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Oak timber and maintenance

General

European Oak (Quercus Robur) is rated as a durable timber and with minimal maintenance our benches should have a service life of at least 25 years. Oak is a very hard and tough timber and displays medium movement in service together with a tendency to split or check, which is the natural behavior of most timbers.

Do observe the cracks and splits that are evident in the oak timbers of old buildings, our oak is the same and will behave in the same manner.

Due to the weathered appearance of oak benches when they have been installed for a while they may not be a suitable choice where adjacent furniture or timber structures are painted or likewise well maintained. If this is the case then iroko timber may be a better choice. Oak benches can be painted or stained after they have weathered but specialist paints are required.

Weathering and bench placement

Oxford Memorial Benches Ltd only purchase kiln dried, prime grade FSC certified timber for their benches in order to manufacture to the highest quality standards but in use the timber, being a natural product, will behave as it wishes and the cracks will appear in larger sections and in the end grain. This will not affect the strength or durability of the bench as our component and jointing dimensions are very generous.

If the bench is to be left standing on grass then place a non porous piece of material under the legs to isolate them from soil and moisture; this section is where the bench will deteriorate first. During manufacture we stand all our leg assemblies in clear preservative for 24 hours minimum.

Oak will show water staining after rain until it has weathered (even if it is treated with clear preservative); this is particularly noticeable immediately after the bench has been delivered. This water staining will often result in dark brown blotchy patches or spots appearing on the timber. Eventually the bench will weather evenly all over and you will have a natural looking bench that will blend in with all surroundings.

Oak will also stain patio slabs a brown colour after rain; this is called iron stain and is caused by the very high level of tannin in oak. The stain will wash away and cease after a while.

If this is not acceptable then choose an Iroko bench.

Treatment and maintenance

There are 3 options regarding the treatment of oak benches placed outdoors.

1. Accept the bench with the timbers in as-machined condition and allow the bench to weather naturally.
2. Apply 2 coats of a clear preservative such as Cuprinol Clear Preservative. This will reduce the rate at which algae and lichens grow on the surface but will not prevent this happening long term. Because the preservative sinks into the timber rather than form a surface on the timber (like oil) then this option does not reduce the speed of severity of checks/splits forming.
3. Apply 2 coats of Quick Drying Tung Oil to the bench. This oil is the only treatment recommended by Liberon (a well respected supplier of timber finishes <http://www.liberon.co.uk>). The oiled surface will shed water and reduce the amount of cracking that will take place. It will be necessary to re-apply the oil to keep the surface treated, possibly after only a few months. See separate information sheet from Liberon. Of note is their advice that during the first year frequent re-coating is required to build up the protection

Warning

Never, ever have the bench cleaned by caustic dipping, as this will completely destroy the bench despite the claims made by some companies. The aggressive chemicals leach out the oils/resins of the timber and destroy the jointing.

Application of 2 coats clear preservative (Cuprinol)

1.2m bench	£ 55
1.5m bench	£ 60
1.8m bench	£ 65
2.1m bench	£ 70
2.4m bench	£ 75

Application of 2 coats of Tung Oil (Liberon)

1.2m bench	£ 85
1.5m bench	£ 90
1.8m bench	£ 100
2.1m bench	£ 105
2.4m bench	£ 120

Liberon Quick drying Tung Oil and Cuprinol Clear preservative can be purchased from most good paint stockists. We use Relics of Witney - <http://www.relicsofwitney.co.uk/search/results/tung%20oil>

The above information has been given in good faith but must be treated as advice only.

The decision as to which treatment (if any) to be adapted is yours, the client.

Oxford Memorial Benches Ltd accepts no liability regarding the suitability or durability of any treatment.