

INFUSE

Week 1 - Introduction

Oak (*Quercus* species)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

Welcome to Oak Month!

I'm so excited to share the wisdom and medicine of Oak with you. At this time of year, and in the world we are navigating, we are being called to tap into our deepest reserves of strength, resilience, and endurance. Oak is one of the best allies to call on and emulate for these purposes.

We'll begin by meeting Oak in the imaginal realm and out in the field using our senses and certain identification clues. I invite you to get up close and personal with this mighty plant being this week and beyond.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping tail.





We begin with an introduction to Oak
via the imaginal realm...



meet Oak

etymology

Being a dominant and primeval species, the meaning of the common name in English is simply what it is: Oak.

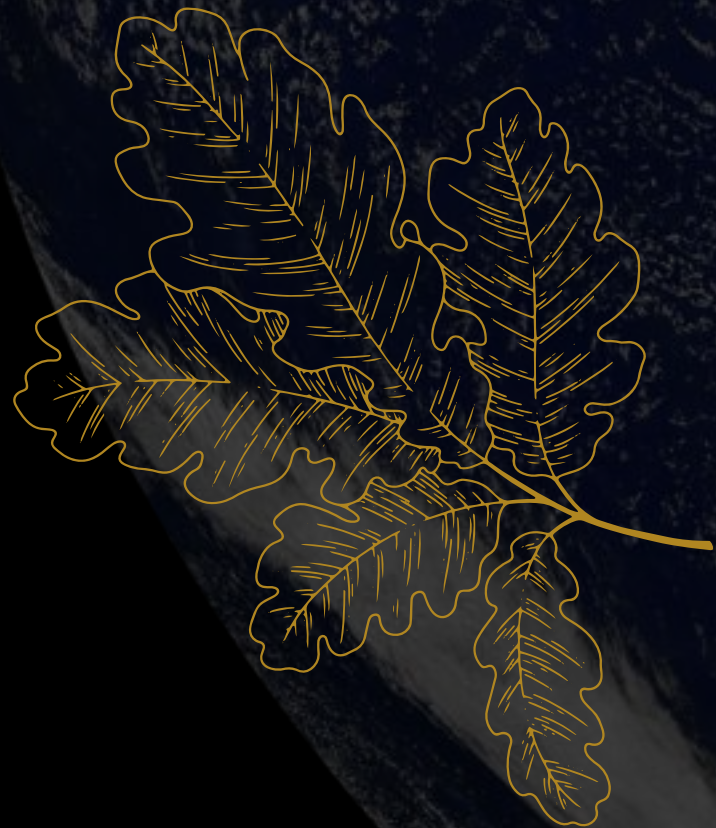
Oak means "tree or shrub of the genus *Quercus*," from Middle English *oke*, cognate Old Norse *eik*, both from Proto-Germanic **aiks*. The origin of the word is uncertain and it does not seem to relate to any languages outside of Germanic ones.

Genus name *Quercus* comes from Proto-Italic "*k^werkus*," assimilated from Proto-Indo-European **pérkus* ~ **p^{r̥}k^wéu-* ("oak").

Oak (*Quercus*) is a genus of tree or shrub in the Fagaceae (Beech) family and is the most widespread hardwood tree in the Northern Hemisphere.

Including hybrids, there are about 600 species of Oak worldwide. Over 190 species are found in the US.

According to available evidence, Oaks have been on this planet for at least 55 million years and though they are mostly endemic to the Northern Hemisphere, some of their earliest ancestors have been found in Patagonia.



distribution

identification

In general, we can identify Oaks by their:

Spirally arranged leaves, often lobed



though sometimes entire with smooth

or serrated edges

identification

In general, we can identify Oaks by their:

Sometimes marcescent leaves that turn brown or rust colored and stick around through winter



identification

In general, we can identify Oaks by their:

Inconspicuous female and male (monoecious)
flowers that emerge in spring

identification

In general, we can identify Oaks by their:

Fruit, the acorn (nut) featuring a cap or cup-like structure called a cupule; each acorn most often contains one seed

A large, leafy tree stands in a field at dusk. The sky is a deep blue, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a soft glow. The tree's leaves are dark green and brown. A yellow, torn-paper graphic is at the top of the image.

where to find

Oaks are one of the most common trees
in the Northern Hemisphere.

You'll find them in a variety of places:
planted as street trees;
standing alone, in pairs, or in groves
in yards, parks, and meadows;
and growing in large communities in the forest.



Look for fallen leaves,
or rattling ones still clinging
to almost bare branches
or sometimes very full ones



Seek acorns –
scattered, split, de-capped, or entire

Feel the bark,
connect the dots,
between now and then,
between the winter winds
and the summer breezes



An invitation to play

invitation

honoring

Set up an altar to Oak.

Here are some suggestions for what to include:

Acorns, Oak leaves, or Oak galls

Red stones such as Jasper and Carnelian

Images of Oak deities (eg, Janus, Zeus, Thor, or Taranis)

Animal figures, including Squirrel and Eagle

Red or green candle

Keys, hinges, nails

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Week 2 - Tree of Gods

Oak (*Quercus* species)

Gathering
GROUND



INFUSE

It's Oak Week 2!

Call to mind what it's like to stand in the presence of an Oak.

What do you notice? What do you feel?

I wonder, can you can feel the electricity, the spark, and the strength of these noble trees?

Let's explore this and more...

Standing like an Oak,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz', written in a cursive style.



common



If there's one thing Oak is, he's common. Which is also part of his power. There is great potential in the mundane, the commonplace, the abundant and generous nature of these trees.

And in the many places where Oak thrives, humans do, too.

Oak, as arborist William Bryant Logan says, is the "frame of civilization." Looking at the global distribution of Oaks on a map, it syncs up uncannily with major cities and human developments.

