



## Collecting Acorns to Support Regeneration in Recently Burned Areas

*UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Brief Outline by Dr. Kim Rodrigues based on UC ANR literature, primarily from Doug McCreary's work and local experiences*

We have a narrow window of opportunity to collect acorns in our area over the next few weeks in order to offer support for regenerating our treasured oak woodlands. The UC Hopland Research and Extension Center are coordinating efforts to gather acorns and form an “Acorn Bank” held at our site in Hopland. We will also work to plant these acorns in fire affected areas as soon as the rains begin to fall. We welcome your support in collecting acorns or assisting with replanting.

A few basic steps to consider as you collect the acorns and prepare for successful planting are outlined below:

- 1) Collect directly from standing living trees, and avoid acorns that have fallen to the ground, as these may be damaged due to insects, etc.
- 2) For collections from a tree, it is best to place a tarp under the branches you will be collecting from and use a long pole to shake the acorns down onto the tarp. If the acorns do not readily fall, they require more time on the tree to ripen.
- 3) Record the species of oak and the location of the collection and as many details related to the site as reasonable, such as aspect, soils, associated vegetation, etc. as this may help landowners seeking sources close to their locations and conditions as these oaks are well adapted to the areas they emerge from and should not be moved long distances throughout the greater region, if possible. Keep this information as a label with your acorns (see data sheet). (Example; blue oak, west aspect, steep slopes, near serpentine outcrop area and hillside with diverse oaks and madrones nearby)
- 4) All species of oaks require a float test to determine viability. Simply place them in a large bucket, about half way to the top of the bucket and fill the rest with water. Allow 24 full hours of soaking. Reject any/all “floating” acorns as they are probably not viable and not worth planting.
- 5) Our local species do not require stratification, but they can be placed in cool dry area until you are ready to plant the acorn. Placing in the refrigerator in sealed zip lock plastic bags preserves acorns until planting conditions are optimum. During a really dry Fall, planting may have to wait until sometime in November.

**Hopland REC is happy to receive collected acorns for distribution to fire affected areas – deliver acorns to your local Mendocino County Library.**

### **If you wish to plant the acorns yourself:**

- 1) Direct seeding of acorns into the soil is preferred and results in hardier plants. Due to low germination success, it is recommended to plant 5-10 acorns per planting location to ensure that some germinate and grow into the spring season.
- 2) Plant early in the fall if possible after sufficient rain has wetted the soil at least 2-3in. Planting in mid-winter or spring results in weak, shallow rooted plants that may not survive their first summer.
- 3) The planting site should be weed free for at least 3-4ft.radius, with bare mineral soil exposed and available for planting if possible and acorns can be directly seeded into the top layer of soil. Please plant in areas already altered such as rangeland/vineyard perimeters – natural regeneration from sprouting oaks will occur in many cases. Mulching around the acorns may support soil moisture retention and enhance germination.
- 4) Tree protective covers around the acorns reduce losses and damage due to browsing animals but are costly to install and maintain. We recommend that you utilize natural tree shelters where feasible, such as downed woody debris, sprouting coyote brush or other natural features to protect the acorn seedling during the first

several growing seasons. Local California Naturalists helped teach us this and it is working well here at HREC so far!

- 5) If you can easily water the acorn, watering will greatly enhance survival and growth. This is not realistic for many situations, especially considering the thousands of acres now requiring restoration. Planting during the natural rainy season to get the acorns established will enhance survival.
- 6) Best management practices recommend weeding to remove competition around the acorns, seedlings, and young plants, if feasible, for the first few growing seasons.
- 7) Pests such as grasshoppers can also pose a threat to the young seedling but with good practices above and increased number of seedlings being planted throughout our region, a few mighty oaks may emerge to once again grace our amazing landscapes.

More detailed information and demonstration workshops are being developed and will be posted soon at UC ANR HREC.

It feels GREAT to plant a tree and can be a wonderful way to give back to our communities.

Contact Hannah Bird at [hbird@ucanr.edu](mailto:hbird@ucanr.edu) or call (707) 744 1424 ext. 105 for further information.