

Canyon Live Oak

(*Quercus chrysolepis*)

The Canyon Live Oak is a variable tree adapted to the often dry, hot conditions in Southern California. It can grow in a shrub form in harsh hill-side conditions, or to heights of 70 feet in open areas.

The average canopy spread is 20-60 feet. The leaves are bright, shiny green on top and bluish gray underneath; leaf edges can be spiny or smooth. The bark tends to be smooth while the tree is young, but becomes rougher and grayish with age. Besides its exceptionally strong hard wood, another feature is the large acorns that take two years to mature and can be between 2 to 3 inches long. The scientific name "chrysolepis" means "gold scale" and comes from the tiny golden hairs that cover the underside of the leaves and the bumpy scales of the acorn cups.



California Black Walnut

(*Juglans californica*)

This native tree is 15-30 feet tall and frequently has several trunks. Trunks of mature trees are dark brown. Many separate leaves, the same size and shape, grow along a stalk up to 11 inches long; they turn from bright green to yellow before falling off in the winter. The walnut is small, thick-shelled and when cracked open resembles the face of an owl. Black walnuts, like acorns, were an important food for indigenous people of California and remain important for wildlife.



City of Pasadena

The May 2002

amendment to the City Trees and Tree Protection Ordinance created protection measures for three types of trees on private property — native, specimen, and landmark. Native trees are specified for protection because they help maintain native populations of birds, insects, and other animals, and promote better environmental conditions. The 13 native trees that are protected in the amendment are illustrated and described in this brochure. To qualify for protection, native trees must have a trunk diameter of 8 or more inches at chest height. In residential zones, the trees must be in a specified setback. On non-residential properties, native trees are protected on the entire site.

The brochure is intended as a general guide to identifying native trees. To determine the species on your property, please consult with a certified arborist.

13 Native Trees

Protected by the City Trees and Tree Protection Ordinance May 2002 Amendment

Department of Public Works
Parks and Natural Resources



100 North Garfield Ave., Pasadena, CA 91109 (626) 744-4321
www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/publicworks ➤ click on tree ordinance

California Buckeye

(Aesculus californica)

Like other native trees, the California Buckeye, or Horse Chestnut, is adapted to Southern California’s dry climate. Its umbrella-like canopy spreads out to 30 feet, but it only reaches heights of 15-25 feet. The palm-shaped leaves include 5-7 leaves that are oblong and pointed at the end. The large, light red or white flower clusters are attractive and pungently scented, producing nectar that is deadly to bees. In native settings, this tree loses its leaves in midsummer; in cultivated areas, it retains them until late fall. Once the leaves fall, the large, pear-shaped seedpods are silhouetted against the silvery trunk and bare branches.



Arroyo Willow

(Salix lasiolepis)

This tree is native to streams where there is plenty of water, which allows it to form a dense root mass. It may look like a shrub in areas that have frequent scouring floods; otherwise it can reach heights of 35-40 feet with a 45-foot spread. Arroyo Willows frequently have more than one trunk that is smooth and gray-brown when young, becoming darker and rough with age. Leaves are oblong, dark green on top and silvery-white underneath, turning yellow-brown in summer and falling off in the winter. Large trees may look like they’re “weeping” because of their hanging branches and long leaves. In spring, the cottony seeds can be seen blowing from the tree.



California Sycamore

(Platanus racemosa)

Sycamores are stream-loving natives, reaching heights of 80 feet with a canopy spread of 50 feet. The highly recognizable bark sloughs off as the tree grows, displaying a patchwork of light and dark colors. Leaves are broad, deeply fingered and turn light brown/orange before dropping in late fall and winter. Fruits of this tree are bristly brown balls comprised of many small, narrow seeds connected to tufts of “hair.” In natural settings, Sycamores survive dry periods by having deep roots that reach down to ground water. In landscape areas, they need supplemental water during droughts.



