

Appendix E

Guidelines for Maintenance, Restoration,
and Rehabilitation of Oak Woodlands

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The following recommendations for the maintenance, restoration, and rehabilitation of oak woodlands are taken directly from Regenerating Rangeland Oaks in California, University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources Publication 21601 (McCreary, 2001). How to Grow California Oaks (<http://danr.ucop.edu/ihrmp/oak04.htm>) and How to Collect, Store, and Plant Acorns (<http://www.californiaoaks.org/ExtAssets/HowToAcorns07.pdf>) have additional information. Qualified professionals and interested persons are encouraged to consult these resources and other current sources of information.

Recommended Acorn Collection and Storage Procedures

- Collect acorns in the fall, several weeks after the first ones have started to drop and when those remaining on the tree can be easily dislodged from the acorn cap by gentle twisting.
- If possible, collect acorns directly from the branches of trees, rather than from the ground.
- If acorns are collected from the ground, place them in a bucket of water for several hours, and discard floaters.
- Stratify acorns from the black oak group (e.g., black oak, interior live oak) by soaking them in water for 24 hours and then storing them in a cooler or refrigerator for 30 to 90 days before sowing.
- Store acorns in a cooler or refrigerator in loosely sealed plastic bags, but do not store acorns from the white oak group (e.g., valley oak, blue oak, Oregon white oak) for more than 1 or 2 months before planting to ensure greatest viability.
- If acorns start to germinate during storage, remove and plant them as soon as possible.
- If mold develops during storage, and acorns and radicles are discolored and slimy, discard acorns.

Recommended Methods for Sowing Acorns of Rangeland Oaks in the Field

- Sow acorns in the fall and early winter, as soon as soil has been moistened several inches down.
- If possible, pregerminate acorns before planting and outplant when radicles are ¼ inch to ½ inch (1/2 cm to 1 cm) long.
- Cover acorns with ½ to 1 inch (1 to 2 ½ cm) of soil.
- If acorn depredation is suspected as a serious problem (high populations of rodents are present), plant deeper, up to 2 inches (5cm).
- If acorns begin to germinate during storage, outplant as soon as possible with the radicle pointing down. Use a screwdriver or pencil to make a hole in the soil for the radicle.
- If radicles become too long, tangled, and unwieldy to permit planting, clip them back to ½ inch (1 cm) and outplant.

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- If acorn planting spots have aboveground protection (treeshelters), and acorns have not been pregerminated, plant two or three acorns per planting spot and thin to the best seedling after 1 year.
- Keep planting pots free of weeds for at least 3 years after planting.

Recommended Procedure for Planting Rangeland Oaks

- Plant oak seedlings early in the growing season, soon after the first fall rains have saturated the soil; do not plant after early March unless irrigation is planned.
- Make sure seedlings are not frozen, allowed to dry out, or physically damaged before, during, or after planting.
- Plant seedlings at proper depth, making sure they are not J-rooted, and eliminate air pockets in soil adjacent to seedling roots
- In hard, compacted soils, break up soil (using a shovel, auger or posthole digger) through the compacted zone prior to planting to promote deeper rooting. If planting holes are augered, make sure that the sides of the holes are not glazed.
- Select microsites for planting that afford some natural protection and provide the most favorable growing conditions.
- Plant in a natural pattern, avoiding straight, evenly spaced rows.

Recommended Weed Control Procedures

- Select method of weed control (herbicides, physical weed removal, or mulching) based on environmental, fiscal, and philosophical considerations.
- Maintain a weed-free circle that is 4 feet (1.2m) in diameter around individual seedlings or acorns for at least 2 to 3 years after planting; if using herbicides to control weeds, remove weeds in circle with a diameter of 6 feet (1.8m)
- Initiate annual weed control by early spring to ensure that weeds do not become established and deplete soil moisture before oak roots can penetrate downward.
- Visit planting sites at least twice annually to remove both early- and late-season weeds that may have grown through mulch.
- If using postemergent herbicides, make sure that chemicals do not come in contact with foliage or the expanding buds of seedlings.
- After weed control is discontinued, visit plantings regularly to make sure vole populations and damage to seedlings have not increased. If increases are observed, remove thatch.

Methods of Protecting Trees from Animals

- Fences and large cages are effective only if livestock and deer are the only animals of concern. Fences require a large initial investment and result in fenced areas being removed from livestock production. Fences and cages must be maintained regularly.

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- Screen cylinders provide adequate short-term protection against insects, rodents, and deer but are ineffective against livestock, insects, or small rodents. Shoots that grow through the sides of tubes are vulnerable to browsing.
- Treeshelters have proven very effective in protecting rangeland oak seedlings from a wide range of animals and stimulating rapid, above-ground growth. They are relatively expensive but can greatly reduce the time required for seedlings to grow to sapling stage.
- Habitat modification can reduce damage from grasshoppers and some rodents, but it is ineffective for larger ranging animals, such as deer. Care must be taken to monitor the regrowth of vegetation or animals will quickly reoccupy site.

Recommended Procedures for Treeshelter Installation

- Select the size of treeshelter based on the browsing height of animals that are a threat.
- Install shelters so that they are upright and secure them to stakes using plastic ratchet clips or wire; make sure that seedlings are not damaged when shelters are secured to posts.
- When treeshelters are used, plant in an aesthetic, “natural” arrangement rather than in regular, evenly spaced rows.
- Utilize stakes that are durable enough to last the length of time treeshelters will be in place and pound them at least 1 foot (31 cm) into the ground before planting seedlings.
- Make sure that the tops of stakes are lower than the tops of shelters to prevent access by rodents that can climb stakes and damage to seedling shoots from rubbing against stakes.
- To prevent seedling desiccation, install shelters with the base buried in the ground.
- To prevent bird access, install plastic shelters with the base buried in the ground.
- If treeshelters are placed in pastures grazed by livestock, secure the shelters to metal posts using wire and thread flexible wire through the top instead of using plastic netting.

Recommended Treeshelter Maintenance Procedures

- Visit shelters at least once each year to make sure they are upright, attached to the stake, buried in the ground, and functioning properly.
- Keep a 4-foot (1.2 m) diameter or larger circle around shelters free of weeds for at least 2 years after planting, and remove weeds that grow inside shelters.
- Replace flexible netting that has blown off shelter tops.
- Replace stakes that have rotted or broken.
- Leave shelters in place for at least 3 years after seedlings have grown out the tops, longer if shelters are still intact and are still intact and are effectively protecting seedlings.

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- Remove shelters if they are restricting growth or abrading seedlings; to remove solid shelters, slice down the sides with a razor or knife, being careful not to damage the seedling inside.

Fertilization, Irrigation, and Top Pruning

- Place .74-ounce (21-g), slow release fertilizer tablets (20-10-5) 3 to 4 inches (7.5 to 10 cm) below planted acorns or seedlings.
- Irrigation in many situations is not necessary if there is timely and thorough weed control.
- If irrigation is needed for established and the terrain is steep or percolation of water through soil is slow, construct earthen irrigation basins.
- Provide irrigation in the form of infrequent, deep irrigations rather than frequent, shallow irrigations; time irrigations to extend the rainy season.
- Always control competing vegetation, even in situations where supplemental irrigation is provided.
- Top-prune seedlings at the time of planting if they are too tall and are out of balance with root systems; prune small, liner stock back to a 6-inch (15 cm) top.