

1/ Pre-Conference Tour participants. 2/ *Quercus phellos*, Arboretum de Chèvreloup. 3/ *Quercus macrocarpa*, Jardin des Plantes. 4/ *Quercus robur* Haas Group, Jardin des Plantes. 5/ *Quercus pyrenaica* 'Pendula', Arboretum de Chèvreloup.

Pre-Conference Tour September 26-29, 2012

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On the 26th September 31 IOS members gathered at the entrance of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. We were welcomed by our Pre-Tour leader, Thierry Lamant. The Jardin des Plantes, the largest (28 ha/69 ac) and one of the most famous botanic gardens in France, is also one of the oldest, founded in 1635. Originally called the Jardin du Roi, it was renamed the Jardin des Plantes in 1793 when the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle was instituted. Today the Muséum comprises many different gardens and institutions. We walked in along the Grand Parterre towards the *Quercus macrolepis* Kotschy planted in 1814 by René Desfontaines. It now stands 20 m (65.6 ft) tall, with a 3.15 m (10.3 ft) girth and 17 m (55.7 ft) crown spread. We passed by *Ehretia dicksonii* Hance, a *Boraginaceae* from East Asia with a corky bark, and near the statue of Bernardin de St. Pierre we saw a splendid *Platanus orientalis* L. with a 24 m (78.7 ft) crown spread, planted in 1785 by the Comte de Buffon. The historical *Quercus macrocarpa* Michx., planted in 1811 from acorns brought from the United States by André Michaux, with its magnificent shape, featuring a 4 m (13.1 ft) girth, and the famous *Cedrus libani* A. Rich., planted in 1734 by Bernard de Jussieu, were also on our way. We saw the first *Styphnolobium japonicum* (L.) Schott (formerly *Sophora japonica*) planted in Europe, known as the “Sophora de Jussieu”. The seeds were sent from China in 1747 by Père R.P. d’Incarville, a Jesuit priest, to Bernard de Jussieu. It now stands 21 m (68.8 ft) tall and was designated an Arbre Remarquable de France (Remarkable Tree of France) in June 2001. We stopped to admire the oldest tree in Paris, the “Robinier de Robin”, a *Robinia pseudoacacia* planted in 1635 by Vespasien Robin. Crossing towards a section of the Jardin des Plantes not open to the public, we met the huge *Quercus haas* Kotschy (now considered *Q. robur* Haas Group) from 1855, a historic tree introduced by Benedict Balansa. It was a pity there were no acorns for the amateur oak collectors. Having left the Jardin des Plantes bound for Versailles, our coach drove us by the *quais* of the Seine; unable to stop, we had a brief glimpse of the famous “vertical wall garden” of the Musée du Quai Branly near the Tour Eiffel.

After a light lunch in Versailles, we went to the Arboretum de Chèvreloup, a 200-ha (494 ac) domain acquired by King Louis XIV in 1669, adjacent to the park of the Petit Trianon, a section of the Château de Versailles. This arboretum is today, like the Jardin des Plantes, part of the National Museum of Natural History. During World War II, the arboretum was badly spoiled, particularly by farmers who grazed their cattle there. It was replanted in 1967, and since 1979 50 ha (124 ac) are open to the public. The fierce storm of 1999 uprooted many trees, including a famous *Styphnolobium*, also planted by Jussieu. Fortunately a cutting, taken from the root of the felled, was successfully grown and is now thriving in the same place as the original. On our way to the Quercetum we crossed a superb 60-year-old *allée* of *Juglans nigra* L., a special feature of the arboretum.

