



# SUFA E-News

## Fall 2020



### Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates (SUFA) newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will keep you informed about how you can participate in SUFA's efforts to increase the tree canopy in Sunnyvale through education, tree plantings, and advocacy.

## A Message to SUFA Supporters

We hope you are all safe and healthy as we continue to take precautions during the pandemic.

We encourage you to continue to explore and enjoy the trees in your neighborhood. Now is a beautiful time with the fall colors which seem especially vibrant this year.

SUFA would like to remind you that tree walk maps of four City parks and the City Center/Library, as well as the Sunnyvale Trees of Distinction tree/bike tour map are available online. (See links below).

For **tree walk maps**: [sunnyvaltetrees.org/tree-walk-maps](https://sunnyvaltetrees.org/tree-walk-maps)

To access the **Self-Guided Car/Bike Tour of Sunnyvale Trees of Distinction** and the descriptive **Guide to the Trees of Distinction** found on the tour, go to our website at [www.sunnyvaltetrees.org](https://www.sunnyvaltetrees.org) and use the pull-down menu: [Events/Programs](#).

While these tours are optimal during spring and summer when the trees are fully leafed out, visiting a park throughout the year allows us to see the seasonal changes of the trees and the wildlife that depend on these trees.

While most of our regular activities such as tree walks and tree plantings have been curtailed because of the pandemic, SUFA is not entirely dormant. In October we helped to sponsor a Sunnyvale candidate forum on climate change organized by Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action. We have also met with the Trees Division to discuss the impact of COVID-19 budget cuts on their work. Also discussed was the potential for a complete street inventory by the City, a new assessment of the tree canopy, and a pilot project of neighborhood tree plantings. Again, because of budget cuts and/or the need for Council approval, these potential projects are still on the drawing board. We will keep you advised as these projects progress.

In the meantime stay safe and enjoy your urban forest.

Mary Brunkhorst, President  
Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates

## SUFA Tree Tips



Winter, when trees are dormant and deciduous trees have lost their leaves can be an optimum time to prune trees. However, improper pruning can create lasting damage or even shorten the life of a tree.

See the two links below from the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) for excellent guidance on proper tree pruning for both young and mature trees.

### How to prune young trees:

[https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/Pruning\\_YoungTrees.pdf](https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/Pruning_YoungTrees.pdf)

### How to prune mature trees:

[https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/Pruning\\_MatureTrees.pdf](https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/Pruning_MatureTrees.pdf)

# Tree on the Street Interview

Over the past two years, the Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates Quarterly Newsletter has been publishing a series featuring the Trees of Distinction of Sunnyvale – trees that are very old, well known, and/or have a unique history here in Sunnyvale. This month we'd like to introduce a new series featuring common Sunnyvale street trees with information about the trees presented in an interview format. These are trees you'll see as you walk or bike through Sunnyvale neighborhoods or parks. We hope you enjoy it!

**I: Thank you for being willing to be interviewed by Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates. First, can I get your full name?**

**G:** Yes, of course. I'm Ginkgo biloba. "Gin" being the Chinese word for silver, "kyo", the Chinese word for apricot, and biloba, a Latin word meaning two-lobed. My common name is the maidenhair tree because my leaves resemble those on a maidenhair fern.

**I: And is it true that you are a very ancient species?**

**G:** Oh my, yes! Our earliest fossil records are from over 200 million years ago. We're the only survivors of an entire family of similar trees dating back to the time of the dinosaurs.

**I: But, you're extinct in the wild now?**

**G:** Yes, sadly we are, although some scientists believe that there are remaining stands in the mountains of southeastern China. Thankfully, we were saved from complete extinction by being cultivated in China and later, Japan.

**I: You look to be about 30 – 40 feet tall. How tall can you get?**

**G:** Ginkgos can get up to 80 feet tall but one of the really interesting facts about us is that we can live to a ripe old age of 2500 – 3000 years. I'll be here awhile.

