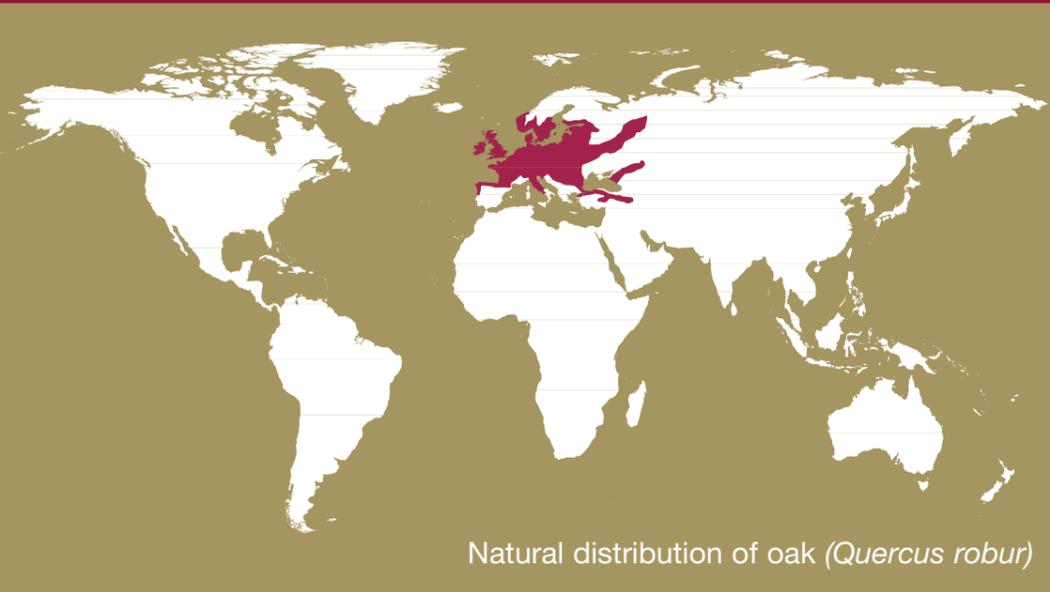


# Oak *Quercus robur*



Natural distribution of oak (*Quercus robur*)



The pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) has acorns on slender stems but leaves without stalks. This distinguishes it from another British native, the sessile oak or *Quercus petraea*, whose acorns sit directly on the twig, but whose leaves grow on stalks!

illustration by John White

## Where would Britain be without this tree?

Oak has had a vital place in British history since pre-historic times, when it formed part of the vast wildwood that stretched across Europe. For centuries oak trees supplied Britain with timber for construction as well as fuel, charcoal for smelting, bark for leather tanning and even acorns for animal fodder. For hundreds of years oaks from the Weald in Kent and Sussex were considered the very best for shipbuilding. Each ship could use wood from up to 2500 trees, so a lot of local oak trees would have ended up at Kent dockyards such as Chatham.

Today oak is still one of the most widely-used hardwoods in Britain for interior joinery and furniture. We have also started to recognise its importance for wildlife.

At Bedgebury we are looking after the older oaks on the site and encouraging natural regeneration of new ones. You can help by only buying timber with the FSC logo – this shows that it comes from sustainably-managed forests.



## Did you know?

The oak with the biggest girth in Britain, the Bowthorpe oak in Lincolnshire, has a hollow trunk that was once said to be big enough to hold twenty people seated for dinner. It is thought to be about 1000 years old.

The crown of a mature oak tree contains over five hundred species of wildlife - more than for any other tree in Britain.

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adventure in a world of trees