

Acorn Harvest, Sanitize, Stratify Procedures

From [Point Blue Conservation Science's California Oak Planting Guide](#) and California Native Plant Society's [Turn An Acorn Into An Oak: How to Leave a Natural Legacy](#)

Step 1: Find a tree with ripe acorns. Take a picture of tree, leaves and acorns

There is variability every year, but...

- Mid August -Sept-Oct - *Quercus Kelloggii* (Black)
- Late Sep-Nov - *Quercus douglassii* (Blue),
- Mid Sept - Nov *Quercus lobata* (Valley), *Quercus garryana* (Oregon):
- Late Oct-Dec - *Quercus agrifolia*:

Step 2: Knock or pick acorns that are ripe

- It is best to collect acorns from the tree. Collect acorns off trees by gently pulling acorns from their caps. You can also lay a tarp under a tree and knock acorns off with a long pole, pole fruit harvester or ladder - only if you feel safe standing on a ladder.
- You can collect acorns off the ground but they will have much lower chances of germination. Acorns that have been laying on the ground, even short term, are highly susceptible to fungal and insect pests that affect their viability.
- Ripe acorns are turning brown and easily detach from the cap. If they are difficult to remove from the cap, return in a week or two.

Step 3 Collect from a diversity of Trees

- Collect from healthy looking trees in our local area or from trees that may be locally adapted to hotter, drier areas. That could be slightly lower elevation or southern aspect, or from hotter drier areas close by.
- Collect from multiple trees of different ages to increase genetic diversity and adaptability.
- Avoid collecting from trees that may have been planted or are of unknown origin.

Step 4a Storing the acorns

- If you want to store the acorns for a few months without sprouting, keep the acorns dry in a labeled plastic bag in your refrigerator.

Step 4b Test and sanitize to prepare for sprouting

- Fill a bucket with water and do the float test. Place acorns in a bowl or bucket of water. Discard floaters. They are not viable. Keep the sinkers.
- Make a bleach solution in a bucket of water. One teaspoon bleach per gallon of water. Put the sinkers in the bleach water. Let stand for 30 seconds. This will kill any fungal spores the acorn may have picked up.
- Rinse acorns in plain water.

Step 5 Cold treatment

- Label a Ziploc type bag, with:
 - a) Species name,
 - b) Area of collection.
 - c) Date collected
 - d) Date placed into the refrigerator.
- Put acorns in the Ziploc bag and add enough perlite so that each acorn is in contact with perlite. Shake the bag to distribute the perlite. Add a small amount of water to moisten and put in the refrigerator until they sprout, generally 60 days after the cold treatment.