Turkey Oak

Species Description

Scientific name: Quercus cerris  
AKA: Wainscot Oak, Derwen Twrci (Welsh)  
Native to: South-central Europe to south-west Asia  
Habitat: Parkland, dry grassland and heathland

A deciduous oak which has a long straight trunk and is regularly planted as an ornamental tree in parklands. The leaf lobes are more pointed than native oaks and the leaf buds have distinctive whiskers, which are obvious in winter. The acorn also has a distinctive ‘furry’ cup, very different to the native oak acorns.

By 1735, it was widely cultivated in Britain and was first recorded in the wild in 1903. Since then there has been a large increase in population and the species has aggressively colonised sandier, acid soils and displaced native vegetation.

Turkey Oak is a host of the Knopper Gall Wasp (Andricus quercuscalicis), which in spring forms small galls within the catkins of the Turkey Oak. The female wasps that develop from these galls then lay eggs within the acorns of Pedunculate Oak (native, aka English Oak) inducing galls to develop and therefore affecting the fertility of the Pedunculate Oak and reducing the viability of the acorns.

It is host to alternate generations of the Knopper gall wasp which can affect the ability of native oaks to regenerate.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.

Key ID Features

- Leaf lobes variable with deep cuts close to midrib
- Acorn cup has furry appearance
- Ends of lobes pointed
- Distinct ‘whiskers’ surrounding leaf bud

* Piero Amorati, ICCroce - Casalecchio di Reno, Bugwood.org
Identification throughout the year

Can be identified in spring and summer by the characteristic leaves and throughout the year by the distinctive ‘whiskers’ surrounding the leaf bud. During the winter, look for fallen leaves and acorn cups. The bark has a greyish colour and becomes deeply fissured, eventually cracking to form square convex plates.

Similar Species

Turkey Oak
Non-native
(Quercus cerris)
For comparison

Sessile Oak
Native
(Quercus petraea)

Pedunculate Oak
Native
(Quercus robur)

Can be identified in spring and summer by the characteristic leaves and throughout the year by the distinctive ‘whiskers’ surrounding the leaf bud. During the winter, look for fallen leaves and acorn cups. The bark has a greyish colour and becomes deeply fissured, eventually cracking to form square convex plates.

Distribution

Widespread over the British lowlands.

References and further reading:


Photos from: Kevin Doidge, M. Violante, Piero Amorati