



# International Oaks

The Journal of the International Oak Society

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25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue

Issue No. 28/ 2017 / ISSN 1941-2061



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## INTRODUCTION

# A Ripe Young Age

Reading through the different contributions to this issue of *International Oaks*, I asked myself in what way, if any, do they reflect these past 25 years? What do they tell us about the “oak world” today? Perhaps even, what might they signify for tomorrow?

Not in the least, as Valencia shows us with *Quercus meavei*, that species remain to be discovered. The list of new taxa described over the last 25 years is not short – to name but a few: *Q. xalentejana* (2015), *Q. barrancana* (2014), *Q. gaditana* (2014), *Q. delgadoana* (2011), *Q. pacifica* (1994), and *Q. macvaughii* (1992). Closely related to this, studies based on history, behavior, morphology and genetics, here by Avishai, Koenig et al., and Murphey and Potter, continue to try and make sense of this funny little thing called life as represented by this genus of remarkable plasticity and complex evolutionary history.

For plant enthusiasts, as for others, the past 25 years have been marked by massive conservation concerns that have largely taken the form of complex institutions and programs actively occupied with increasing public and decision-maker awareness about the importance of this issue. Oaks and their habitats are a primary focus of these efforts and Lobdell gives in these pages an example: a joint venture between the US Forest Service and the American Public Gardens Association for the ex-situ conservation of a critically endangered species, *Q. oglethorpensis*, through collaborative cultivation. Collaboration – in cultivation but also by exchanging information – is of course the first step towards a brighter future, in this, as in many undertakings.

From a historic oak collection in Australia (Buttigieg and Velázquez), through several collections in the United Kingdom, some still growing and some that have disappeared (Carnaghan, Chassé), to new and not-so-new collections in Argentina (Cameron), one can not help but recognize the undeniable reservoir of information about oaks that these (and other) collections represent, while acknowledging the fundamental role that the IOS plays in providing, on the one hand, the avenues through which information can be shared, and, on the other, the stimulus that helps feed our passion for these trees.

Enjoy the passion such as springs from the pages in this issue that will take you back in time through a bit of IOS history (Sternberg) on a stroll through the incredible forests of Panama (Cameron), share with you the beauty of Martha’s Vineyard and of the mountains

of Taiwan (Chassé), help you discover the interesting flora of New Mexico (Russell), or recent cultivar selections (Jablonski and Russell). As all of these articles show, on their own or in groups, there are private individuals who devote resources and time to learning about oaks all over the world – again, a non-negligible force considering the state of concern about these, and other, plants all over the planet.

Now and again, I have heard concern expressed about the future of botanic societies since, generally, and the IOS is no exception, their membership is not largely constituted by that demographic category which has in recent years tended to supplant the significance of all others. This concern has always left me a bit perplexed given that since time immemorial membership in these societies has always been recruited from older generations – and I can not see how this is a handicap. Au contraire. Human beings are like trees in really only one aspect: they both take considerable time to mature.

The International Oak Society, now at the ripe young age of 25, has grown, if not terribly so in number of members, as our President points out in the Preface to this volume, certainly in scope and ambition.

Writing in 2014 (*International Oaks*, No. 25) Allen Coombes remarked that in the twenty years then past since the first IOS Conference in 1994, the number of oak collections and the number of new species growing in them had increased significantly, both due largely to increased collecting efforts in the oak-rich areas of the world. “Today the names of many obscure, and even then unnamed, oaks are tripping off the tongue in not so idle conversations.”

Indeed.

In these times of ecological despair, I should like to end with a sincere homage to plant collectors and propagators past and present as well as to the botanic societies, such as ours, that have been instrumental in disseminating the fruits of their efforts. Identifying fragile zones and endangered species is surely a useful exercise – but is it not necessary, if we want to save those species, to have knowledge about their cultivation? In Europe very nearly the only arboreta that are growing many endangered oak taxa, or, less dramatically, the more recent introductions, are the private ones along with a very few specialized nurserymen. The activities of these individuals are an essential resource for the success of conservation efforts and for building awareness about the beauty in the diversity of our planet and the positive role that each of us can assume.

**Béatrice Chassé**  
Editor

