



# SUFA-News

## Fall 2021



Welcome to the Fall 2021 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.

### **Branch Out Sunnyvale is Still Growing!**



Branch Out Sunnyvale planted seven trees for homeowners last spring and eleven more plantings are currently underway this fall. Applications are still available for spring 2022 plantings. The City of Sunnyvale has allocated funds to subsidize 50 private trees and has contracted with Our City Forest of San Jose to implement the Branch Out Sunnyvale program.

To participate, the homeowner will visit the program website, fill out an application, and pay the \$50 fee. Our City Forest will communicate with the

homeowner to discuss tree selection (based on location and size), provide the tree, plant the tree, and educate the homeowner on care of the tree. Sunnyvale will reimburse Our City Forest for the trees that have been planted.

Visit <http://www.sunnyvaltetrees.org/branch-out-sunnyvale/> for more details on the program. Visit <http://www.ourcityforest.org/sunnyvale> for more information and the application.

Homes with trees planted in their yard are worth more — a lot more — than properties without any tree cover, according to a new university study.

The report, conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Bureau of Business Research and sponsored by the international nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation, found that the collective value trees add to private home properties amounts to more than \$31.5 billion annually nationwide.

“Trees do so many great things for our neighborhoods and homes — from lowering neighborhood temperatures, to fostering wildlife habitat, to even lowering crime rates where we live,” said Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation, which sponsored

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(Branch Out Sunnyvale, continued)

the study. “Now we have the science available for us to really dig in and understand from an economic standpoint how impactful trees are for our neighborhoods and communities.”

Here is the link to the complete report:

<https://www.arborday.org/urban-forestry-economic/>

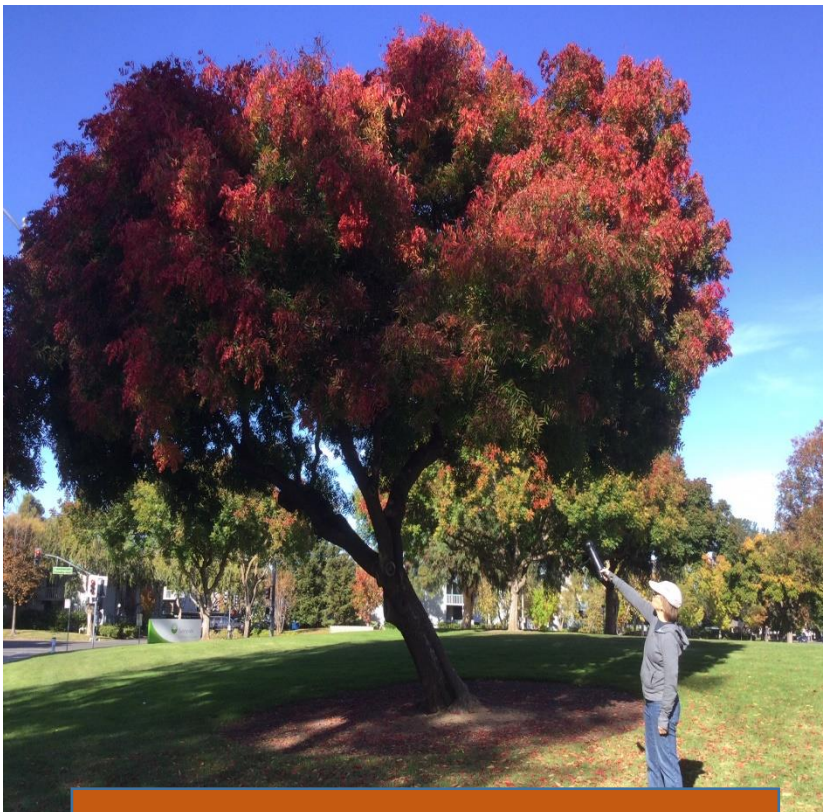
Please note: SUFA and the City of Sunnyvale are very aware of residents’ concerns about additional water use during a drought but are agreed that the long-term benefits of planting a tree far outweigh the immediate cost of the water used to maintain it. A newly-planted tree requires only 10 - 15 gallons of water per week.

