

*Quercus macrolepis*

[Synonyms : *Quercus aegilops*, *Quercus aegilops* var. *ithaburensis*, *Quercus aegilops macrolepis*, *Quercus graeca*, *Quercus ithaburensis* var. *macrolepis*, *Quercus macrolepis* ssp. *ithaburensis*, *Quercus vallonea*]

**VALONIA OAK** is a semi-evergreen tree. Native to southern Europe and western Asia, particularly south-eastern Turkey, it has glossy dark green leaves and egg-shaped acorns. It is also known as *Balania* (Greek), Camatina oak, *Chêne du Mont Tabor* (French), Dyer's oak, Great prickly-cupped oak, *Nagy pikkelyű tölgy* (Hungarian), *Vallonea* (Italian), Vallonea oak, *Vallonia* (Italian), Valonea oak, Valonian oak, *Wallonen-Eiche* (German), and *Ziegenbart-Eiche* (German).

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

*Macrolepis* is made up of Greek *macro-* (large, long) and *lepid-* (fish-scale) components meaning 'large-scaled' with reference here to the acorn cups.

Hundreds of years ago in its native habitat Valonia oak was revered as a sacred tree.

This is believed to be the species of 'oak' referred to in the Old Testament of the Bible in Isaiah (Chapter 6, verse 13).

In the past in times of famine the acorns (after they had been steeped in water for a period until any bitter taste had been removed) were eaten boiled or raw, and ground into flour for bread.

Tanners have used the dried scaly acorn cups (known to them as '*valonea*, *palamut*, or *trillo*') for producing quality heavy leathers – both firm, and soft and flexible – especially on a commercial scale for upholstery, shoes (soles and uppers), linings and leather goods generally. They yield a black dye and, apart from dyeing, this has also been used as black ink.

Valonia oak was introduced to North America in 1731.

Medicinally, it is said to have been recommended by Dioscorides, the celebrated 1<sup>st</sup> Century Greek physician, in treatments for internal haemorrhaging ('blood-spitting') and dysentery. (Earlier, in Biblical times, it is said that acorns were used in remedies for cancer and burns.)