



International Oaks

The Journal of the International Oak Society

25th Anniversary Issue

Issue No. 28/ 2017 / ISSN 1941-2061



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PREFACE

What Now?

This year is the 25th anniversary of the International Oak Society, and Guy Sternberg recollects the history of the Society in the Foreword to this volume. Furthermore, in 2012, the then four past Presidents of the IOS each wrote a paper published in *International Oaks*, No. 23 about their love affair with the IOS, about its members, and of the achievements of the Society over its first 20 years. Thus, I do not want to repeat what Guy writes – and what he, Ron, Eike and Allen wrote – about the Society but rather reflect on its present and future.

Although the IOS grew fast in its early days, when I look at the statistics it rapidly reached a peak that has not yet been surpassed. We have never had more than 500 members, we were 435 when I joined the Board in 2009; we were 422 at the close of 2016. We lost 60 members in 2016 (not an unusual loss after a conference year) and 145 since 2013. Fortunately, new members generally compensate these losses. While each of us should work at recruiting new members, it seems clear that we will always be small. Being small has advantages, of course. Guy Sternberg noted in 2012: “Many of my very best friendships, worldwide, have come from this group. Many of the special places I have seen, with the help of other individual members or via our tours, are places I never would have found (or even known about) without the IOS.” Indeed, we have now members in 32 countries, including one new member from Lebanon.

Nevertheless, small implies that our means will always be limited. We rely largely on volunteers and donors to organize our triennial conferences and their gigantic seed exchanges. Without these benevolent volunteers and donors, we would no longer be able to hold our conferences.

As Allen Coombes pointed out in *International Oaks*, Issue No. 23, 2012, our members have been very successful at introducing new oak species to cultivation. That is how the Society began: individual private collectors exchanging acorns. Today, several private individuals hold remarkable oak collections, including many plants grown from wild-collected seed as well as newly introduced species. The diversity in these private collections plays an important role in providing key information about the distribution and cultivation of oak species to those institutions concerned about their status and future. However, increasingly restrictive international legislation will in the future make

it nearly impossible for individuals to collect acorns in the wild in most countries rich in oak species. Future seed exchanges might not be what they have been, although we firmly intend to maintain that tradition.

Note that conference attendance is also essential to the Society's success and I remind you that our 2018 Conference will take place at UC Davis in Northern California. Tentative dates are October 22 to 24 for the Conference itself, but there will be a Pre-Conference Tour and a Post-Conference Tour. Make every attempt to attend and book your calendars now!

What is certainly within the means of the Society is to carry out its mission. This includes to: 1) publish *International Oaks*, the Journal you are holding in your hands, which we want to be among the best in its category: a medium between scientific institutions, the horticultural world, and amateurs (in the noblest sense) deeply interested in the genus *Quercus* and a publication that also reflects the life of the Society and its activities; 2) be the International Registrar for Oak Cultivars and to maintain the Oak Name Checklist at www.oaknames.org, a reference for all oak taxa, not only cultivar names, a database initially created by the late Piers Trehane; 3) organize Oak Open Days and tours; 4) publish *Oak News & Notes*, our newsletter, and *The Cupule*, our quarterly e-newsletter; and 5) maintain the www.internationaloaksociety.org website: all activities that provide the glue that keeps the Society and its members together and make us a community.

Whilst I hope that we will continue to find sponsorship to hold our triennial conferences, I nevertheless view these three as key activities of the Society, which, importantly, can easily be financed by membership dues. We constantly aim at improving the Journal and the Oak Name Checklist. Issue No. 27 of *International Oaks*, the Proceedings of the 2015 Conference, was considered by many to be our best issue ever. We have improved our other media as well and we want to improve them further.

This is not to say that administrative activities are not important. These form the operational basis without which we would not be able to carry out the above-mentioned activities. And here too, our website is key since we now manage membership through it.

I close this foreword with an appeal that past Presidents have made before. The Society relies almost exclusively on volunteers. Seven Board Members, including four Officers, run the Society. They are all members of one or more committee. Ten other members are involved in committee activities, chiefly the Taxonomy, Editorial and Oak Cultivars Committees. In 2018, we will hold new Board elections. Whatever your skills are, be it in finance and administration, oak taxonomy, or editorship and publishing, consider applying to the Board. You do not even need to wait until next year to join a committee of your choice and see for yourself how rewarding it can be to contribute to the life of your Society.

Charles Snyers d'Attenhoven
President

