

Guy Sternberg's Acorn Exchange Tips

1. Species that may seem common to you could be highly sought be members from other parts of the world, so bring your local acorns. Do your best to bring only those seeds that appear to be free from weevil larvae and fungus (heavy weight, uniform color, no holes). If you have time to float test, bring only those which sink.
2. If an acorn can be pulled easily from the cupule without tearing, it's ripe enough to mature and grow. If it tears, wait a week and collect again. Then remove the cupules before storing if possible, but try to save some loose cupules.
3. Store your ripened seeds under refrigeration in plastic bags to prevent desiccation. If significant condensation develops in the bags, dump them out into flat trays and bring the acorns into room temperature in the shade for a few days to completely ripen. Then place them into fresh, dry bags and back into the refrigerator.
4. A few days before you travel to Davis, assemble small zip-lock sandwich or snack bags of about 10 seeds per bag, with each small bag labeled with botanical name, source location, your name, and your e-mail for further contact later. If possible, include a loose cupule in each bag for identification and specimen use by the recipient. Try to bring 10 small bags (100 seeds total) or more for each species if you can find them, but bring whatever you can find because someone will need them even if you can bring only one bag.
5. Group the small bags from each source tree or species into larger bags to facilitate arranging everything alphabetically by Latin name upon arrival. It takes hours for the volunteer crew to sort everything onto the seed tables, and having them pre-sorted by species will be a big help.
6. If you are flying to Davis, poke a pin-hole in each small bag to allow for decompression on the plane so the bag doesn't explode at altitude, and unfortunately that's enough to pop open some seed bags and scatter the contents throughout your baggage. Then keep them cool until the day you leave home.
7. We will be collecting seed at registration in order to organize and refrigerate. Any day spent in a warm plastic bag further deteriorates the vitality of oak seed.
8. Remember that only IOS members may participate in the seed exchange, and those who attend the business meeting (and thus devote an hour of time to helping the organization) will have first access to the acorns! No one may enter the exchange room until the door is opened, and those with passes obtained at the business meeting will be allowed in first.
9. The seed exchange was the original reason IOS was founded, and it continues a triennial tradition begun in 1994. So bring lots of good acorns, especially those from documented wild sources and special trees, and help us make this one the best ever!