Oak is

the frame for buildings
the doors and floors, too
furniture

casks and corks
sea-faring ships
ink for writing

dye for fabric, tan for leather

food for humans, squirrels, deer, and other creatures

a very astringent medicine

fuel for fire

a lightning rod

Divine inspiration

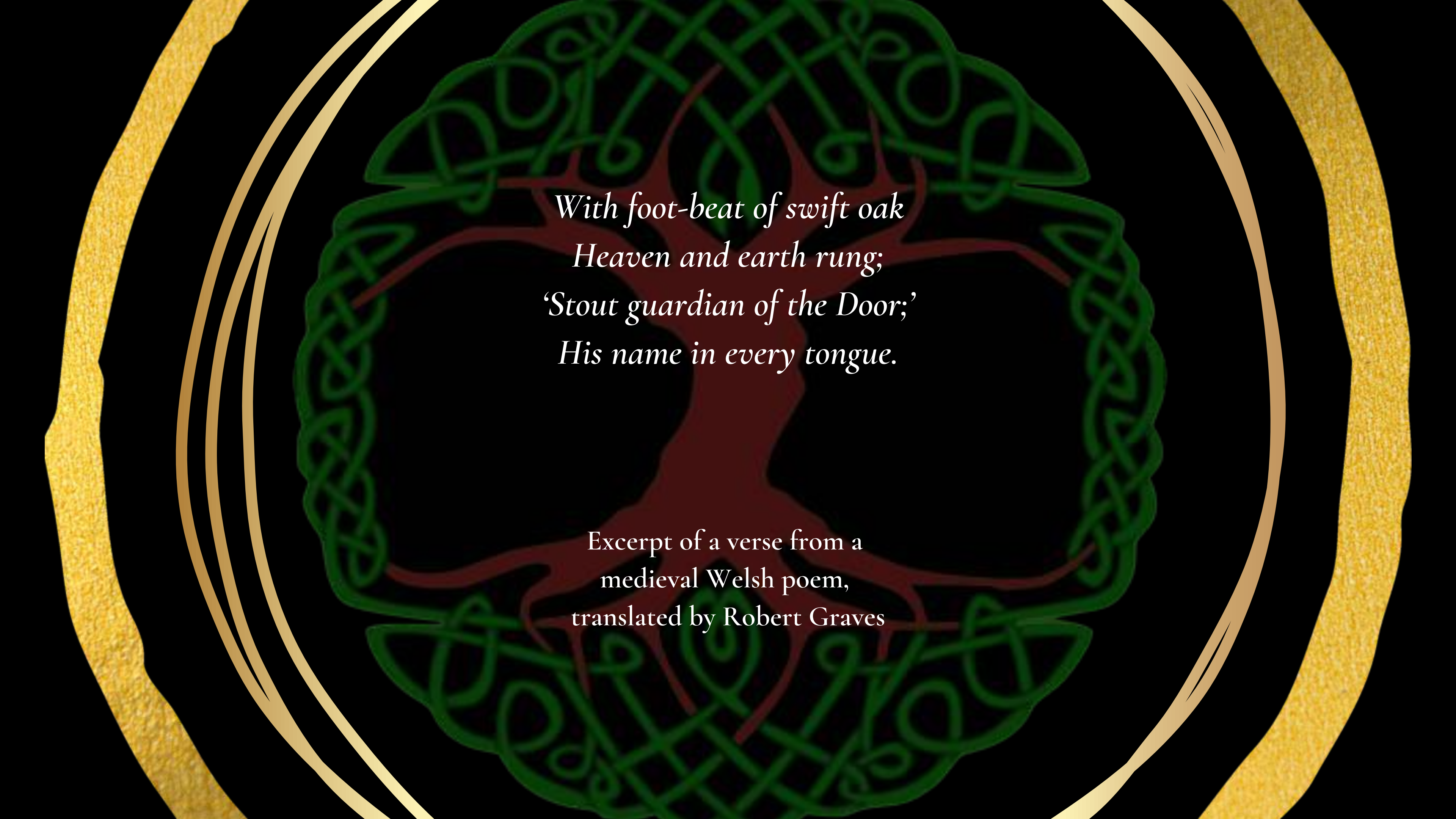
foundation

Janus

The month of January is named for Janus - the Roman god of new beginnings, transitions, and gateways, and doorways.

The Oak tree is associated with Janus, and this tree is also connected to the concept of doors.





*With foot-beat of swift oak
Heaven and earth rung;
'Stout guardian of the Door,'
His name in every tongue.*

Excerpt of a verse from a
medieval Welsh poem,
translated by Robert Graves

open the door

The Sanskrit word for Oak and Door is the same:

DWR

As is the Ogham word:

Duir

Oak is the door through which we travel to other realms – up to the Cosmic Heavens, down to the Sacred Earth.

As above, so below.

As within, so without.

The word Druid comes from a related word for Oak:

Dru or *Daru*

and "to see or know":

wid

(the word Dryad, too)

duir

Duir is the Celtic ogham of:

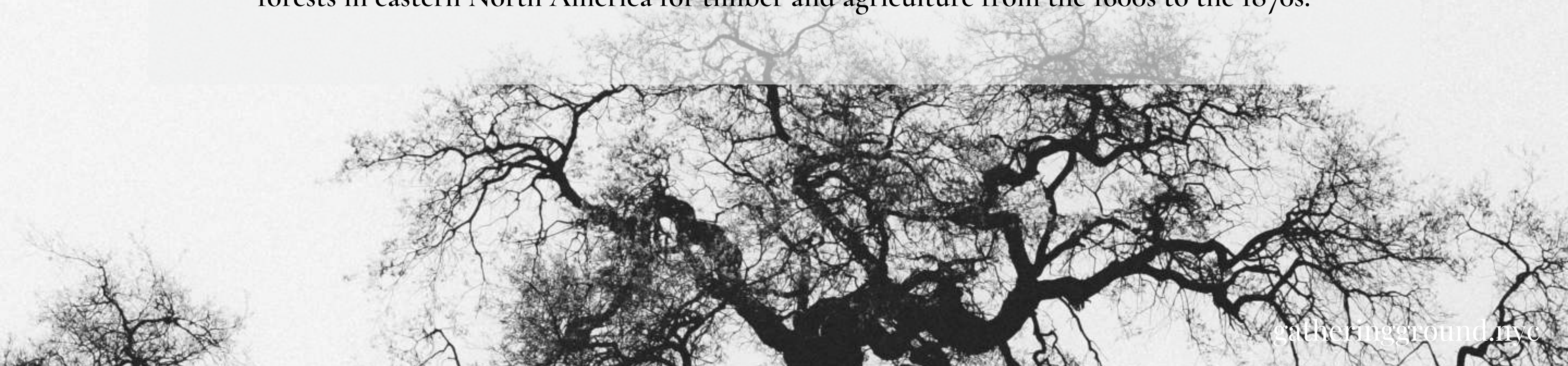
Oak
strength
virility
courage
will
nobility
sovereignty
solar aspects

Oak is the door that opens the way between the Solstices. There is an old tale of the Oak King and Holly King. The Oak King is rising to power now, on the other side of the Winter Solstice, and he will succumb to the Holly King (which could also be the Holly Oak, *Quercus ilex*) as the sun begins to wane again after the Summer Solstice.

According to the pre-Christian Irish Brehon Law, trees such as Oak were sacred and to be treated with reverence and care. However in the 12th century the Normans introduced the concept of land ownership and Ireland became colonized. Her forests were treated as commodities. The Tudor Dynasty spelled death for the ancient and revered Irish forests. Both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I cut down almost all the old growth forests both to punish the rebelling Irish and to make the warships for the Royal Navy to fight Spain.

And before that, the ancient Oak groves where Druids practiced their arts were felled by the Romans to both subjugate the Druids that they did not massacre and expand their growing empire.

Sadly this practice did not stop with Europe. Colonists from those lands clear cut about half of the forests in eastern North America for timber and agriculture from the 1600s to the 1870s.



keystone

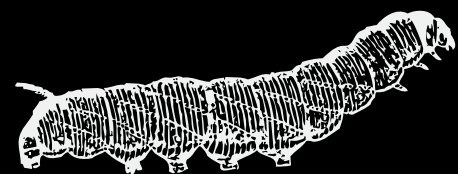
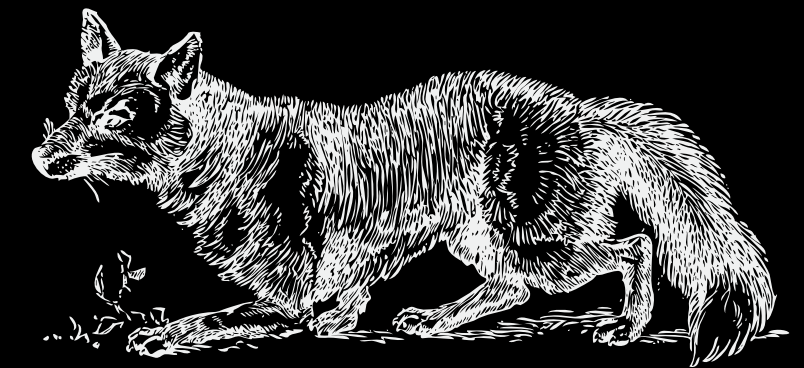
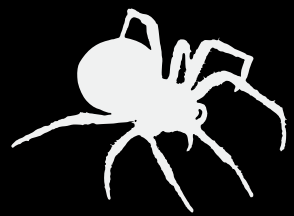


Oaks are a keystone species, essential to the ecosystems where they grow.

