

Quercus engelmannii

[Synonyms :]

ENGELMANN OAK is an evergreen tree that is native to south-western North America, particularly California (United States). It has leathery, dull greyish-green leaves and stout, brown to black acorns.

It is also known as *Chêne d'Engelmann* (French), Engelman oak, Evergreen oak, Evergreen white oak, Mesa live oak, and Mesa oak.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

This oak is rare in parts of California now (especially threatened in the south of the state by land development, as well as over-grazing by livestock in Engelmann oak woodland and fire).

Engelmannii commemorates a German-born American physician and botanist, Georg Engelmann (1809-1884), who emigrated to the United States in 1832 and practised medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. He carried out biological and botanical research (concentrating on western North American flora) and is said to have been the first voice to declare that some American grape species (*Vitis*) are immune to attack from *Phylloxera* (the plant lice). From 1836-1884 he also made meticulous meteorological observations. He became a founder member of the St. Louis Academy of Science in 1856. Engelmann wrote some highly respected botanical papers some of which were published in *Botanical Works of the Late George Engelmann*.

For the Luiseño North American Indian tribe this oak's acorns are said to have been a staple food. [Like acorns from many other oaks when the tannin content is significant the fruit needs to be processed before being eaten – not least to remove any bitter taste. For this they were buried in wet ground during the Winter (or carefully washed in running water – by placing a bag of them in a stream for several weeks) to reduce the amount of tannin in them. They were then dried and boiled or ground before being eaten or used as flour.] Both the Diegueño and the Luiseño Indians made them into a kind of porridge and the Luiseño tribe are certainly known to have dried and stored harvested acorns for Winter food. Roasted acorns also provided a coffee substitute. Diegueño Indians used washed and pounded gum from the bark like chewing gum as well.

The close-grained brittle wood has been burnt as fuel.