Coast Live Oak

(Quercus agrifolia)

One of Pasadena’s most common native trees, the Coast Live Oak is highly recognizable by the dense canopy of small, cupped, dark green leaves that have prickly points along the edges. Trunk bark is gray; smooth and light colored in youth, rough and darker when mature. The acorns are dark brown, thin and pointed. Coast Live Oaks are generally slow-growing trees that may reach 70 feet in height with a canopy of 100 feet or more and a root system about the same size as the canopy. The trees drop some of their leaves in the spring, while gradually gaining new leaves. Over 200 native bird species rely on Coast Live Oaks for food and shelter.



California White Oak/Valley Oak

(Quercus lobata)

This majestic tree thrives in deep, rich soil and can reach a height of 150 feet, with a spread of 75-100 feet. The name lobata denotes the leaf’s shape with 7-11 lobes. Leaves are glossy green in spring and summer, turning brown before falling in autumn. Valley Oak acorns are 1-2 inches long and chestnut brown. The bark is gray, thick and cracked. Legend says that when rainy winters are approaching, Valley Oaks drop more acorns than usual.



Western Cottonwood

(Populus fremontii)

This water-loving tree, also called Fremont Cottonwood, grows to heights of 80 feet and has a broad, open canopy. The trunk is gray with thick, rough bark. The triangular leaves are often wider than long. They are shiny yellow-green during spring and summer, but turn bright yellow in the fall before dropping. Fruits are light brown, egg-shaped capsules that open in the spring to release many cottony seeds. Early settlers planted Cottonwoods for shade and windbreaks.



White Alder

(Alnus rhobifolia)

This is a fast-growing tree that will reach heights of 50-70 feet, with a canopy spread of 40 feet. It has one main trunk that is usually very straight and light gray, white or light brown in color. Branches that break off from the trunk leave scars that resemble eyes. Alder leaves are bright green, triangle shaped and have small teeth on the edges. The seeds are contained in tiny cones that are clustered on short stems. Alders need a continuous water supply and grow naturally along streams in Pasadena’s canyons.



California Laurel

(Umbellularia californica)

The Laurel is an evergreen tree that can grow 90 feet tall and 50 feet wide. The dark green leaves are glossy on top, finely hairy beneath, 3-5 inches long and leathery. The bark is generally smooth and reddish-brown. The round, 1/2 to 1-inch berry is green when young, turning dark purple when mature. Bay trees need steady access to water and grow naturally on canyon slopes and along streams. When rubbed or crushed, the leaves and twigs are distinctly aromatic and can cause itching in eyes. Leaves are not to be confused with the cultivated bay leaves that are used in cooking.



Engelmann Oak

(Quercus engelmannii)

Also known as the Pasadena Oak, this is a large, wide-spreading evergreen tree. The canopy has an average height of 40-50 feet and can be twice as wide. It has smooth, wavy-edged leaves that are 2-3 inches in length and gray-blue in color. The bark is light gray and furrowed. Acorns are round-tipped and half enclosed in bumpy caps. These Oaks are adapted to Southern California’s dry climate but may lose some leaves during drought years.



Black Cottonwood

(Populus trichocarpa)

This tree is named after the dark color of its bark. The tallest native Cottonwood, it reaches heights of 120 feet. Fast growing, Cottonwoods require moist soil that exists along streams and in flood plains. Leaves are heart-shaped and have small serrated-like edges. They are dark green on top and pale green underneath, turning bright yellow before dropping in the fall. The fruit is a round, brown capsule that splits open to release many cottony seeds that drift in the breeze. Cottonwood leaves make a distinct rustling sound in the wind.



Scrub Oak

(Quercus berberidifolia)

This shrub-like Oak is a dense growing, short, wide tree that may reach heights of 15 feet. This species usually grows like a shrub with many trunks. The bark is generally gray, smooth when young and rough when older. The Scrub Oak has small, leathery leaves with spines on the edges and small, oval acorns with knobby caps. This Oak is not common as a street tree in Pasadena, but is abundant in Pasadena’s foothills and the Arroyo Seco.