Squirrel, Bear, Deer, Blue Jay, Wild Turkey, and Duck depend on the acorns for sustenance. (Humans, too, which we will explore in another lesson.)

Raccoon, Opossum, Fox, various Birds, Reptiles, Insects, and many other creatures nest in the branches or take shelter in cavities of Oak trunks, or in fallen logs.

Of all the plant types in North America, Oaks host the most caterpillar species.



While Oaks may be common, this does not mean they are not at risk.

In fact, about 1/3 of the Earth's Oak species are threatened by extinction. Their departure would create a dramatic shift in the cycles of life for many.

So what can we do?

Here are a few actions to take to support our forests:

Take care of the Oaks in your area

Build and nourish soil - Compost!

Plant an appropriate tree for your neck of the woods

Join TreeSisters

Support Indigenous Forest Management

Get inspired, listen to Stand Like an Oak by Rising Appalachia

act

Oaks have the ability to transport us to other realms and to connect us with the Elements.

WATER: Traveling over sea in ships of Oak

AIR: The transportive sound of wind through Oak leaves

FIRE: Oak burns long and slow, perfect fuel for flames

EARTH & COSMOS: Oak, a conduit, rooted deeply, drawing energy up from Earth and down from the Sky

transport

lightning



With their usually upright habit, hardwood, twisting trunk and spiraling branches, Oaks are not only reminiscent of lightning. They are veritable lightning rods.

Oak reaches high to the Sky while reaching equally deep into the Earth - serving as a channel for that spark of electricity.

So it's no wonder that Oaks are featured in tales involving lightning, and are associated with several thunder gods...

lightning



There are several Thunder Gods directly associated with Oak, including but certainly not limited to:

- Zeus (Greek)
- Jupiter (Roman)
- Thor (Nordic)
- Taranis (Celtic)
- Dagda (Celtic)
- Perkwunos (Proto-Indo-European)*
- Perun (Slavic)
- Parjanya (Vedic)

*If you'll recall from Lesson 1, the genus name *Quercus* is derived from *pérkus* – see the connection? This is quite a beautiful rabbithole and if you are into etymology and deities from a variety of traditions, I recommend exploring this!

lightning

[Click through for an Oceti Sakowin story about Utahu \(Oak\) and Magaju \(Rain\), a brother and sister who need the help of a Thunder Being.](#)



All parts of Oak have healing benefits – leaves, bark, twigs, acorns, and even the Oak galls (sometimes called Oak apples) produced by wasps (*Cynipidae*).

The keyword I would use to describe the medicine is "astringent."


This translates to toning, tightening, and drying.

The actions of Oak include: anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antiseptic, astringent, decongestant, hemostatic, and tonic

In general, Oak is partnered with for conditions where there are excessive fluids and fluid loss, such as bleeding, diarrhea, and weeping wounds. Oaks are also called for where there is inflammation – for example, muscle strain, rheumatism, eczema.



healing



Traditionally, Oak bark is made into a wash to ease body aches and injury.

It helps tighten and tone lax vasculature, such as with varicose veins and hemorrhoids. The infusion can be used in a sitz bath to treat hemorrhoids.

Taking an Oak-infused bath is both physically restorative to the musculoskeletal system and energetically strengthening.

Oak leaves and bark can be made into an infusion and used as a mouthwash or gargle for dental pain, bleeding gums, loose teeth, mouth sores, and sore throats. Oak bark can be powdered and applied to wounds or infections in the mouth or on the skin.

The infusion can also be taken in small doses over a brief period of time, up to 3 weeks. Take care to not overdo it – in excess Oak may cause kidney, liver, and gastrointestinal problems.



healing

identification

Oak species hybridize naturally and there is variation within species, particularly with size and shape of the leaves and acorns. This variation can occur even on one individual tree!

For example, leaves growing in the shade are larger and have shallower sinuses (the space between lobes) than ones growing in the sun. Younger trees tend to have larger, less defined leaves than older trees.

When keying out species, it's important to look at several characteristics (leaf, bark, bud, acorn) and more than one individual tree.

Oak trees fall into two broad categories or subgenera: White or Red. Generally, White Oaks have more rounded lobes while Red have pointed ones. There are plenty of exceptions to that rule!

Considering there are hundreds of Oaks distributed in the places we live, let's look at a few common species you might find where you are.



How will you work with Oak?

Perhaps you intend to work with Oak energetically or spiritually.

Maybe you or someone you know might benefit from Oak's medicinal gifts for physical ailments.

Put out the message to the Universe that you are seeking the help of a plant ally.

Oak might answer the call!

intentions

offerings

Whether you work with Oak now or later, it is a blessing to offer gifts.

Here are some suggestions. You might also like to ask Oak if there is something he would like.

Water

Song

Fragrant herbs

Flowers

Strands of your hair

Your touch

A hug!

wildcraft

Always ask permission before harvesting, from the plant, the land, and if you are on private land, ask the person managing it. Know the local laws regarding removing plant material from the land.

Oak leaves can be gathered year round, green or brown. Oak galls can be found growing on the tree or on the ground - though they are not prevalent in all areas. I like to gather fallen branches before taking directly from the tree.

Acorns are ready to harvest when they first begin to fall off the tree in early autumn. I'll share more about acorns in a later lesson.

wildcraft

Harvest bark in the spring, to both help the tree and get the most potent medicine.



Use the 3-cut method to prune branches from trees. Start with suckers, if there are any. Or choose branches that are intersecting. Be sure to take in the entire form of the tree and notice how the removal of a branch will affect the overall habit.

Never girdle the tree (cut it all the way around the trunk). This cuts off the circulation of the tree, starving it of nutrients.

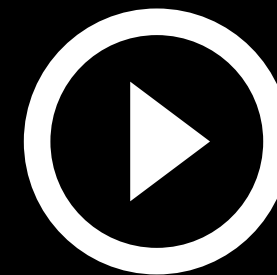




Here's one way you can work with
Oak right now without even pulling
out your pruning shears or saw.

Seek out a branch of fallen Oak leaves,
which is likely easier to find after a
windy day or storm.

Then try this simple energy clearing
technique.



energy



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INFUSE

Week 3 - Divine Spark

Oak (*Quercus* species)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

Oak Week 3 is here!

There's something about Oaks that inspire us, creatively. They spark our inner knowing and intuition. They are often the material for crafts and the media for arts. Oaks feature strongly in our imagination and our creations.

This week we'll connect with this concept in a variety of ways.

Ever Inspired,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liz', written in a cursive style.



Oak

by Adam Wyeth

The old oak is our father
coming home late at night,
turning his key in the door,
leaving it off the latch.