**I: And my understanding is that the City of Sunnyvale only plants males of your species. Why is that?**

**G:** Yes, we ginkgo street trees live a lonely bachelor life because, and I will say this as delicately as possible, the seeds of the female trees smell bad. Very, very bad.

**I: But aren't the seeds edible?**

**G:** Yes, the nuts inside the seeds are a traditional food in China and additionally, ginkgo leaf extract is sold in the West as a medicinal supplement.

**I: And what makes you such a popular urban street tree throughout the world?**

**G:** Well, where should I start? We have many attributes that are found in any good street tree including resistance to pests, the ability to grow in confined spaces, and tolerance to heat, pollution, and soil salt. And, for the homeowner that doesn't like to rake up fall foliage, we very graciously drop all of our leaves over a one to fifteen-day period unlike some street trees that drop their lives over many, many weeks. I'm looking at **you** liquidambar...

**I: Well, thank you for your time. Before I go, I must say, I find your fan-shaped leaves that turn lemon-yellow in the fall quite beautiful.**

**G:** Thank you. I'm happy to take a bough on behalf of myself and all the Sunnyvale ginkgos.



For additional information about the ginkgo, follow this link to a fascinating interview with the author of the book: [Ginkgo](https://e360.yale.edu/features/peter_crane_history_of_ginkgo_earths_oldest_tree)

[https://e360.yale.edu/features/peter\\_crane\\_history\\_of\\_ginkgo\\_earths\\_oldest\\_tree](https://e360.yale.edu/features/peter_crane_history_of_ginkgo_earths_oldest_tree)

Visit us at: [sunnyvaleurbanforestadvocates.org](https://sunnyvaleurbanforestadvocates.org)

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# The Redwoods are Survivors

by Kim Walter



*The interior of a Big Basin redwood tree on fire.*

As we were cleaning recently, my daughter found her 2020 to do list that she had written in February. One of the items on the list was "go for a hike at Big Basin." We looked at each other, filled with sadness, as she said, "Guess I won't be able to do that one, since Big Basin is gone." I agreed that it probably isn't doable in the near future, but I immediately thought of the video starring one of the Park Rangers at Big Basin that had circulated immediately after the fires. Paraphrasing him: Yes, the iconic and historic buildings have all been destroyed, but the forest lives on. Certainly many of the trees sustained some damage, but the vast majority will recover and live on for (hopefully) hundreds, if not thousands of years.

You see, a redwood forest is a testament to survival. These massive trees can live over 2000 years under ideal circumstances. Larger redwoods often have signs of fire damage, because redwood forests naturally undergo cycles that include forest fires. These fires clear off some of the smaller trees and bushes from the forest floor, allowing for the larger trees to take in more nutrients and attain their great heights. Redwoods also have adaptations that allow them to withstand fires, including thick bark (up to a foot thick) with both fire- and pest-resistant tannins in it. They have amazing abilities to resprout from seemingly completely charred stumps, and, in fact, tend to use fires as an excuse to sprout even more than usual. Another factor aiding in their survival is their unbelievable height. The tallest redwood on record tops out at 371 feet, the height of a 37 story skyscraper. Only the biggest raging infernos can damage the canopy, where an amazing amount of species exist.

A study on redwood forests conducted by researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, after lightning ignited over 2000 fires in California in 2008 (sound familiar?) declared redwood trees to be "almost indestructible," and said that only one out of one hundred established redwood trees died. (Established here means having a diameter over one and a half feet). Even just one year after the fire, almost all of the trees that had all of their foliage scorched off showed new growth.

I recently gathered my courage and drove down to Big Basin. I expected widespread destruction, but was relieved to see so many of the trees still upright. True, many of them showed some fire damage and a number of the private residences around the park were consumed by flames, but, honestly, it gave me hope. If the trees can recover from the almost complete clearcutting that occurred a little over a hundred years ago, I have no doubt that they can recover from the devastation of 2020.



*New growth in an area of previously burned redwoods.*

For more information, refer to:  
<https://www.savetheredwoods.org/>,  
<https://www.parks.ca.gov/BigBasinRecovery>  
or <https://sempervirens.org>.