

SUFA E-News Winter 2026



Welcome to the Winter 2026 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.



Help Determine the Future of Sunnyvale's Heritage Orchard

Study Issue DPW 17-05 - Orchard Heritage Park and Heritage Park Museum Study - is looking into setting boundaries for the orchard and museum. There have been two public meetings and proposals were presented to the City Council in November. This will go before the Parks and Recreation Commission on March 11 and back to City Council on April 7.

To help preserve the Heritage Orchard:

Please review the information below and contact the City Council and the Parks and Rec Commission with any concerns. Please reference Study Issue DPW 17-05 – Orchard Heritage Park and Heritage Park Museum Study.

- [City Council Contacts](#)
- parksandrecreationcommission@sunnyvale.ca.gov

Please join SUFA members at one or both of the meetings. You may speak during the public comment period if you choose.

- Parks and Recreation Commission: Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 7pm in the Redwood Conference Room at City Hall
- City Council: Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 7pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall

SUFA's Position: Sunnyvale is urged to maintain the orchard's current property footprint and public purpose.

Heritage Orchard History: Sunnyvale designated the 10-acre apricot orchard at the Community Center and the 3-acre cherry orchard near Las Palmas Park as heritage resources in 1997 with the intent of preserving the working orchards. The orchards are managed by an experienced orchardist and fruit is harvested for sale every summer. The Heritage Park Museum sits at the edge of the apricot orchard and would like to expand its boundaries into the orchard.

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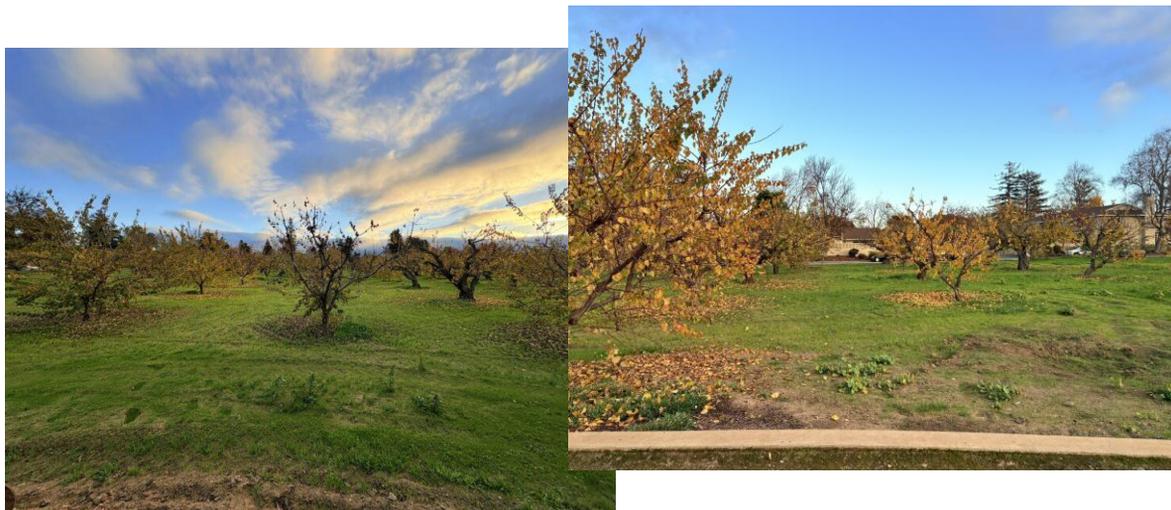
Summary of Study Issue Proposals:

- Orchard operations: The Heritage Orchard is currently 10 acres with about 800 apricot trees and is managed by a private orchardist. Three options were proposed for future operations: hire a private orchardist, hire an outside vendor, or have the city staff run the orchard. The preferred option is to hire a third party to manage the orchard.
- Museum footprint: Three options have been presented for expanding the museum footprint. All options extend the museum boundary into the orchard. The options would require the removal of 24, 42, or 48 trees (the latter being 6% of the orchard). The museum prefers the third option involving the loss of the most trees. If approved, the boundary lines would allow the museum to extend into that space when they plan their next expansion.
- Public Access: Public access would allow the public to walk through the orchard and harvest fruit. This could include walking paths among the trees, which could result in damage to the trees and irrigation infrastructure, and the potential loss of productivity. Full public access would essentially treat the orchard as a public park.
- Public Benefit: Public benefit refers to how best to use the orchard for the community's benefit. This could mean no access, full access, or a focus on educational aspects, such as interpretive signs, tours, or supervised fruit harvest.

A Few Points:

- The Heritage Orchard is a valuable asset and should be preserved as a working, productive orchard.
- The city should limit public access in order to maintain the integrity of the orchard.
- Public benefit could be further achieved through education and supervised visits.
- The city should minimize the museum expansion into the orchard. Space for expansion exists within the property the museum currently occupies.
- Losing 6% of a small orchard for any purpose is extreme.
- Loss of any trees results in the loss of their benefits provided by sequestering CO2, managing stormwater, and reducing urban heat.

Additional Information: Videos of the public meetings and the 11/4/25 City Council Study Session can be found at [Orchard Heritage Park Study](#) To read the report to council, click on the "attachment" link at this site: [Report to Council 11/4/25](#)





We continue our 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.

Tree on the Street Interview: The Blenheim Apricot

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

Blenheim Apricot: Of course. My Latin name is *Prunus armeniaca*. *Prunus* means plum trees or plum fruit but botanically, it refers to the whole group of "stone fruit" such as plums, cherries, peaches, and apricots. *Armeniaca* means Armenian. Apricots have been cultivated in Armenia since ancient times – possibly as long as 6000 years ago.

