

TREES IN GREAT BADDOW – 2

THE ENGLISH OAK QUERCUS ROBUR

Two magnificent oak trees stand as sentinels to the entrance to Great Baddow along Maldon Road, opposite the junction with Longmead Avenue. This species of oak is the English oak – *Quercus robur*. The leaves and acorns are very familiar, but the flowers may be missed easily. They are not typical flowers, with petals, but are catkins, a feature the oak has in common with many other trees. The English oak is deciduous (loses its leaves in winter), but there are types of oak that are evergreen, one of which, the Holm Oak, you can see in Great Baddow too.

The oak can live many years, perhaps up to 800. By the time the trees reach that age, they have usually lost some branches, and may not be very vigorous, but have an appearance of great antiquity. These two trees in Maldon Road are still in their prime. Young oak trees have the habit of keeping the dead leaves on the twigs over winter. They fall in spring, just before the new leaves appear. The young trees can look like untidy bushes before the typical mature shape takes over.

Oak trees grow easily from acorns. Collect the acorns in autumn, when they have fallen from the tree, and either plant in the ground, or in pots or trays which are left outside over winter. The acorns need the action of the cold to germinate in spring. You can keep them in the fridge for six weeks (not the freezer), in a plastic bag with some moist peat or potting mix to get the same effect. Young oak trees do not have a very good root system, so it is best to grow the seedlings in containers, so that none of the roots are lost when planting. As with all big trees, be careful where you finally plant them. In generations to come, they will get very big, and will easily outgrow a small suburban garden.

“Ash before oak, we’ll have a good soak. Oak before ash, well have a good splash” runs the old rhyme. Which ever way, it sounds like a wet summer! Does the old rhyme still hold true in the present days of changing climate? Which of the trees, oak or ash, has come into leaf first this spring?

Does anyone have any information about the two oaks in Maldon Road. Maybe an old photograph with them in? Big trees like these are living links with the past. We’d love to hear from you if you have.

Click on the link here to see a map of the Trees in Great Baddow.



ENGLISH OAKS – Maldon Road, Great Baddow



ENGLISH OAKS – Maldon Road, Great Baddow



ENGLISH OAK – catkins

[Click here to see more details of English Oak trees.](#)



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THE ENGLISH OAK – flowers at bottom right.