The leaves are still falling.
I hear his slippered footsteps
shuffle on the stairs, scuff
along boards. He stifles

a cough opening my door
and releases the catch
from the window, taking
my breath as the curtains

mushroom. A pattern
of webbed branches frames
the moon. His great shadow
bows low and creaks



down the years, pressing his
whiskered cheeks to my brow,
whispering good night.

The old oak swishes and moans

low mutterings meander
through the house. The wind
brushes my face, the sound
of leaves falling, patting the pane.

The moon is in the wind
and the wind is in the bough
and the bough is in the door
that our father leaves open.

A hot infusion of Oak leaves, twigs, or bark has
so many uses. Here are just a few:

Sip to ease diarrhea

Use topically to stop bleeding

Bath for relief of musculoskeletal pain

Wash for wounds

Foot bath for tired feet

Sitz bath for hemorrhoids

In the following video I'll show you how to make the
infusion and share a few ideas for application.



leaves

phyllomancy

The practices of phyllomancy* and dendromancy* are ancient ones. They are the use of the movement of leaves or trees for divination purposes.

The Druids divined with both Oak and Mistletoe (which grows on Oak).

The Ancient Greeks divined by the sound of rattling Oak leaves. In particular, a sacred grove in Epirus, Greece, known as the Dodona Oracle, was consulted.

According to Herodotus (5th C. BCE), two "black doves" (peleiades in Ancient Greek) were released from Thebes/Karnak in Egypt. This is thought to mean priestesses, perhaps slaves, who became the prophetesses of Dodona and Siwa in Libya, a site sacred to the Egyptian god of wind, Amun. Dodona is thought to be the oldest oracle in Greece.

*From Ancient Greek: phyllo- = leaf; dendro- = tree; -mancy = divination.

In one retelling of the tale of Jason and the Argonauts (*Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes), Jason's ship, the Argo, was built of Oak timber from Dodona. The ship itself was said to be able to speak and have the gift of prophecy.



Argo Navis by Aratus (315–240 BCE)

Argo

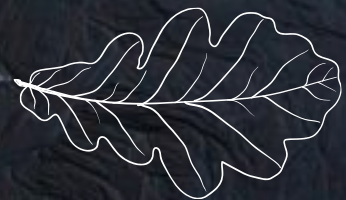
Sibylae

I learned of this tale of the Sibyl from Clarissa Pinkola Estés' *Mother Night* (a great series of talks, I recommend!).



Sibyl means "prophetess" in Latin, originally *sibylla* from Ancient Greek.

There are at least 10 Sibylae (Sibyls) from the ancient world. The Cumaean Sibyl – based at Apollo's Oracle in Cumae, a Greek colony that is near modern-day Naples, Italy (Napoli, Italia) – wrote prophecies on Oak leaves. She would leave them at the entrance to her cave. However, if the wind blew and scattered them, anyone who would come to decipher them would not have the help of the Sibyl.



The Sibyl is also a guide to the Underworld, as described in Virgil's *Aeneid*.



Michelangelo painted acorns in the Sistine Chapel to represent the family of Pope Julius II, who commissioned the paintings. The family name, Della Rovere, translates as "of the Oak" from Italian.



della Rovere

divine spark

The Sybilae are also featured in the Sistine Chapel. This is Michelangelo's depiction of the Cumaean Sibyl.



Burning Oak bark as incense is said to invoke the qualities of Oak - strength, endurance, and prosperity.

We will be making incense next month in the Pine lesson, so for now, if you'd like to work with Oak as incense, you can burn a little bit on a charcoal in a fireproof container.



spark

creative spark

Channel your inner child!

Perhaps when you were a kid, you made rubbings with a crayon and a piece of paper, of leaves or of tree bark.

I invite you to go out and do this.

Grab a crayon and a blank sheet of paper and head out to meet a variety of Oak trees!

This will help you practice identifying Oak species by their bark.





Oak galls, sometimes called gallnuts or Oak apples, are little round nest balls created by specific wasps in the *Cynipidae* family.

They are sometimes used medicinally and they contain many of the same chemical compounds as the bark, leaves, and acorns - particularly tannins.

But there's one use that's specific to the Oak galls and it goes back centuries...



Judy Gallagher

oak galls



Studies of the Foetus in the Womb.
Circa 1510 -13.

Oak galls are used to make ink.

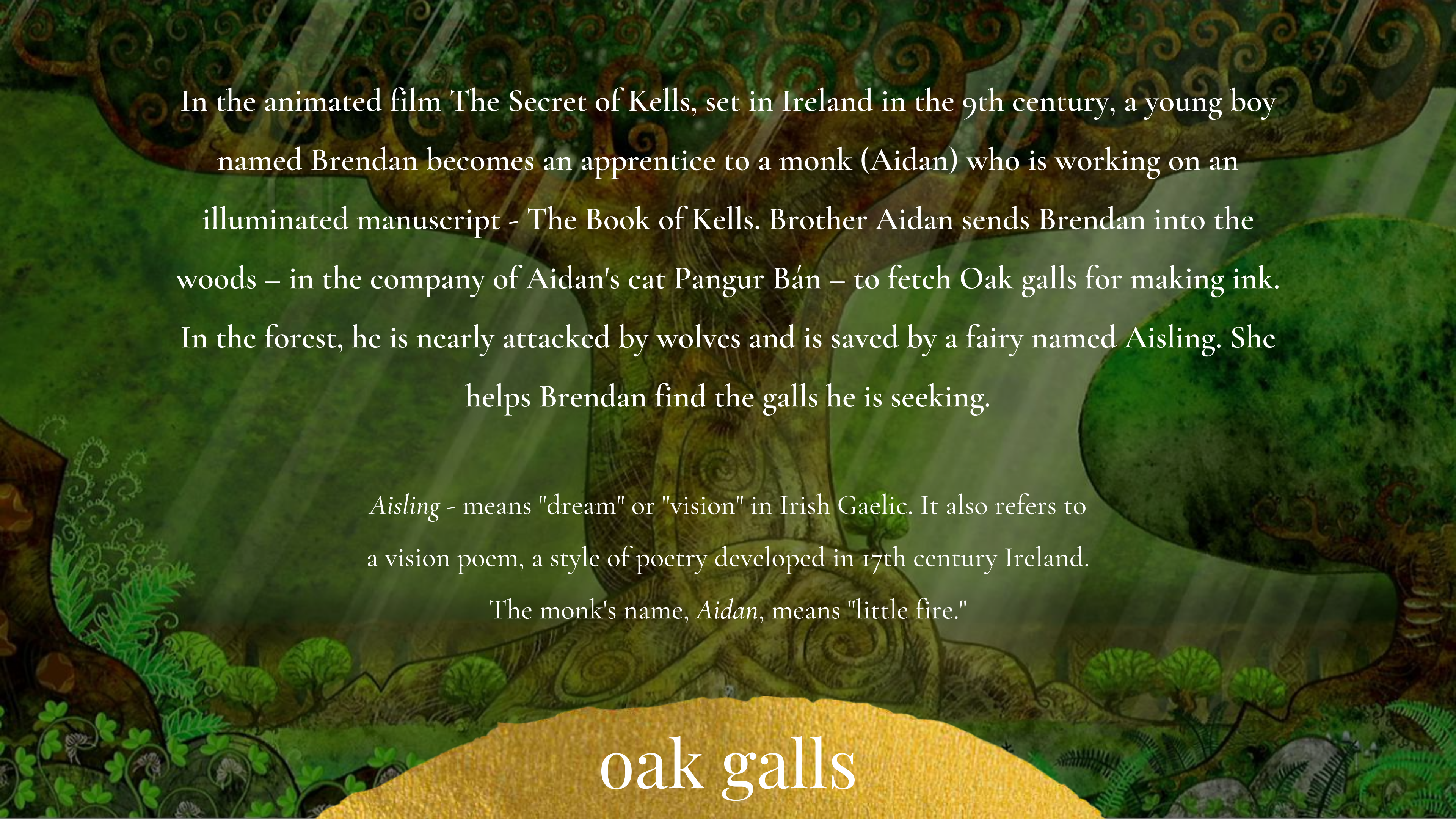
Leonardo Da Vinci's notes and drawings were made in Oak gall ink.

