## LEAVES

Deciduous with obovate-oblong margins, narrow at the base and asymmetrical in shape, with 5-7 broad lobes; two characteristically unequal "ears" form around the short petiole (2-5mm). Late in the season they turn rather more leathery; glossy and green on the upper side.

## FRUITS

Acorns, which ripen between September and October. Acorns are elongated, smooth to the touch, brown in colour and vary in size from 2 to 3.5 cm. They have a cupule formed of triangular scales which are larger closest to the petiole.

## BARK

In the younger trees (10-20 years old) the bark is smooth and greyish in colour, before forming longitudinal cracks with deep, regular furrows divided into shallower grooves that form elongated rectangular plates.

## INTERESTING FACTS

In the past, acorns were an important source of food. Today, their culinary use is almost unknown to humans, but they are still used in animal feed.

## ROOTS

The root system is formed of a large taproot that penetrates the soil with strong lateral roots, anchoring the tree firmly to the ground.

