

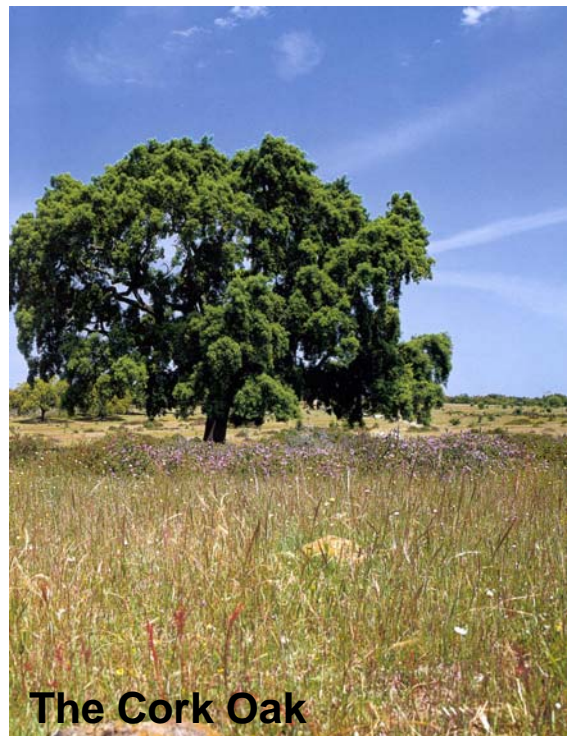


TRADITIONAL CORK *THE EVOLUTION OF CORK*

TECHNICAL SUPPORT 800.345.6202

Cork has been an integral part of social and economic segments of many societies for over three thousand years. Use of cork has been documented as far back as 3000 B.C. when Chinese fishermen used cork as floats. Throughout history, production methods and finished goods related to cork have changed, yet the raw material and harvesting practices have remained virtually unchanged. The cork material used on the Space Shuttle as a heat shield bears the identical physical structure of cork used by the Romans and the ancient Egyptians.

Throughout the world, the cork forests span an estimated 5.4 million acres, predominantly in the Mediterranean region: Portugal (33%), Spain (23%) and Algeria (21%), Tunisia, Italy and France. Small plantations of cork oak trees can also be found in South America and Australia. The growth and establishment of the cork oak as a native tree in the Mediterranean region can be attributed to the particular climatic conditions as well as the natural habitat and relatively small number of natural predators. Beginning in the 18th century, cork became widely used in industry, particularly after the re-development of the cork stopper by Dom Perignon, a Benedictine monk well known for creating the first champagne.



Until the late 1800s the predominant uses of cork continued to be stoppers (wine and champagne) as well as flotation devices (fishing floats, etc.). At this time the cork industry saw significant changes in how cork was used and processed due to new uses that had been discovered for the raw material. One of the most important discoveries was insulation corkboard, a thermal insulation product made from 100% cork grain. This product was widely used for years as an insulating product in military vessels, railcars and for other general insulating purposes. In the early 1900s the uses for cork began to expand rapidly due to a new awareness of the unique properties of the material. Among these new materials were cork gaskets, bottle cap seals and cork flooring.

For more information about Expanko visit our website at www.expanko.com or contact Expanko at 800.345.6202.