



Office of the City Manager

January 27, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
Re: Creating a healthy urban forest: planting, pruning and culling

We wanted to provide you an update on our Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department's ongoing work to grow, maintain and improve Berkeley's urban forest.

Led by the department's Urban Forestry Unit, cultivating a healthy forest in an urban environment requires a commitment to both preserving City trees and protecting the public. We strive to plant sustainable, native trees, prune and maintain the ones we have, and, on occasion, cull those that are diseased or pose a danger. The planting plans consider location, available space, water availability until establishment, and the effect that a changing climate may have on the species selected. Some non-native trees can also be more flammable, posing a particular danger for the vulnerable wildland-urban interface in our hills. In addition, the unit is also removing fire fuel hazards throughout the hills on City properties and the right-of-way. In doing so, we facilitate trees' natural cycles from seedlings to maturity to removal while minimizing risks for falling trees and branches.

Over the last couple of years, City tree planting arborists have developed tree planting plans for many of our 52 parks. With the help of donors, volunteers, grants, and Parks Tax, staff have implemented these plants to strengthen the canopy of the of the following parks:

- King
- Strawberry Creek
- San Pablo
- James Kenney
- Monkey Island
- Greg Brown Park.

In the coming year staff plans to plant trees at Indian Rock, John Hinkle, Cedar Rose, Grove and Aquatic Parks. Two are coming soon:

Two examples of this work are coming soon at John Hinkel and Indian Rock parks.

John Hinkel Park Tree Planting

On March 8, we'll be planting coastal live oaks and California buckeyes – all native trees – at John Hinkel Park. Large growing trees will help reestablish the canopy of this park and add habitat. This area will be temporarily fenced off to avoid conflict with deer. Automatic irrigation will be installed to provide 2-3 years of water to establish the roots of these native/drought resistant trees. In addition, durable irrigation will allow for future tree planting.

**John Hinkel Park Native Tree Planting**


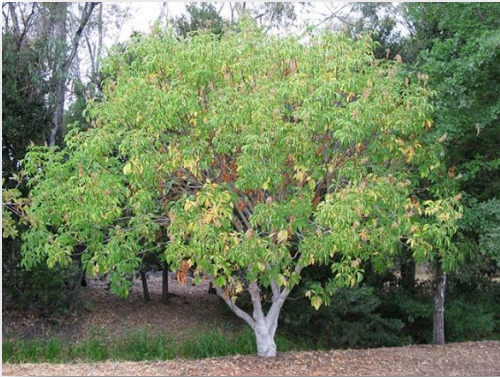
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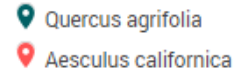
8:00 a.m. start

Volunteers can bring gloves. The City will provide all needed equipment.

The planting plan:

- Thirty coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Ten California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)

Coast Live Oak	California Buckeye
<i>(Quercus agrifolia)</i>	<i>(Aesculus californica)</i>
	



This planting will help restore decaying trees that have had to be removed in the past year while also anticipating the removal of others whose decay is severe. A root crown excavation earlier this year revealed that the trees along the top of the amphitheater had compromised root systems which could have caused them to fail. An additional inspection of the oak grove determined that six other trees have structural deficiencies and should also be removed soon.

### Indian Rock Park Planting Plans

The planting plan for Indian Rock Park calls for smaller, still-growing flowering trees to add habitat while not conflicting with views. These nine native trees will be planted on the east side of the park. These will be smaller stature trees to preserve the views and due to the available space in the park. On the east side of the park, there are 25 other existing trees, including nine coastal live oaks, each of which have trunk diameters over 20 inches. Existing irrigation will be modified to tree specific bubblers and used for 2-3 years to establish the roots of these native/drought resistant trees.

### **Indian Rock Park – Tree Planting**

Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>



8:00 a.m start

Volunteers can bring gloves. The City will provide all needed equipment.

### **Indian Rock Park Planting Plan:**

- Two California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)
- Four western redbud (*Cercus occidentalis*)

- Three California flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*)

Western Redbud	California flannel bush
<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	<i>Fremontodendron californicum</i>
 <p>Western Redbud <i>Cercis occidentalis</i></p> <p>Copyright © Robert O'Brien</p>	 <p>Common Flannel Bush <i>Fremontodendron californicum</i></p> <p>Copyright © Robert O'Brien</p>



- *Cercis occidentalis*
- *Fremontodendron californicum*
- *Aesculus californica*

Maintaining a healthy urban forest also requires identifying and removing unhealthy trees.

Indian Rock Park currently contains 40 trees that are a combination of Coast Live Oaks, California Buckeye's and seven blue gum eucalyptus, the latter of which are not native trees.. Two of these blue gum eucalyptus trees exist on the west side of the road near the climbing rock and five on the east side of the road. All seven of these trees have been inspected by the City's Urban Forestry arborists because of recent limb failures on August 13<sup>th</sup>, August 22<sup>nd</sup> and on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The result of this inspection requires



that three of these blue gum eucalyptus trees will receive a crown cleaning and reduction which will remove dead limbs and shorten the longer limbs to reduce the risk of limb failure and that the remaining four will be removed.

Of the four removals, the two of the blue gum eucalyptus trees that dropped limbs in the Fall show evidence of a decay organism inside the limb at the point of failure. This was not visible from the ground. See the photos attached below.







A third blue gum eucalyptus tree located next to the historic siren tower and south of the large rock will also be removed. This tree has a large exposed wound on the base of

the tree's trunk. A *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Sulphur fungus) fruiting body conk grew on this wound. This disease is a wood-rotting fungus that causes decay in trees. A photo of that tree is below.



The fourth blue gum eucalyptus, closest to Shattuck Avenue, has a distinct lean toward and over Indian Rock Avenue with the majority of its canopy on the west side over the street. Given that Indian Rock Avenue is an arterial Street that would be used as an evacuation route in the event of an emergency, removing this tree will improving the safety of this location will also provide emergency response vehicles a clear response route.

cc:

LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager  
Scott Ferris, Director, Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront  
David Sprague, Interim Chief, Berkeley Fire Department  
Jenny Wong, City Auditor  
Mark Numainville, City Clerk  
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager