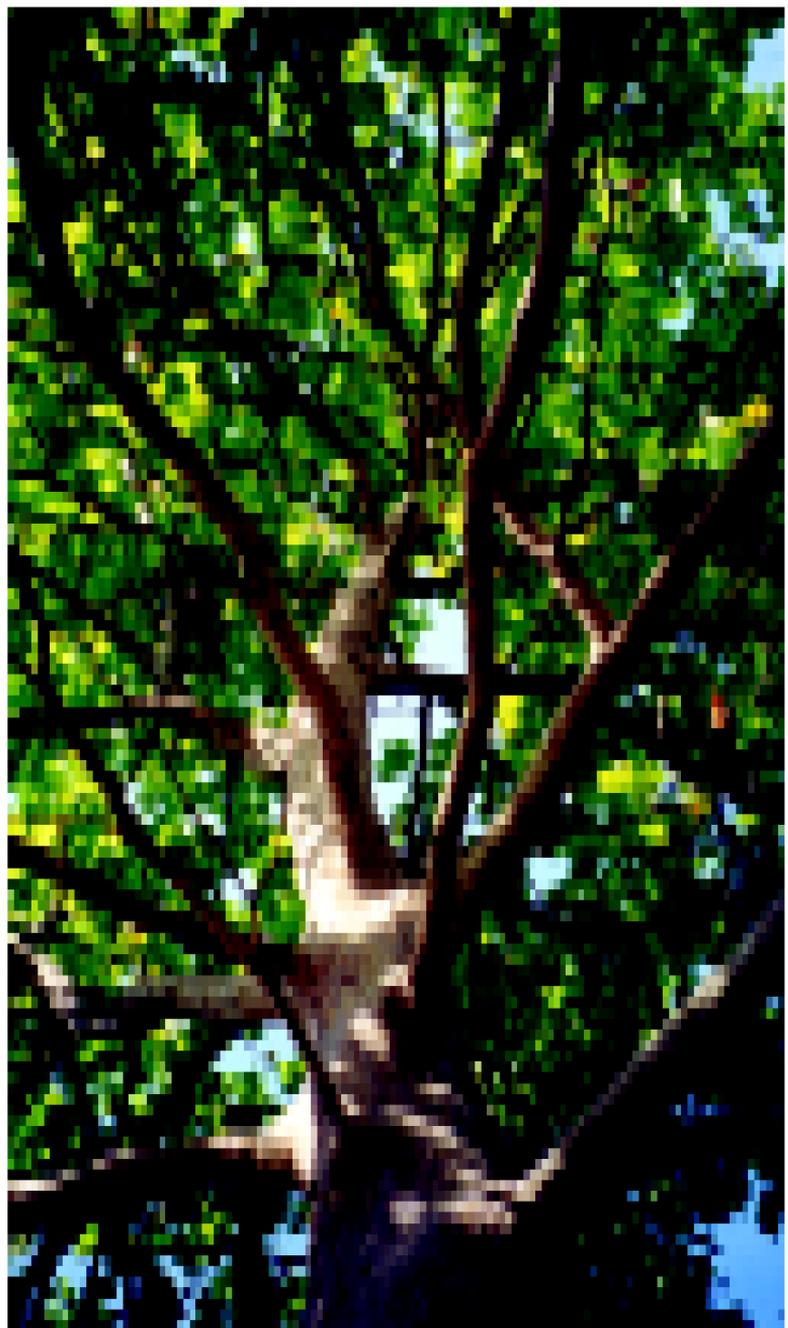


# TREES



Trees are Sacramento's crowning glory. Anyone who has strolled beneath the cooling, soothing canopy of towering elms and sycamores knows the city is graced by a special relationship with trees that dates back to the city founders and civic leaders of the 1800's. Our region's trees are continuously working to provide us with benefits that range from beauty to energy savings, increased property values and improved states of mind, cleaner air and reduced risk of flood. They add interest and character to our neighborhoods as they change with the seasons, connecting us to the cycles of life and the earth itself. They provide homes and food for urban wildlife. Beautiful trees make for happy people!



## A REGIONAL RESOURCE

The residents of Sacramento are uniquely positioned to benefit from planting and maintaining trees. Most of Sacramento County's 6 million trees are private trees in yards and street fronts. By providing regular care to keep trees healthy and maximize their benefits, tree owners improve not only their own property but keep Sacramento's legacy of trees alive.

Maintaining a mature tree increases your property value by about 1%, saves you energy and water, and makes your property more attractive and relaxing. But your tree also gives a great deal to the community around it by reducing air pollution and storm water runoff, cooling the air, and helping to give your neighborhood its character. Keep your trees healthy for yourself and your community!