For a complete list of the benefits that trees provide us (complete with an important example for each benefit, too) visit: <https://www.treepeople.org/22-benefits-of-trees/>

For excellent information on how much and how often to water your trees, as well as how to save both water and trees during the drought, visit the website for Canopy (Palo Alto's urban forest group): <https://canopy.org/tree-info/caring-for-trees/trees-and-water/save-water-and-trees/> and from the state of California's website, Save Our

Water: [https://saveourwater.com/trees?mc\\_cid=14ab57b0a2&mc\\_eid=62db1bbf59](https://saveourwater.com/trees?mc_cid=14ab57b0a2&mc_eid=62db1bbf59)

For how to use graywater from your home to water your trees, please see the article found further on in the newsletter.



**Tree on the Street Interview:  
The Chinese Pistache**

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

**Chinese Pistache:** Certainly. I’m *Pistacia chinensis* – more commonly known as the Chinese Pistache. That’s pistache from the Greek word “pistake” meaning nut and “chinensis” from the Latin for Chinese. You can probably guess from our name that we are native to China, also Taiwan and the Philippines.

**SUFA: So, do you actually produce nuts? Pistachios, by any chance?**

**CP:** No, that is a common misconception given my name, but that would be my cousins in the same

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*(Tree on the Street continued)*

family, *Pistacia vera*. Most of my pistachio cousins live in the Mediterranean and the Mideast. The other famous cousins in the family would be the cashew and the mango. I think they must be second cousins twice removed.

**SUFA: Quite a family tree, so to speak. Any others you can tell us about?**

**CP: (*Whispering*):** Ahem, yes, there are the “black sheep” of the family: Poison sumac, poison ivy, and poison oak. Poison oak lives here in the area but we’re not in touch. These cousins all have high levels of a toxin called urushiol which can cause contact dermatitis. But, please tell your readers my levels are very, very low and we are rarely a source of this problem.

**SUFA: You don’t produce nuts but I do see some of you with bright red berries on your branches.**

**CP:** Yes indeed. They would be the ladies of our species. We Chinese pistache are what is known is dioecious, that is we have separate male and female trees, just like my street tree friends, the ginkgos. Humans, like you, don’t find our berries edible but the birds love them! The berries put on a colorful display during the year turning from green to red to blue as the year progresses.

**SUFA: Your species is one of the most common urban trees in our city, our state, and for that matter, the entire world. Why is that?**

**CP:** Well, we have been described as tough as nails and make an excellent urban tree. We are tolerant of both heat and drought. We grow in a wide variety of soils, we’re winter hardy, fast growing, pest free, fire resistant, and a great food source for insects and birds. When we’re mature our canopy is 20 – 30 feet and provides loads of summertime shade reducing the urban heat island effect. Whew! I need to catch my breath and take in some CO<sub>2</sub>. Should I go on?

**SUFA: Yes, please!**

**CP:** Well, we have been described as the “ugly duckling” of urban street trees because when we are young, we are quite asymmetric and spindly. However, we mature into 25 -30 feet tall trees with large, gorgeous canopies – green in the spring and summer and turning brilliant shades of red, yellow, and orange in the fall. We make quite a show when there are many of us along a street, if I do say so myself.

**SUFA: Well, thank you so much for your time and for sharing such interesting information. You are indeed, gorgeous!**

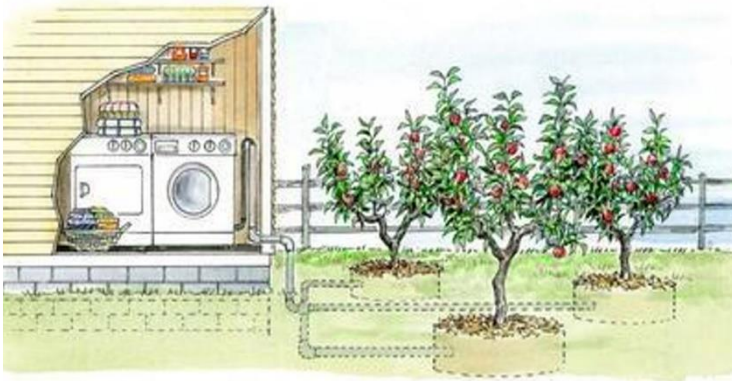
**CP:** Thank you. The pleasure was mine. I’m always here. Come visit anytime.

