

Hello Trees Resource Sheet

Hello
Trees

What to look for outdoors: early spring Oak tree catkins and female flowers



Have a magnifying glass with you.

We are going to look for oak flowers and some of them are very small.

Oak buds burst in April or early May. That is the time to look.



What do you think we shall find?

Which will come out first, leaves or flowers?



Clue: oak flowers are wind pollinated. Leaves get in the way of the pollen being blown away, so it is usually flowers before leaves for wind-pollinated trees.



What do oak leaves look like?

You might know what oak leaves look like. They are so attractive that they are often used as a decoration.



Do you think the leaves will look the same when they first comes out?

Oak leaf in summer



Clue 1: we know the leaves have been squashed up.

Clue 2: we are told that, as the leaves unfurl, chlorophyll within them develops fully. Chlorophyll is green, so they may not be very green at first.



What do oak flowers look like?



Clue: we already know that oak flowers are wind pollinated and wind



pollinating flowers are often catkins.

Yes, oak tree male flowers are catkins. They are the ones that make pollen.

We have seen the female flowers on other trees that have dangling catkins: birch trees have stiff green spikes, alders have perky purple ovals, and hazel trees have crimson bits sticking out of what looks like a bud.



We had to look really hard for hazel female flowers.

Oak female flowers are even smaller and more difficult to find than hazel's.

Do you feel up to the challenge of finding the very small female oak flowers?



Clues:

1. Oak female flowers are at the end of new shoots.
2. Oak female flowers are bright red.
3. Oak female flowers are about the size of a pin head.
4. There are sometimes two oak female flowers on a stalk.



Let's find an oak tree whose buds are bursting so that we can see what comes out.

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Have a good look at what comes out of the bursting oak buds.

Which of the following statements would you say is true?

1. Oak leaves and flowers come out at much the same time.
2. Oak leaves are crumpled up when they first appear.
3. Oak leaves are mostly yellowy green when they first appear.
4. Oak leaves have tinges of pink-brown when they first appear.
5. Oak catkins are stiff and green and bobbly at first.
6. Gradually the catkin bobbles spread out and go brown then yellow-green.
7. Female oak flowers are tiny, round, red-topped blobs on a pale green stalk.
8. There are fine hairs round the female flowers.
9. Sometimes there are two or more female flowers on a stalk.
10. There seems a chaotic mass of leaves and flowers but the catkins and female flowers do manage to stand out, well clear of the leaves.

I think all of the above statements are true.

? Do you agree? What do you see?

Here are some photographs for you to compare to what you see.



Oak leaves and flowers emerging at the same time



New oak leaves & female flowers



Oak female flowers and male catkin



Do let us know what you see.

Put a Visitor Post on the Hello Trees [Facebook](#) page.

You might like to compare what you see to more photographs in our [special resource sheet](#) – and to the ones in the Hello Trees book 'Olly Oak' where you can also find out what to look out for next.

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