## SCHEDULE TIME FOR YOUR TREES

Set up a regular schedule of simple maintenance if your tree is established and older than 3 to 5 years. It is not difficult or demanding. Regular care will ensure your trees will continue to thrive and survive for generations. It will also help you avoid expensive and dangerous situations caused by unhealthy trees. An effective program includes regular inspection, watering, pruning, mulching, and possible fertilization. You can do much of the on-going tree care yourself, but at times a tree care professional will be needed to diagnose problems and assist you in solving them.

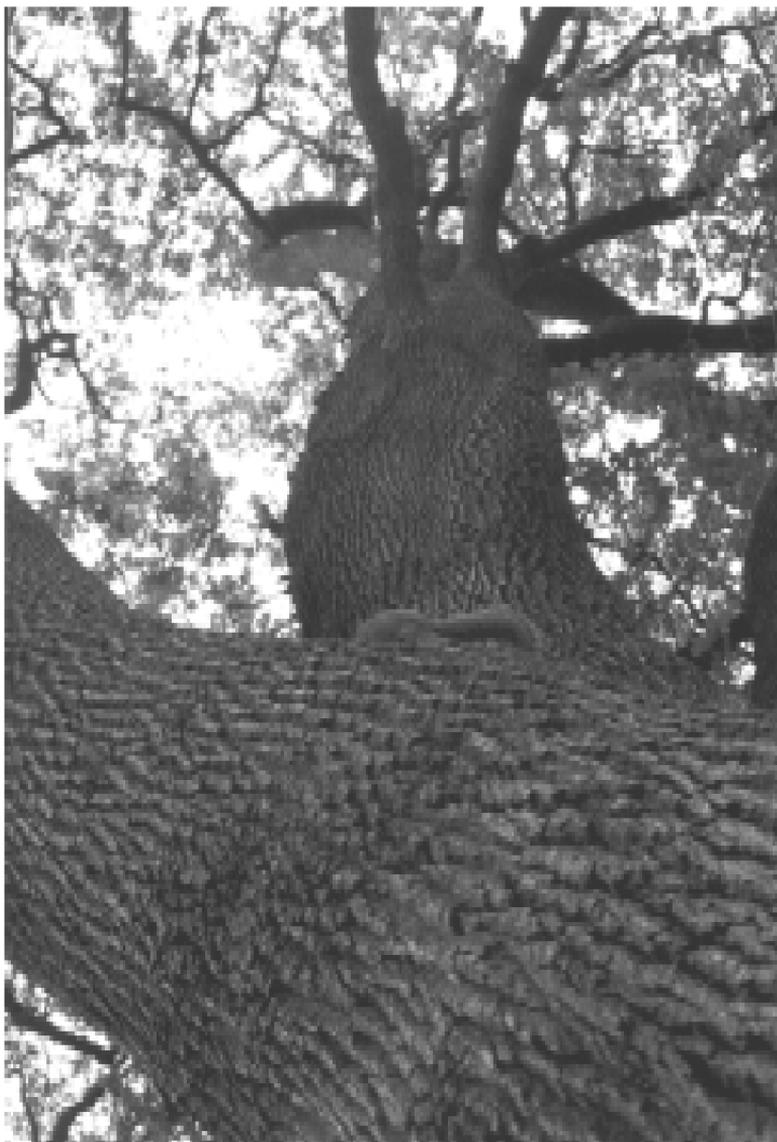
## INSPECTION

Mature trees should be inspected on a regular basis, preferably yearly. Do this safely from the ground, using binoculars if necessary. Loss of vigor is the surest early warning sign there may be a problem with your tree. Advice from an arborist may be invaluable and a great yearly deposit on your long term investment.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

A healthy tree shows it! Here are some signs your tree is growing well:

- **Health and vigor** – Tree species grow at different rates, so make sure your tree is growing appropriately. Check for new buds and leaves in spring, appropriate leaf size, twig growth, and a full crown. Trees in good condition will have full crowns, vigorous branch growth, and full sized leaves with good coloring and condition.
- **Structure** – Most trees should have a strong upright central leader with well attached, well spaced, balanced branches. Pruning for structure should begin while the tree is young to develop good form for future growth.
- **Right Tree, Right Place** – Know the size your tree will grow and make sure it will not interfere with power lines, infrastructure, or buildings.



*This mature oak should be inspected regularly to keep it in the best condition.*

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Regular inspection can prevent some tree failures, but not all failures are predictable or preventable. If you suspect a problem it is best to get a professional evaluation. Here are some common warning signs.

### LEANING

Leaners result from sudden loss of root anchorage and are in the process of falling over. Check your tree's vertical position and if roots are exposed on the opposite side of a lean. Leaners are imminent hazards because they can fall at any time.

