

English Oak - *quercus robur* (also known as the Pedunculate Oak)

 Oaks can be spotted at most times of year. In the winter look for the typical bark and twisted branches. In summer look for the familiar, distinctive leaf and in autumn look for acorns.

This is the principal species in Selsdon Wood and is widely dispersed. It is a long-lived tree and some of the specimens in the wood may be centuries old. This photograph (below left 23/3/12) looking north from Noakes Way shows a number of typical Oak trees in winter with rugged twisted branches. The tree bearing the Noakes Way name board at the point where Noakes Way crosses the Wend is also an Oak (below right 23/3/12). It may be distinguished in winter by its typical ridged grey bark, frequently green with lichen and its tight brown buds. There are three types of Oak in Selsdon Wood, English, Turkey and Sessile - see separate Turkey Oak sheet.



The flowers are green catkins appearing at the same time as the new leaves in late spring (April/May). In summer and autumn the leaves and acorns are very familiar and recognisable.



In 1983 Councillor Dudley Mead helped to raise a fund to plant 100 Oaks to commemorate the Centenary of Croydon Council. The trees in the Centenary Plantation are thus around 30 years old (with a girth of 56cm). However, close by in Steven's Larch there are many much older Oaks. The girth of the one behind the bench in the Great Field (bottom right 19/5/12) is 255cm, which suggests that it is well over 100 years old.

In 1986 three oaks were planted by the Mayor of Croydon in the Southern corner of David's Crook to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Official Opening. A plaque on one of them marks the event. There is also an older oak here with wide spreading branches.



Take a walk at any time of year and look out for oaks.

How many trees can you count in the Centenary Plantation?

Walk along the southern side of Steven's Larch looking for ancient trees. There is one by the bench - measure its girth. Spot the oaks marked with the plaque in David's Crook.



English Oak is the dominant tree and is common and widespread throughout Selsdon Wood. The map shows the locations mentioned above.



Oak Galls

Galls are abnormal growths on plants that are caused by insects or other parasites. They are actually formed from plant tissue, which is made to grow into a particular shape by chemicals produced by the parasite. Insect galls are created to form both a habitat and a food source for the larvae of the insect that creates them, protecting the larvae from predators. Oak trees are especially rich in the variety of galls and we have seen several different ones in Selsdon Wood, four of which are shown below. All of these are caused by Gall Wasps of different species and they are found on different parts of English Oaks. From left to right the photographs show:

- Currant Gall - Found on the underside of the leaves and caused by *Andricus quercusbaccarum*.
- Oak Apple Gall - Found on budding twigs and caused by *Biorhiza pallida*.
- Knopper Gall - Found on the acorns and caused by *Andricus quercuscalicis*.
- Marble Gall - Found on the buds and caused by *Andricus kollari*. Unlike the others these are not shown in situ - the wedding ring around one of them shows the scale. They can be found in great numbers on the ground under one tree in the north of the wood (shown in green on the map) where it is too dark to photograph them because of an adjacent large Yew Tree. These old galls are as hard as bullets and perfectly spherical.