di Leonardo da Vinci



Leonardo da Vinci, taccuino forster III, 1490 ca.: Sailko

oak galls



In the animated film *The Secret of Kells*, set in Ireland in the 9th century, a young boy named Brendan becomes an apprentice to a monk (Aidan) who is working on an illuminated manuscript - *The Book of Kells*. Brother Aidan sends Brendan into the woods – in the company of Aidan's cat Pangur Bán – to fetch Oak galls for making ink. In the forest, he is nearly attacked by wolves and is saved by a fairy named Aisling. She helps Brendan find the galls he is seeking.

Aisling - means "dream" or "vision" in Irish Gaelic. It also refers to a vision poem, a style of poetry developed in 17th century Ireland.

The monk's name, *Aidan*, means "little fire."

oak galls



ink

There are several recipes for how to make Oak gall ink.
Most of them require 4 ingredients:

1. water
2. Oak galls
3. ferrous sulfate (aka iron sulfate, copperas, green vitriol, German vitriol)
4. gum acacia

I tested out [this recipe](#) and in the following video
you'll see the results.



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INFUSE

Week 4 - Strength

Oak (*Quercus* species)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

It's Oak Week 4!

Oak is a generous and deeply rooted ancestor that nourished our human ancestors and continues to do so.

This week we'll explore the ways that Oak has provided humans with strength and sustenance throughout the ages and around the world.

I'll show you how to process acorns for food and share a sweet and delicious recipe.

In strength,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz", written in a cursive style.





Oak Tree
by Bernard Shaw

I took an acorn and put it in a pot.
I then covered it with earth, not a lot.
Great pleasure was mine watching it grow.
The first budding green came ever so slow.

I watered my plant twice a week
I knew I would transplant it down by the creek.
One day it will be a giant oak,
To shield me from the sun a sheltering cloak.
Lovers will carve their initials in the bark,
An arrow through a heart they will leave their mark.

It will shelter those caught in a fine summer's rain,
Under its leafy bows joy will be again.
Creatures of the wilds will claim it for their own,
Squirrels will reside here in their own home.

Birds will build nests and raise their young,
They will sing melodies a chorus well sung.
Under its branches grass will grow,
Here and there a wild flower its head will show.

My oak tree for hundreds of years will live.
Perhaps the most important thing I had to give.



foundation



Oak is a foundational species. What I mean by this is that, Oak is at the root of our existence.

We humans and our relations depend on Oak for so many things. Including and maybe especially the acorns produced by these majestic trees.

Our ancestors depended on Oak for the nourishing and strengthening nuts they produce. Before agriculture, before wheat and corn, there was the acorn.

In Proto-Germanic, the word *ferhuz* captures the significance of Oak as a means of sustenance.

Ferhuz means:

body

life; being; existence

Oak tree



The rune to the left is Northumbrian for *Ac* (Oak) which can represent the saying "Mighty oaks grow out of small acorns."

(*acorn* comes from this word for Oak, *ac* + *corn*, meaning seed)

We can think of this in the literal sense and also on a broader scale: acorns grow the mighty (humans, civilizations, etc.)



ferhuz



Endurance. Faith. Generosity.
From little acorns, great oak trees grow.

Oak/Duir Mandala
by Annie Louvaine

balanophage

Many people around the world have been or still are *balanophages*, that is acorn-eaters – a term coined by restoration ecologist Dr. David Bainbridge.

The oldest known human-used acorn remains are from 750,000 BC in Gesher Benot Ya'akov on the shores of lake Hula in the northern Jordan Valley in the Dead Sea Rift.



There was a time when the Sahara desert and other parts of North Africa were lush and green. It was during this time, in the Upper Paleolithic – around 12,000 BCE – that the Oranian people in what is now known as Morocco subsisted on a great amount of nuts, especially acorns, as a year-round staple.

Green Sahara

image: Taforalt Caves by [Nicholas Perrault III](#)