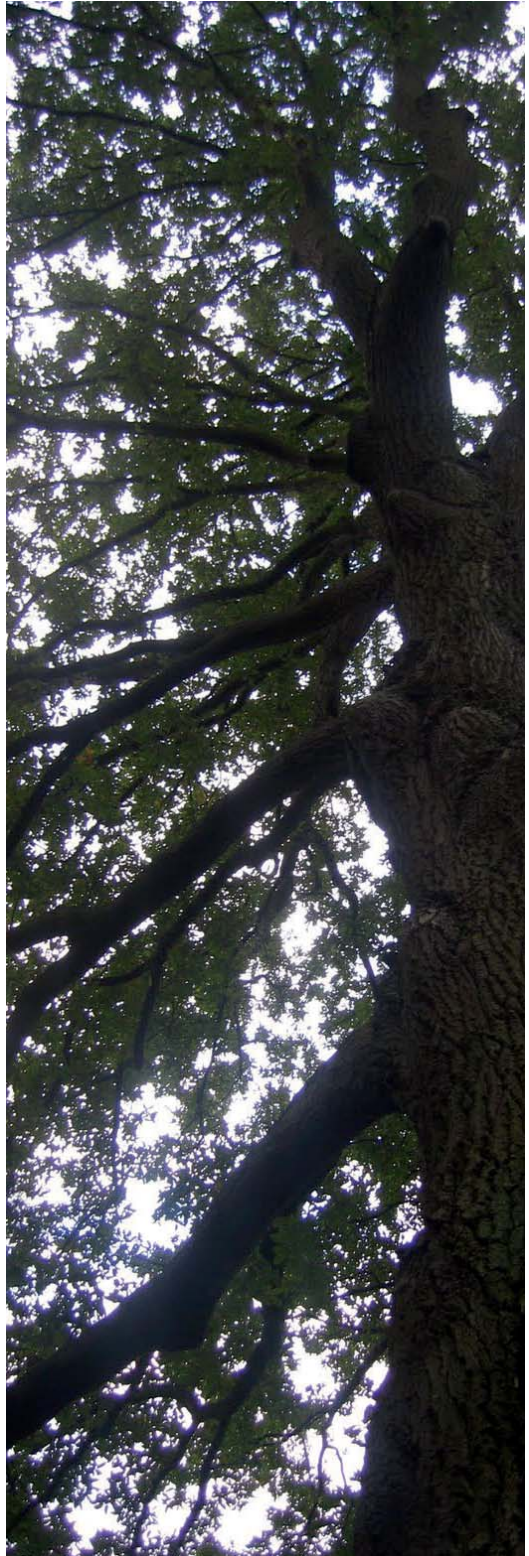
We saw a *Quercus libani* G. Olivier, (with acorns), a *Q. castaneifolia* C.A. Mey. (acorns not guaranteed to be “true”), a *Q. crispula* Blume (formerly *Q. mongolica* subsp. *crispula* (Blume) Menitsky), a *Q. Pondaim* Group with its large leathery leaves, a nice 16-meter-tall (52.4 ft) specimen of *Q. aliena* Blume and a *Q. phellos* L. ‘Latifolia’, whose leaf is very similar to *Q. imbricaria* Michx.

From Chèvreloup we took the highway towards the city of Angers (our first night’s stop), crossing the flatlands of the rich agricultural department of the Beauce, and then passing through the cities of Chartres and Le Mans.

On the morning of the 27th we visited the Arboretum Gaston Allard. Created by Mr. Allard in 1880, the arboretum was later taken over by the Institut Pasteur and at present

is owned by the City of Angers. Among other distinctions, the arboretum holds one of the French National Collections of *Hydrangea*. We entered along an avenue of oaks, including old specimens of *Q. cerris* L., *Q. frainetto* Ten., *Q. canariensis* Willd. and *Q. afares* Pomel (from Algeria). This last had a girth of 4.35 m (14.2 ft), stood 19 m (62.3 ft) tall and, most importantly, had shed a plentiful supply of acorns! The former national champion of *Q. ×schochiana* Dieck. (*Q. phellos* Münchh. × *Q. palustris* L.), which had a codominant stem, had collapsed some time ago: a sad spectacle for all of us oak lovers. The group wandered around the arboretum where conifers were omnipresent: *Sequoia sempervirens* (D. Don) Endl. ‘Prostrata’, *Pinus bungeana* Zucc. ex Endl. (its bark resembles that of a plane tree), *Torreya nucifera* L., *Torreya grandis* Fortune ex Lindley (with a bountiful crop of seeds on the ground) and *Keteleeria davidiana* (Bertrand) Beissn. Our morning ended with lunch at Angers.

The afternoon was spent visiting the well-known Forêt de Bercé in the Sarthe. This forest was planted during the reign of Louis XIV by his minister Colbert. It now consists mainly of *Q. petraea* (Matt.) Liebl., but originally it was a mixed forest of *Q. robur* L. and *Q. petraea*; as the latter is more resistant to drought they have survived, while almost all the *Q. robur* have disappeared. *Fagus sylvatica* L. were planted with the oaks and some now reach a majestic height of 30 m (98.4 ft), as tall as the *Quercus*. Bercé is managed by the ONF (Office National des Forêts). The local forester who welcomed us immediately informed us there was no acorn mast this year. Sad, long faces were our only reply to this announcement! We went to a stand of old giant oaks and saw the “Chêne Boppe”: a 350-year-old *Q. petraea* with a girth of 3.45 m (11.3 ft) and standing 36 m (118 ft) tall. It was the highlight of the visit.



6/ *Quercus afares*, Arboretum Gaston Allard.



7/ *Quercus petraea*, Forêt de Bercé.

Many other species are to be found in this magnificent forest, including *Pinus sylvestris* L., *Pinus pinaster* Aiton, *Pinus nigra* subsp. *laricio* (Poir.) Maire, *Carpinus betulus* L., *Acer pseudoplatanus* L., *Sorbus torminalis* (L.) Crantz, *Betula pendula* Roth (syn. *B. verrucosa* Ehrh.), *Prunus cerasus* L., *Crataegus monogyna* Jacq., *Ilex aquifolium* L. and *Fragula alnus* Mill. (syn. *Rhamnus frangula* L.).