SUFA: That's impressive! And I understand your variety is called a Blenheim. Can you elaborate?

Blenheim Apricot: Sure. Our variety was developed at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England, roughly about 1835. We're thought to have originated from a seedling of the "Royal" variety from the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris so we're often called "Royal Blenheim". I don't stand on ceremony though so you can just call me Blenheim.

SUFA: Well, SUFA has never interviewed an orchard tree before. Can you tell us about your digs here?

Blenheim Apricot: I'd be delighted! My home is in the Heritage Orchard Park. It's 10 acres and there are about 800 apricot trees here. The City of Sunnyvale preserved this land in 1994 to celebrate the contribution of stone fruit cultivation to the development of its early economy and it was declared a Heritage Orchard in 1997.

SUFA: And how old are the trees here?

Blenheim Apricot: Well, the oldest are probably 50-60 years old. A bunch of youngsters were planted back in 2022 to keep the orchard thriving and they should be producing fruit soon.

SUFA: I have to say, you look somewhat old yourself, a bit gnarly, maybe. No offense.

Blenheim Apricot: None taken! Although I do prefer the term "rugged". Producing 50 plus pounds of apricots every year as we mature trees do, may lead some of us to look a bit weather beaten. And remember, you haven't caught me at my most glorious time of year - spring! Take a look on my other side and you'll see one, small, beautiful blossom as well as some buds – a harbinger of the beauty and bounty to come.

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SUFA: So, this is still a working orchard?

Blenheim Apricot: Oh, absolutely! Our fruit ripens in June and July, is harvested, and then made available for sale to the public. We've been lovingly taken care of for almost 50 years by Charlie Olsen. I hear he's going to retire. I will miss him dearly! We all will!

SUFA: I understand there are other heritage apricot orchards in the valley.

Blenheim Apricot: That's right. There are orchards in Saratoga and Los Altos as well as here. I have some family in both spots if you need an introduction.

SUFA: Well, thank you so much! One last question, we always ask our tree interviewees what makes them a good tree for the urban forest. You're not a street tree or a park tree so what would you say?

Blenheim Apricot: Well, I mean, being a tree, we do all the absolutely amazing things that all trees do – sequester carbon, produce oxygen, manage stormwater, and reduce urban heat, just to name a few. But, and I'm going to do some bragging here, we Blenheims also produce the fruit that is considered the “gold standard” for apricot flavor. Our fruit is rarely found in grocery stores. Sadly, we are considered a heritage food that is facing extinction. But, bottom line - we're here and we're beautiful, beneficial, and bountiful. What more could you want from a tree?!



Blenheim apricots on a tree in the Sunnyvale Heritage Orchard and for sale following harvest. A single apricot blossom and a few buds harbinger spring on our tree interviewee.



SUFA is hosting a table at the Sunnyvale Earth Day Festival. Stop by to talk about SUFA, free trees, and our urban forest. You can also join a tree walk along Olive Avenue as we share information about some of the trees that grace the Civic Center.

Tree walks will be held from 11:30am-12pm and from 12:30-1pm. Sign up at the SUFA table.

Sunnyvale Earth Day Festival
Saturday, April 11, 2026
11am-2pm
Olive Ave. near City Hall

Feel like sharing your enthusiasm for trees? Join us as a volunteer at the table. Contact info@sunnyvaletrees.org with questions or to volunteer.



Calling New Neighborhoods for Our Edible Tree Walk

For the past three years, SUFA has held an Edible Tree Walk in the S.N.A.I.L. neighborhood. If possible, we would like to expand this much-enjoyed walk to other neighborhoods, since it is a popular addition to our city park tree walks.

Does your neighborhood have a suitable route and would you be willing to host a walk, with the help of SUFA members?

Criteria would include:

- A walk of roughly one mile.
- Fruit trees or trees that provide sustainable products and that are easily viewable from the sidewalk.
- A host and a site (a home or park) for a discussion gathering at the end of the walk.
- Or an event, like an annual harvest swap that we could combine with a tree walk.

If you can help or know of a suitable neighborhood, please contact us at info@sunnyvaletrees.org. We look forward to hearing your suggestions!

On Saturday, January 17th, SUFA was delighted to host our first ever Evergreen-Only Tree Walk around the Library and Civic Center grounds. Participants met in the Library plaza for an Introductory talk on tree basics by walk leader Debbie Schmaltz. First stops on the walk were in the plaza itself to learn about the towering redwood trees and the iconic cork oak. From there the group headed down Olive St. taking a turn back on to the Library grounds to learn about the history and science behind the holly oak, the Canary Island pine, juniper, and olive trees, among others. The walk concluded with a closeup look at a redwood tree to learn about its cones and leaves, and the tremendous effect redwoods have in fighting climate change because of their ability to capture and store carbon.



SUFA's First Evergreen Tree Walk

Can't wait for the next walk? You have two other options?

Private group tree walks: Gather your group of up to twenty people (minimum of five) and reach out to us at info@sunnyvaletrees.org to schedule your walk. Walks are available May through September.

Self-guided tree walks: Use SUFA's prepared tree walk maps which can be downloaded from our website at <https://www.sunnyvaletrees.org/tree-walk-maps/>

Available parks for either a private or self-guided walk are: Ponderosa, Ortega, Serra, De Anza, Murphy, Lakewood, Washington, the Civic Center, and the Community Center.