

## Wild Foods 2: The Oak Team Performance Task

### Background

Like the black walnut, the oaks are a collection of related species of hardwood trees very common throughout North America and especially in the eastern states. In fact, the oak is the “state tree” of six states and the most commonly occurring shade tree found in North America east of the Rocky mountains. Its fruit (the acorn) is highly edible, easy to recognize and simple to preserve for long periods of time. For this lab investigation, you or your team will be tasked with finding, identifying and foraging for the nutritious nuts of this common tree and preparing them for later use in the course.



### Instructions

1. Read the *Oaks* page of the Wild Foods E-Unit to familiarize yourself with the species' characteristics and properties.
2. Consult other online sources for hints and tricks for processing acorns and develop a plan for completing the objective. You will only be given a certain amount of time to complete the task so it is vital you develop a plan prior to starting the operation. A high quality plan will address collection strategies and methods, processing, drying and storage.
3. Obtain an ample supply of fresh acorns from local trees to facilitate the creation of a supply large enough to satisfy the short term nutrition needs of you and/or your team. Although the nutritional value of acorns from different oak species vary greatly, typical acorns contain approx. 144 calories per ounce.

**Special note:** Acorns from oak trees fall under the category of “tree nuts” for allergic students and care must be taken to keep the nuts and associated oils off of tabletops, etc. in areas where allergic students might work. If any members of the team are allergic, their duties should be limited to responsibilities that will not expose them to any allergens.



## A Note on Natural Competition

Acorns are sources of food for a variety of small mammals so you could find yourself in competition with “critters” when foraging. Keep this in mind...it is not a good idea to wait until all of the acorns fall before collecting.

Like most tree nuts, acorns may contain several species of insect larvae that also feed on the fleshy meat but are incapable of penetrating the thick shell. These little worms are harmless and do not affect the quality of the acorns but can be quite common and “disenchanted”. Acorns affected by these larvae will be easy to spot by a small perfectly round hole in the meat which has been bored from the inside out. Remember, if the unprocessed acorns are brought inside and stored there, the larvae could bore their way out of the acorn and crawl around the house.

Remember, if you are trying to figure out which acorns might be good vs bad, simply conduct a “float test” and make a decision from the results.

## Grading

Grading for this lab is based on you or your team’s ability to forage enough of the resource to be valuable in a survival situation. this means that simply gathering four or five samples is not enough...in truth it would not even be valuable as a “snack” let alone as a source of food.

Scoring rubric (5 point scale)

<b>Advanced (5.0-4.5)</b>	<b>Proficient (4.25-3.5)</b>	<b>Basic (3.25-3.0)</b>	<b>Below Basic (&lt;3.0)</b>
Advanced ability to find, gather and process the resource in question demonstrated.	Adequate ability to find, gather and process the resource in question demonstrated.	Below average ability to find, gather and process the resource in question demonstrated.	Poor ability to find, gather and process the resource in question demonstrated.
Chance of survival using this resource very high.	Chance of survival using this resource is good/average.	Chance of survival using this resource below average or in doubt.	Chance of survival using this resource unlikely/poor.
>1000 calories	1000-600 calories	600-400 calories	<300 calories