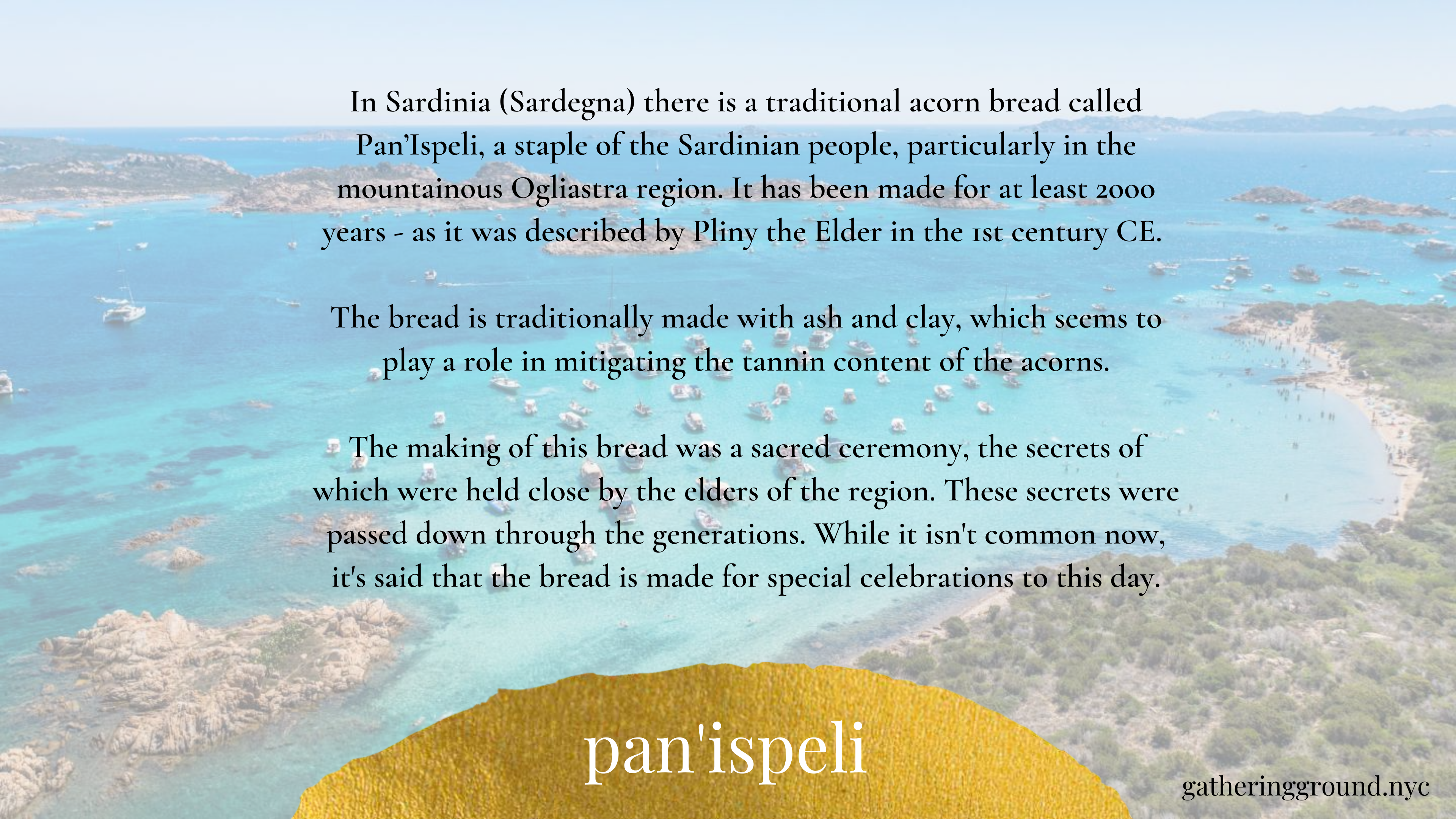
gatheringground.nyc

La Sarga



Image: [Old European Culture](#)

In Valencía, Spain, there's a site of the Epipaleolithic age (around 8000 BC) called La Sarga. Rock paintings here depict figures gathering acorns or hazelnuts as they fall from the tree.



In Sardinia (Sardegna) there is a traditional acorn bread called Pan'Ispeli, a staple of the Sardinian people, particularly in the mountainous Ogliastra region. It has been made for at least 2000 years - as it was described by Pliny the Elder in the 1st century CE.

The bread is traditionally made with ash and clay, which seems to play a role in mitigating the tannin content of the acorns.

The making of this bread was a sacred ceremony, the secrets of which were held close by the elders of the region. These secrets were passed down through the generations. While it isn't common now, it's said that the bread is made for special celebrations to this day.

pan'ispeli

acorn feast

For at least 9,000 years before European contact (and likely much longer before), people native to what is now known as North America have incorporated acorns into their diets as a staple food.

This is most evident in the original inhabitants of what is now California. Remains of acorns are the most often found edible food at archeological sites in California, and the native people of the region continue to incorporate acorns into their diets and celebrations.



Acorn grinding stone from Mariposa County, CA, likely Miwok.

Acorns were also a staple in Mesoamerica. Between 8000 and 6500 BCE, hunter-gatherer people living at Guilá Naquitz, a cave that's an archeological site in Mexico, included acorns as part of their diets. The precursor to maize, teosinte (maize of God), squash seeds, and other food crops were also found at the site, pointing to the beginnings of an agricultural society.

In the cosmology of the Aztecs, we have entered the time of the 6th Sun. Prior to this, the Earth has gone through 5 epochs or Suns. In the time of the first Sun, people were giants who ate only acorns* and wild roots. They did not plough the soil or sow crops (in other words, they were hunter-gatherers).

*Nahuatl word for acorn = Āhuatomatl.

time of the 1st sun



Tezcatlipoca started the time of the 1st Sun

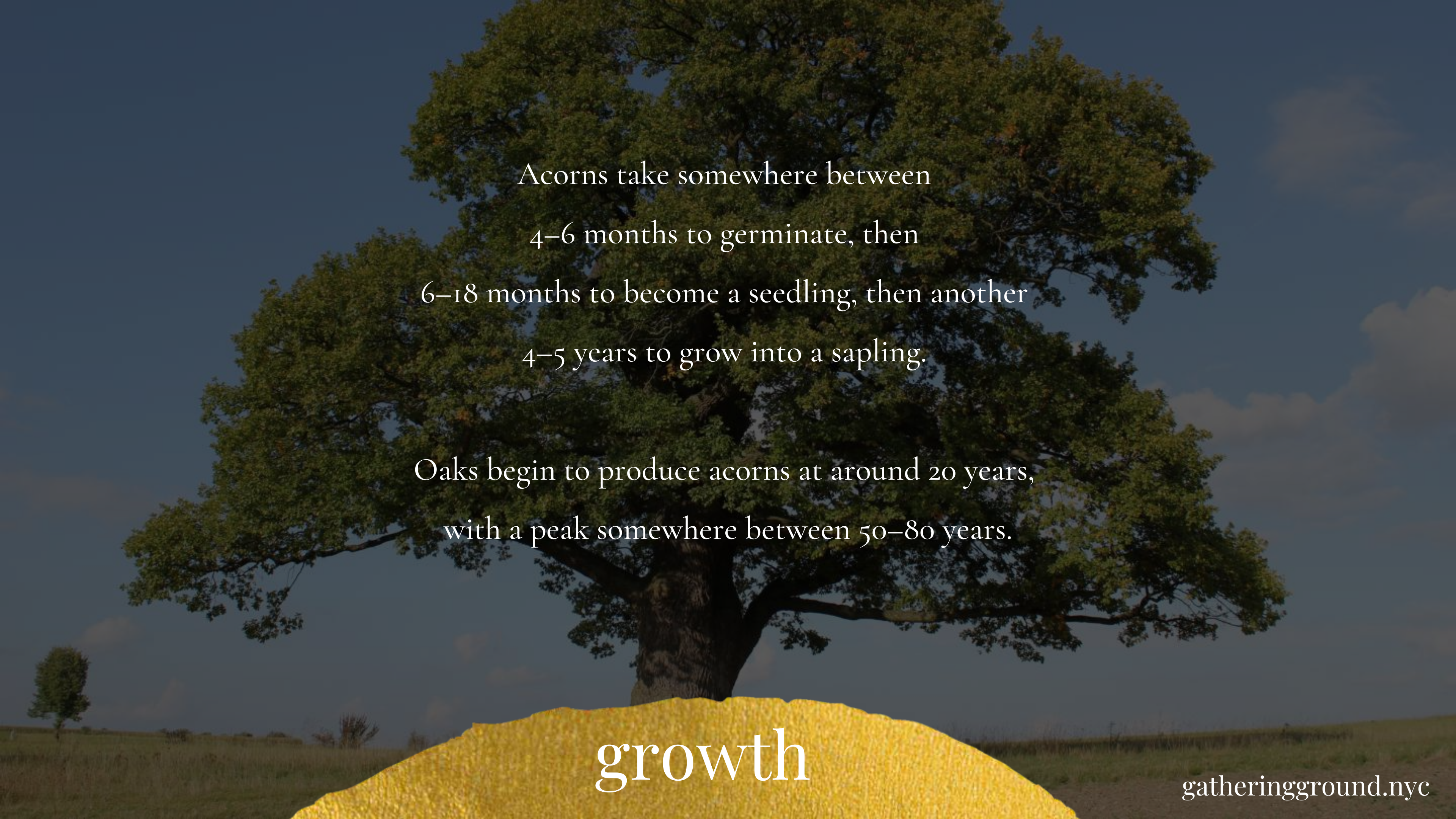


abundance

Acorns are generally abundant in forests, though Oak trees do fluctuate in their fruit production. There are periods known as mast years where the trees will produce a large amount of nuts and years where that isn't the case. The cycle is somewhere between 2–5 years, depending on the species and the conditions. This is a great strategy for reproduction.

