



CAES

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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PRESS RELEASE

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Record Red Oak Acorn Crop Observed Statewide

New Haven, CT – The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is reporting a significant increase in acorn abundance in the red oak group this year as compared to past years, a phenomenon referred to as either a “mast year” or “bumper crop.” Except in the northern corners of Connecticut, residents should expect to see an unusually high number of red oak acorns hit the ground this fall. Nearly 87% of all red oaks in the study were documented with acorns compared to a historical average of 57%. In contrast, all survey locations noted an acorn crop failure in the white oak group with only 9% of trees producing acorns compared to a historical average of 25%.

Twelve locations across the state are surveyed for acorn crop abundance on mature oak trees (300 red oak group, 275 white oak group) each August. Although acorn production can be highly variable year-to-year, red oaks tend to produce reliable acorn crops every three to five years while white oak mastings events are less predictable. Recent bumper crops occurred in red oaks in 2016 and 2019 and in 2015 for white oaks. “A bumper crop can drive several ecological processes in our forests, such as the opportunity to help maintain and perpetuate declining oak populations while providing a nutritious food source to sustain wildlife populations throughout the winter months,” according to Joseph Barsky, lead forest researcher for the study. “Masting events can also lead to higher rodent populations, which serve as primary reservoir hosts for numerous human pathogens including the bacteria that causes Lyme disease,” noted Dr. Scott Williams, Chief Scientist, Department of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Twelve species of oaks are native to Connecticut, including *Quercus rubra* (northern red), *Q. coccinea* (scarlet), *Q. velutina* (black), *Q. palustris* (pin), and *Q. ilicifolia* (bear) in the red oak group and *Q. alba* (white), *Q. bicolor* (swamp white), *Q. montana* (chestnut), *Q. prinoides* (dwarf chestnut), *Q. muehlenbergii* (chinquapin), *Q. stellata* (post), and *Q. macrocarpa* (bur) in the white oak group.

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