

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

## Q. Dear Twig: Can I grow an oak tree from an acorn?

A. Oh, sure. And you can try very soon. Acorns ripen and fall in autumn. Squirrels know that and you will too if you spend time under an oak tree. And both main kinds of acorns — ones from oaks in the **white oak group** and ones from oaks in the **red oak group** — do well, maybe best, if you plant them then.

White-oak-group acorns “will start to **germinate** (“*jur-muh-nayt*”; sprout and start to grow) almost as soon as they hit the ground,” says Ohio State University forestry specialist Kathy Smith. Get them into that ground right away and you’ll keep them safe, moist and growing.

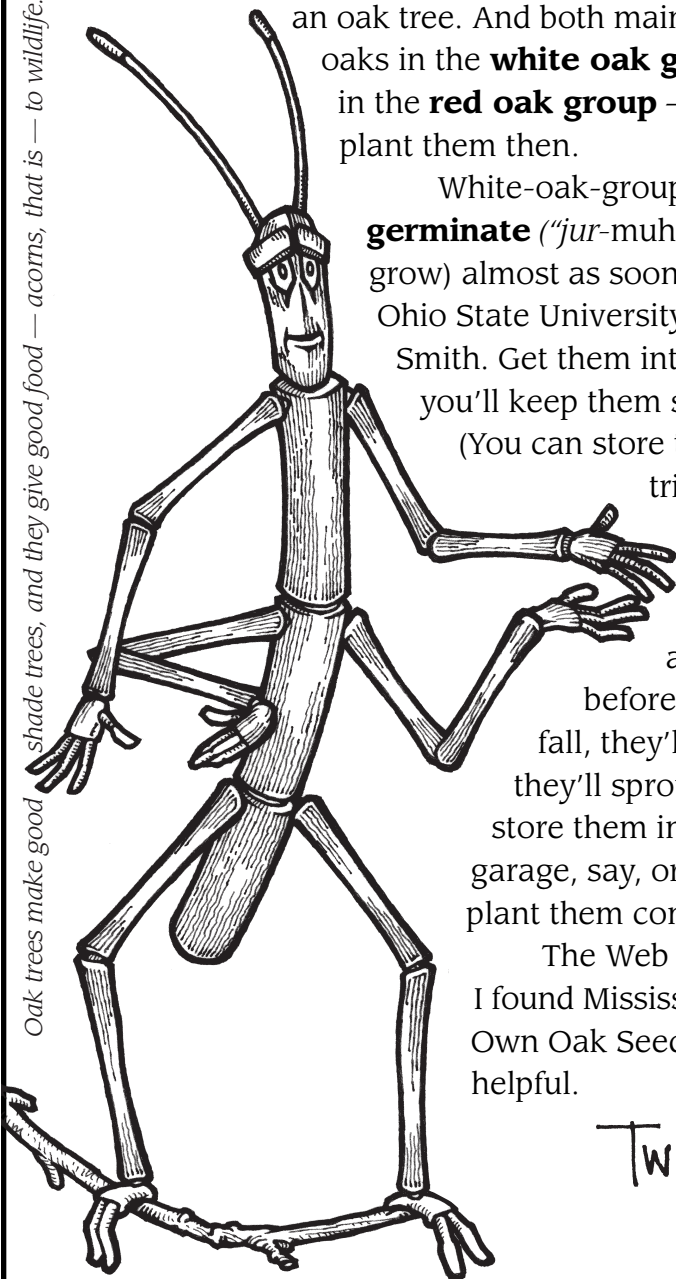
(You can store them, too, until spring but it’s trickier.)

Red-oak-group acorns need cold first. The cold keeps them **dormant** — still and inactive. They need that before they can sprout. Plant them in fall, they’ll stay cold all winter, and then they’ll sprout and grow in spring. Or store them in a safe, cold place — in your garage, say, or your refrigerator — then plant them come springtime.

The Web has lots of instructions on this. I found Mississippi State’s “Growing Your Own Oak Seedlings” especially clear and helpful.

Twig

Oak trees make good shade trees, and they give good food — acorns, that is — to wildlife.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION  
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of  
Sept. 6, 2009

By Kurt Knebusch  
(330) 263-3776  
[knebusch.1@osu.edu](mailto:knebusch.1@osu.edu)

**Notes:** Oaks in the white-oak group include bur oak, white oak and swamp white oak. Oaks in the red-oak group include pin oak, scarlet oak and northern red oak. Kathy Smith works for Ohio State University Extension and leads the Ohio Woodland Stewards Program (<http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/>) as part of that. The program will give a class called “Forest Food for Wildlife: Enhancing Mast Production” on Oct. 16 in northeast Ohio ([http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/classes/index.php?article\\_id=77](http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/classes/index.php?article_id=77)). (Scientists call the nuts, seeds and berries that trees produce “mast.”) Find Mississippi State’s “Growing Your Own Oak Seedlings” at <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2421.pdf>.

### Section of Communications and Technology

2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1044  
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services Bldg.  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
(330) 263-3780

OSU Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status. Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President, Agricultural Administration and Director, OSU Extension. TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868