### WEAKLY ATTACHED BRANCHES

Inspect large branches for splits where they attach to your trees and areas where many branches arise from the same point on a trunk. Both indicate potentially hazardous and weak branches and have a high chance for failure. Often these types of branches will need to be removed.



*These codominant stems will grow to be a problem if not dealt with.*

### **MULTIPLE TRUNKS**

Also called codominant stems, these trunks are weakly attached and prone to split apart.

### **CAVITIES AND EVIDENCE OF DECAY**

Decay in pockets on branches, or in old wound cavities, and mushrooms or conks on trunks or on roots at the base of your tree may indicate hazardous conditions and potential structural failure. An arborist should be called to evaluate your tree.

### **TRUNK AND BRANCH CRACKS**

Cracks can be vertical or horizontal. Cracks in the bark are typically not a problem; cracks into the wood are cause for concern. An arborist should inspect your cracks to determine depth and severity of damage. In some cases corrective pruning can reduce potential hazards by lightening the load on the base branch or trunk.

### **BROKEN BRANCHES**

Broken branches or “hangers” are likely to fall without warning and could cause serious damage. They should be removed immediately.

### **DEADWOOD**

Branches that have died will eventually fall off. Small branches usually should not cause concern, but dead branches larger than 2" in diameter should be removed.

## HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR TREE

### WATERING

Deep water your trees to let the roots drink! The best way to deep water trees is by a soaker hose that slowly applies water to the soil over several hours or overnight. You can use a garden hose set to a trickle and moved to at least four different locations under the drip line. Sprinklers may be used to water deeply by watering until water begins to run off, then waiting at least an hour or two to resume watering. This should be repeated until water has penetrated at least one foot in depth. Special care will need to be taken when watering on a slope. Water around and beyond the drip line of mature trees where the roots are, not near the base of the trunk.

Irrigation frequency during our rainless months may vary greatly depending on the tree species, daily temperatures, and location in the yard, along with soil texture, structure and depth.

Established drought tolerant trees may need occasional watering at one or two month intervals. California native oaks, California laurel, cork oak, Chinese pistache and goldenrain tree can be damaged and short lived with frequent summer watering. Moisture adapted trees such as birches, redwoods, magnolias and red maples may need regular deep watering throughout their lives to look their best and perform well. These and other species greatly benefit from an occasional deep watering to the depth of at least a foot once or twice a month. Trees in or near lawn areas with frequent shallow watering may develop surface roots. Poorly adapted Monterey pine, Leyland cypress and giant sequoia are prone to insect damage and diseases in hot dry interior areas of the state regardless of how much water they are given.

Use a shovel or soil sampling tube to check the depth of moisture to at least a foot.

*Deep water your tree near the dripline and beyond.*

## MULCHING

Mulching is critical for young trees and helps develop a friendly soil structure for tree roots. Cover the soil around your trees four feet in diameter to a depth of four to six inches with organic mulch or allow leaves or needles from the tree to remain on the ground. Keep mulch 4" to 6" from the trunk of the tree to prevent crown rot. As your tree canopy expands, continue to expand the mulched area to cover the entire drip line of your tree. Don't mulch with stone cobbles, plastic, or weed cloth – they create a hostile environment for root growth.

### Mulching:

- Reduces competition from grass and weeds
- Improves movement of water and air through the soil
- Conserves moisture in the soil
- Protects tree roots from hot ground temperatures
- Provides plant nutrients and improves soil structure for healthy root formation
- Protects trees from damage by lawn mowers, weed cutters, herbicides and pesticides
- Conserves water



*Native oaks mulch themselves with fallen leaves.*



*Mulch creates a friendly environment for tree roots.*

## FERTILIZING

Mature trees generally do not need fertilizer. Fertilizers are not tree food, you do not “feed” a tree when you fertilize. Tree food (sugar) is made by living leaves through the process of photosynthesis.

Healthy leaves manufacture sugars (the tree food) which are stored in healthy roots grown in healthy soil. Keeping the soil within or beyond the dripline mulched helps create a perfect environment for non-woody roots (these absorb essential elements and water from the soil) and woody roots (these store energy reserves and support the tree).

If nutrient deficiencies are detected in a soil test, it may be necessary to fertilize that soil to improve conditions and ultimately, tree vigor. When considering supplemental fertilizer, it is important to know when it should be applied, what nutrients are needed, and how it should be applied. Fertilizer is best applied in late summer or after the trees have completely leafed out in spring. Consult your certified arborist or plant care professional for advice on the best fertilizer for your trees and the best application methods for each. Generally, nitrogen can be broadcast and deep watered into the root zone. Remember, mature trees have expansive actively growing root systems that extend well beyond your tree's dripline.

**Warning** - Many lawn fertilizers contain weed and feed formulations and broadleaf herbicides that may be picked up by tree roots and harm your trees if applied incorrectly.