In mast years, animals squirrel away extra acorns in caches. Sometimes these caches are accessed and sometimes the acorns germinate and develop into trees. This strategy also conserves the energy of the trees, as they aren't continually producing massive amounts of fruit. It simultaneously helps to keep animal populations in check.

This is the wisdom of a healthy ecosystem!

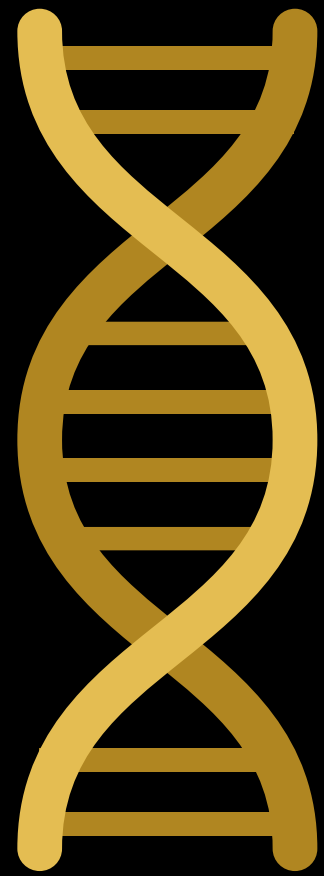


Acorns take somewhere between
4–6 months to germinate, then
6–18 months to become a seedling, then another
4–5 years to grow into a sapling.

Oaks begin to produce acorns at around 20 years,
with a peak somewhere between 50–80 years.

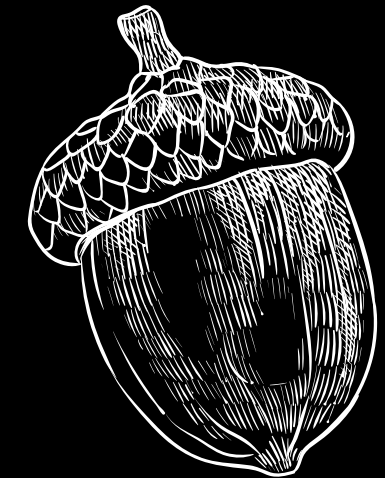
growth

nourishing staple



Acorns fed many of our ancestors – the Oak is a part of our DNA, in some cases buried deep within and in others perhaps closer to the surface.

This once near-universal staple is rich in nutrients, with high amounts of potassium, iron, folate, and vitamins A, E, and B6. Acorns contain healthy unsaturated fats, fiber, and other carbohydrates including resistant starch. These keep the body full, satisfied, and sustained over longer periods of time than other staple foods.



Acorns also contain antioxidants such as quercetin, resveratrol, catechins, and gallic acid.

Many people around the world continue to feast on acorns.

Koreans make an acorn jelly called Dotori-muk



image: Sjschen

global cuisine

gatheringground.nyc

In Turkey, people drink racahout, an acorn beverage that is sweetened with sugar and touted as a healthy alternative to coffee. It can also be made into a kind of porridge and is given to children or those recovering from illness.

Beech nuts (from the Beech tree, an Oak relative) are also taken this way in other parts of the world.

Apparently, racahout is the precursor to hot cocoa mix!



image: [Magical Childhood](#)

global cuisine

First Peoples of North America/Turtle Island
continue to incorporate acorns into their diets.

The Apache make acorn stew and acorn cakes.

Many tribes, from coast to coast and down into
Mesoamerica, make acorn mush or porridge.

Miwok, Pomo, and other California-based people have
many recipes, including these muffins and bread.

global cuisine

sweet enough



Holly Oak, above: [Derek Keats](#) CC BY 2.0



Emory Oak, above: [Mineral Arts](#)

In most cases, acorns must be leached before processing for consumption - although there are some exceptions.

It's said that the Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*) growing in southern Europe and the Emory Oak (*Q. emoryi*; chich'il in Apache) growing in the Southwest develop acorns sweet enough to roast and eat without leaching.

harvest

Gather acorns when they are just beginning to turn from green to brown and as they begin to fall from the trees, usually in early fall.

Select acorns where the caps come off easily. Trees let go of immature acorns – cap and all – that are infested with insects. Also, skip over any acorns with holes in them.

All species of Oak have edible acorns, however some are considered more "choice" for eating. Some, as mentioned previously, can be eaten without much processing. In most cases, roasting, boiling, or leaching are an important part of preparing acorns, due to the high tannin content in the nuts.

Making acorn flour from scratch is a labor-intensive process. First harvesting, then drying and shelling. Grinding, leaching, dehydrating, then grinding again. It's a process that was traditionally done in community, not a solo pursuit, as it is very time consuming!

In the following video I'll show you how I did it, inspired by the process described by Hank Shaw, [Hunter-Angler-Gardener-Cook](#)



flour

woodland flavors

It was challenging to decide what to make with the precious acorn flour I processed. I originally wanted to make Pan'Ispele, as I do have some ancestors from Sardinia and nearby Sicily. I found a recipe in Italian for a torte that looked promising.

Ultimately I decided I wanted the flavor profile to be reflective of where I currently live, so I settled on a recipe for a maple-acorn torte created by Minnesota-based Forager Chef Alan Bergo.

I made a couple of minor adjustments to the recipe. You can see the [original here](#) and watch the following video to see how I adapted it.



Here's a great round-up of acorn recipes and resources,
and another compendium of recipes from around the world.



a little bit more

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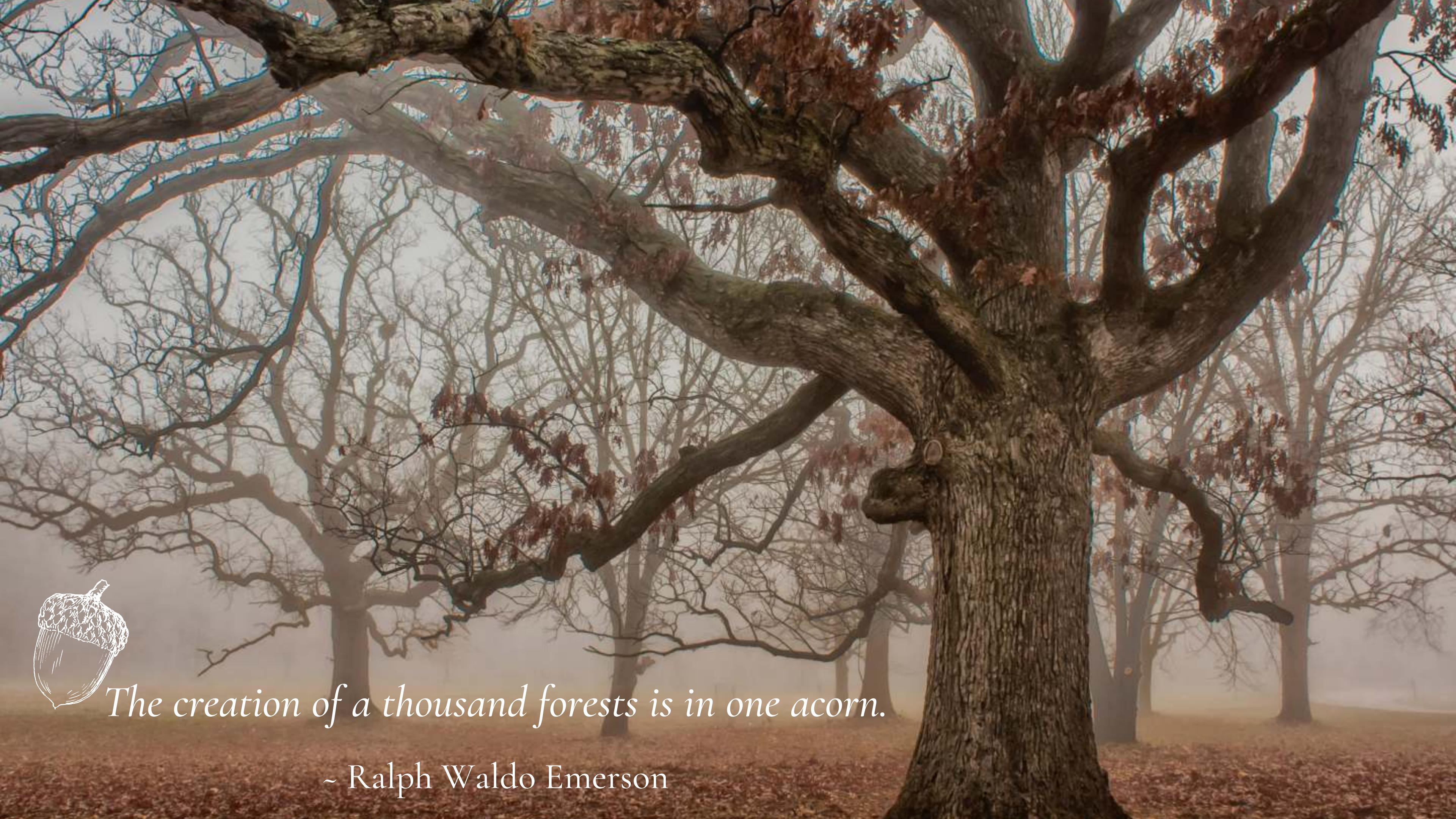
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INFUSE - January