If you have converted your lawn to a drought tolerant landscape, it is especially important that you water your trees during the hot months. A 5 gallon bucket of water 2 - 3x/week throughout the summer is a great rule of thumb for a smaller tree. If you choose to collect a bucket of shower or dish water, that is wonderful. All you need to do is pick soap products that are gray water safe. Products should be salt and boron free and pH neutral. Examples include Oasis, Ecos, Biopac liquid detergent, and Vaska. You can also try soap alternatives that are graywater friendly like soap nuts and “wonder balls”.



Here are some useful sites that give recommendations from experts based on their experience, expertise, and science. Some people also consider the environmental impact of the packaging. (**Please note that SUFA does not endorse any specific products**).

- [EWG's Guide to Healthy Cleaning | Cleaner Ratings | VERIFIED™ Products](#)
  - [The 8 Best Eco-Friendly Soaps of 2021](#)
  - [11 Zero Waste Shampoo And Conditioners For A Do-Good 'Do](#)
  - [Shopping guide to Soap and Handwash](#)
- Greywater Action's [greywater-safe soap and detergent list](#)



In addition, the Santa Clara Valley Water District offers rebates for installing a Laundry to Landscape system. One of our members installed this by herself five years ago and says that it is effective, low maintenance, and the guidance from the water district was exceptional.

[Graywater Rebate | Santa Clara Valley Water](#)

Useful links for laundry products:

- [What soaps and products can I use with my greywater system?](#)
- [Laundry to Landscape Graywater Starter Kit](#)
- [EWG's Guide to Healthy Cleaning | Cleaner Ratings | Laundry](#)
- [11 Eco Friendly & Zero Waste Laundry Detergents For The Greenest Clean](#)



## Trees in Sunnyvale History

***While the Murphy Bayview home no longer exists, eight trees from the original homestead remain in Murphy Park.***

In the 1800s, this area was one of the premier locations in which to settle in California. It was here that some of the Martin Murphy, Jr. family

settled after being the first family to cross the Sierras in a covered wagon. The Murphy home was the first frame house in the area, reassembled here after being built in Maine to Murphy's specifications and shipped around Cape Horn in 1850. In 1881, the Murphy's 50th anniversary party was the largest private party ever held in California, with over 10,000 guests. The house was demolished in 1961 after being extensively damaged in a fire. The Sunnyvale Historical Society currently resides in a reconstruction of this house - the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum at 570 W. Remington Drive.

Even though the house no longer is on the property, there are a number of notable trees present. Right in the parking lot is a massive valley oak tree (*Quercus lobata*) that is somewhere over two hundred years. It represents one of the native species that once covered the entire Santa Clara Valley, but have been eradicated mainly due to urbanization. The five Southern blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) that remain from the site of the original Murphy family homestead and are well over 100 years old. There are also two date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) that were planted by Mrs. Murphy herself back when the property was larger. There was also a fig tree (*Ficus*, species unknown) which at one time spread to cover over two acres of the Murphy property. A self-guided walk featuring the Murphy Park trees can be found at [sunnyvaleretrees.org/tree-walk-maps](http://sunnyvaleretrees.org/tree-walk-maps)

White birch (*Betula papyrifera*), also known as paper birch or canoe birch, is a species of birch native to northern North America. They are often found in urban landscapes here in Sunnyvale and throughout the Bay Area. Given our drought conditions these trees would no longer be an ideal choice for the urban garden but preventing the loss of existing mature trees is important given their benefits.



## White Birch Death

It must be remembered that these trees are native to northern climes and are usually found near water - lakes, rivers, and streams. Under these conditions they can live up to 100 years. But under our current hot and dry conditions in California their life may be only 20 - 30 years. In addition when birch trees are stressed they become more susceptible to insect attack, particularly by the bronze birch borer. Tree die off begins near the tops of the trees so that is something homeowners can watch out for. To preserve your birches, make sure they are watered often during the hot, dry summer months. For tips on caring for your birch visit: <https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/na/NA-FR-02-97.pdf>