It was dark when we arrived at our hotel in Orléans, a modern and comfortable golf resort where we would spend the next two nights.

Friday 28th: As we did not have to pack we were prompt to depart at 8am sharp. Thierry surprised us by taking us to his charming home to visit his garden, where we saw *Q. pacifica* Nixon & C.H. Mull. (endemic to Santa Cruz Island off the coast of California), grown from seeds he collected himself in 1997 during the 2nd International Oak Society Post-

Conference Tour. Other species of interest were: *Q. gravesii* Sudw., *Juglans microcarpa* Berland., *Heptacodium miconoides* Rehder (from China) and *Pinus johannis* M.-F. Robert (from Mexico), a very rare pine with stomata restricted to the adaxial sides of the needles.

Our next destination was the Arboretum national des Barres in Nogent-sur-Vernisson. In 1821 Philippe de Vilmorin bought the estate and in it he began planting tree collections grouped according to provenance. The Vilmorin family kept les Barres until 1936 when the French state assumed ownership. The arboretum now holds over 2,800 species from the world's temperate regions.

The quercetum was the main purpose of our visit. We admired the rare specimen labeled for a very long time *Q. oxyodon* Miq. that was then identified by Zhou Zhekun in 1998 as *Q. liboensis* Z.K. Zhou. This name was then considered in the *Flora of China* to be a synonym of *Cyclobalanopsis gracilis* (Rehder & E.H. Wilson) W.C. Cheng & T. Hong, the correct name for which as a species in the genus *Quercus* is *Q. ciliaris* C.C. Huang & Y.T. Chang. Finally Min Deng, who gave a presentation at the conference and who has revised the *Cyclobalanopsis* group, is of the opinion that this taxon is now considered to be *Quercus glauca* var. *gracilis* (Rehder & E.H. Wilson) A. Camus (evidently botanists have a difficult time sorting out these complicated questions!). *Q. sartorii* Liebm. (from Mexico) with nice long dentate leaves thrives here, as does an old *Q. dentata* Thunb., the parent tree of the hybrid named in honor of Vilmorin: *Q. ×vilmoriniana* A. Camus (*Q. dentata* × *Q. petraea*). *Q. variabilis* Blume and *Q. aliena* Blume were some of the Asian oaks we saw at les Barres. I asked Thierry about a lovely, huge *Q. frainetto* Ten. with a 3 m (9.8 ft) girth I had seen at the arboretum in 1999; it had recently died—another tree for our reminiscences... As is often the case, we were running short of time as we had to be at Ingrannes for lunch prior to our last Pre-Tour visit: the Arboretum des Grandes Bruyères.

This lovely arboretum owned by the Comte and Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld, situated in the heart of the Orléans forest, has earned the designation “Jardin remarquable” awarded by the Ministère de la Culture. Over 2,500 taxa are represented, while 7,000 labels correctly identify each specimen, providing the visitor an opportunity to learn botany. The arboretum is laid out according to the geographical origin of plants, Asia and America being the most important areas. Les Grandes Bruyères holds three French National Collections: *Magnolia*, *Cornus* and oaks of Northeast America.

We were welcomed by the hosts, Bernard and Brigitte de la Rochefoucauld, and split in two groups, each to be led by one of the hosts. Brigitte explained that no chemical pesticides or fertilizers are allowed at les Grandes Bruyères: only compost and manure which are spread around the plants. The soil is sandy with subsoil of clay and a pH of 5-6. The arboretum is very pleasant to visit, with meandering lanes connecting the borders and charming ponds that enhance all the vistas. A list of plants seen would be overwhelming; in my opinion, the most important feature of les Grandes Bruyères is the great enthusiasm that the owners have for taking care of their arboretum, which encompasses new projects for the near future! In a nutshell, it is truly a *jardin remarquable*. A farewell cup of tea was kindly offered by our hosts under the canopy of a splendid *Q. robur*.

Saturday 29th was dedicated to traveling from Orléans to Bordeaux by way of Tours, Poitiers and Angoulême. We arrived in the magnificent architectural city of Bordeaux just in time to get ready for the conference reception cocktail party.

Thanks to Thierry Lamant our leader who organized this IOS Pre-Conference Tour so well in this our beloved France!



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8/ *Quercus robur*, Arboretum des Grandes Bruyères. 9/ *Quercus dentata*, Arboretum national des Barres. 10/ *Quercus baronii*, Arboretum national des Barres. 11/ *Quercus glauca*, Arboretum des Grandes Bruyères. 12/ Le Chêne Boppe, Forêt de Bercé. 13/ *Quercus* × *schochiana*, Arboretum Gaston Allard.

Photographers. Title page: Lloyd Kenyon (*Quercus glauca* var. *gracilis*). Photo 1: Guy Sternberg. Photos 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11: Roderick Cameron. Photos 3, 10, 12: Lloyd Kenyon. Photo 8: Joyce Lee. Photo 13: Thierry Lamant.