Oak (*Quercus* species)

Gathering
GROUND

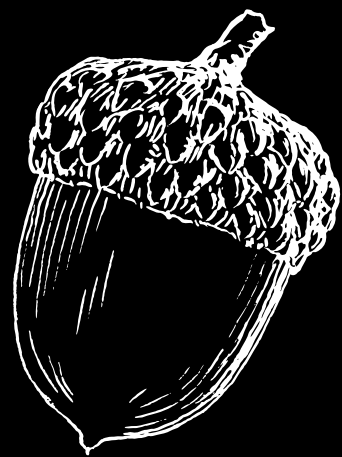


The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.

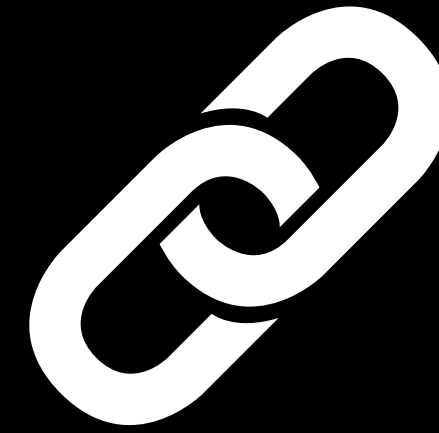
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every oak tree started out as a couple of nuts who stood their ground.

~ Henry David Thoreau



Common Oak Types by leaf shape, bud, and acorn.

A botanical illustration of Quercus imbricaria. It features four distinct parts: two oblong, green leaves with smooth edges; a woody stem with several small, brown buds; and two acorns, one showing the cap and the other showing the nut. The entire illustration is set against a white background.

2 *Quercus imbricaria*
Shingle Oak

Key Characters: 1) Oblong leaves with smooth edges 2) Acorn nearly globular 3) Locally common in dry woodlands.

species

cycle



The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, England is said to have sheltered Robinhood -it's thought to be somewhere between 800 and 1000 years old.



Marcin Floryan

Major Oak

Bowthorpe



Colchicum

The hollow trunk of the Bowthorpe Oak in Lincolnshire, England, has been used as a dining room! The tree is over 1,000 years old and about 40 feet around.

Also known as the Oaks of Avalon, Gog & Magog are ancient, as old as 2,000 years. Gog is no longer living, but he still stands. The two trees are named for an ancient race of giants. They are thought to be an entranceway to the sacred site of Glastonbury Tor.



Gog & Magog

Angel



[MadeYourReadThis](#)

The Angel Oak is a Southern Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) on Johns Island near Charleston, South Carolina. Age estimates range from 400-500 years old. Stats: 66.5 ft (20 m) tall, 28 ft (8.5 m) circumference; shade covers 17,200 sq ft (1,600 m²); longest branch 187 ft long

The Great Oak, Wi'áaşal, is a tree sacred to the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians in California. It is a Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) that is over 1,000 years old, and it still produces acorns! The aerial (above ground) parts of the tree are 100 feet tall and the trunk is 20 feet in circumference. From the tribe's website: "Like the Oak, we are resilient, able to survive many seasons of hardship."



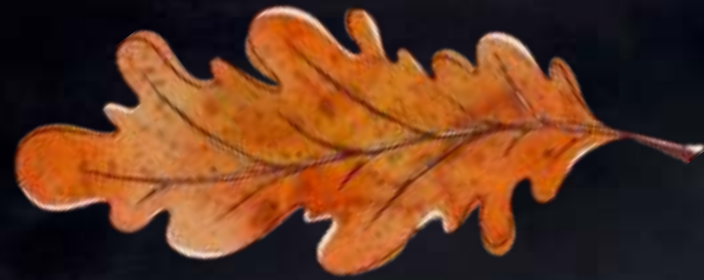
Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians

Wi'áaşal

Oaks are built to weather the storm

Spiraling trunk twists and sways in wind

Marcescent leaves hold on tight through winter



Oak is

the frame for buildings
the doors and floors, too
furniture

casks and corks
sea-faring ships
ink for writing

dye for fabric, tan for leather

food for humans, squirrels, deer, and other creatures

a very astringent medicine

fuel for fire

a lightning rod

Divine inspiration

foundation

acorn dye

You know I don't like to waste anything...

I used the leftover acorn shells from the acorns I made flour with to make...

dye



ink



For the Kumeyaay People of what is now known as California, in the south, in and around San Diego County, acorns have and continue to be one of the staple foods. In this short documentary, we get to see the traditional way of processing acorns to make mush, which is the base for many Kumeyaay dishes.



Life Under the Oaks

keep exploring

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How the Conifers Show the Promise of Spring.

A Seneca Legend in which Oak rustles his leaves in the face of Winter (Frost).

Native American Ethnobotany. Traditional uses for Oak.

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USDA, Forest Health Technology.



keep exploring

How to say "acorn" in Lenape. Lenape Talking Dictionary.

Lenape names for various species of Oak. Lenape Talking Dictionary.





keep exploring

[Acorn Resources](#)

[Acorn Oil](#)

[Forager's Harvest](#)

[Acorn Products](#)

[Mighty Wild](#)

[Where I got acorns from](#)
[Canfields Duckery, Etsy](#)



keep exploring

Are All Oak Galls Equal?

Natural Dye: Experiments and Results

A blog by Catharine Ellis.

Dyeing with acorns

Fiber Artsy

Four Rabbit

The Barefoot Dyer

disclaimer

The statements herein have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. The recipes and information in this course are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

This course is also not meant to replace medical care. If you are in need of medical assistance, please reach out to a qualified healthcare practitioner.

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