



# MAMA TREE

## The Ongoing Gifts of Rain

Greetings, friends of [Mama Tree](#)

The bubbling of new projects and offerings on the farm is matching the abundance of blossoms and birds brought on by the epic wet winter and spring. Birds of all shapes and sizes (including our neighbors' peacocks) are filled with the energy of creation, attempting to kindle new relationships, making nests, laying eggs, and tending young fletchlings.



*Male hooded oriole eyeing a female who refuses to look in his direction*



Baby house finches nesting cozily in a hard hat

We're excited to share some of the creations sprouting from Mama Tree.

First, we're honored to have been featured in the recent [Summer Issue of Ojai Magazine](#), which debuted on Friday. The writing staff at Ojai Valley News proclaimed it their best issue yet.

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A long, olive tree-lined lane embraces visitors to Mama Tree, a family-owned orchard providing a bucolic oasis of olive, Pixie tangerine, and mature walnut trees nestled on 60 acres on the Sulphur Mountain side of the Upper Ojai Valley.

# Mama Tree

... AND THE 5 PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

In addition to its almost 600 olive, 1500 tangerines, and 40 walnut trees, Mama Tree also grows Steezy Ruby grapefruit, navel and Valencia oranges, Eureka and Meyer lemons, pomegranates, persimmons, pineapple guava, kiwi, apricots, and peaches. With the majestic Topatope mountains towering in the distance, north, sky, and air infuse the idyllic property with a sense of wholeness. The 20-acre orchard and 40-acre woodlands provide the perfect venue for land stewards Natalie Buckley-Medrano and Jeffrey Riedl to nurture and regenerate an ecosystem.

Mama Tree is owned by Holly Kretschmer and Loren Buchard, who hired Buckley-Medrano and Riedl to manage the property in 2020. The foursome's mission is to transform the formerly conventional orchard into a diverse, regenerative agro-ecological system that relies on permaculture design.

When Kretschmer and Buchard first saw Mama Tree, they immediately fell in love. "The property's physical beauty attracted us, and I had been quietly nurturing a dream of getting involved in regenerative agriculture," Kretschmer says. "We were looking for a property where we could grow, literally and metaphorically, and be part of a community that supports positive change—it was already a working farm, but we wanted to further and experiment with the agricultural practices used."

Buchard agrees, saying, "We felt there was an opportunity to grow things differently, in doing so, we're doing right by the land."

When Riedl and Buckley-Medrano were hired, they immediately went to work, intent on transforming Mama Tree into a vibrant, diverse, nurturing, integrated system where animals do the work and the land is designed to maximize moisture levels in the soil.

"Our first plan of action was to call a halt to the spraying of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and cease any tilling," Buckley-Medrano explains. "Now, we fertilize by strategically mixing our animals through and using practices such as spraying liquid clay, a natural mineral, on the olives as a barrier against fruit flies."

She discusses efforts to improve Mama Tree's ecological health and functionality, including sequestering carbon by building living soil, integrating livestock, making their own compost using animals' bedding, and having goats graze from perennial fodder off the land instead of alfalfa, which is an expensive, water-intensive crop.

Left: A member of the mama tree crew with Totobito. Photo by Holly Kretschmer  
Below: Mama Tree Farm managers Jeffrey and Natalie with their baby and goat Miquette. Photo by Kasee Stone of Light House Photography

KEEP SOIL COVERED  
MINIMIZE SOIL DISTURBANCE  
MAXIMIZE CROP DIVERSITY  
INTEGRATE LIVESTOCK  
MAINTAIN LIVING ROOT YEAR-ROUND

The 4-page spread on Mama Tree in Ojai Magazine highlights regenerative agriculture

The magazine's spotlight on Mama Tree coincides with the debut of our food products on new shelves across Ojai. You can now purchase our olive oil, marmalades, and walnut butter at Rainbow Bridge, Farmer and the Cook, the Nest, and Rains. Dive Deeper into the story behind our products at the end of this newsletter.

In the orchard, the rain made for our most productive planting season yet. We are making great strides towards our biodiversity goals, with over 350 carefully chosen new plants and trees of 30 different species all hand planted and sited for various ecological roles, not to mention our cover crops grown from seed.

The winter rains also brought 5 new baby goats born to 2 excellent mamas on May 23rd... After January's 13" storm event, our flooded orchards were too soggy to be disturbed by goat hooves. Our female herd and our male herd were housed into 2 adjacent barn corrals, separated by a hardwire fence. We don't know exactly how this happened, but after a 5-month gestation, voilà! We have 2 seemingly immaculate conceptions:





*Bella and Farrah mothering their baby goats, captured by Kate Bowen of Light Beacon Photography*

With the addition of these snuggly baby goats, we're thrilled to announce our upcoming [farm tour, on Saturday, June 3rd](#). Goat snugglers are welcome!

[Farm Tour Registration](#)

### **Mama Tree Deep Dive: From Orchard to Table**

Since 2022, our resident Kitchen Witch, Madeline Mikkelson, has been experimenting and developing recipes to preserve and transform our freshest produce into shelf stable products that can sit proudly in your kitchen or on your next party platter. If you've made your way to the [Ojai Community Farmer's Market \(OCFM\)](#), on Thursdays, maybe you've been lucky to sample some of our pilot goods from Madeline herself.



Prior to the inception of our beloved community market, our pixie crop was exported nationally and globally with the local Ojai Pixie Co-Op. Our grapefruits were shipped through Sunkist, and our heirloom English walnuts fell to the ground and fed the squirrel population. As we lovingly rejuvenate the soil and microbiome of our orchard with our hands, goats, chickens, and diversified cover crops, our plan is to sell our produce as locally as possible. [Ojai residents deserve access to food grown well.](#)

We're delighted to offer our fresh produce at the OCFM, where we also sell our delicious [marmalades, refreshing shrubs, and decadent walnut butter](#). Our products have been so popular that we can hardly keep up with demand.



Staying true to our ethics, we replaced the sugar in our marmalades with local, small batch honey. If an ingredient can't be grown on site or locally, we select recipes that use ingredients from organic, low-water tree crops — like apple vinegar and maple syrup. Tree crops, on average, build soil fertility, require fewer sprays, use less water, and communicate [mystically with mycorrhizae.](#)

Our 2023 batch of our Extra Virgin Olive Oil continues to be our favorite so far. Our Taggiasca olives are notoriously smooth, with a round buttery flavor profile. We intentionally harvest early, when the olives are not quite ripe, in order to capture a balanced, spicy finish. This comes from the increased amount of polyphenols (antioxidants) present, which also give the oil a longer shelf life. Our oil is pressed at the Ojai Olive Oil Company's mills and bottled at Mama Tree.

By sharing our goods with those you love, you're casting a vote for ethical treatment of land and animals. Thank you for eating consciously, choosing to pay the true cost for food, and thinking globally by acting locally.



*All of our olive trees are pruned by hand with care. Shown here: Abudu Nininger, resident Forester and Carpenter*

Header photo by Kate Bowen at Light Beacon Photography

