



Welcome to the Summer 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.

Inaugural Community Center Tree Walk

On Saturday, July 11th, SUFA held our first tree walk at the newly re-landscaped Community Center. About 20 community members joined us to hear from Sunnyvale city arborist, Travis Rios, about some of the trees, both old and new, that make up this beautiful, welcoming space.



With the older, established trees, Travis discussed the work necessary to maintain their longevity including special pruning, irrigation, and fertilizing. With the newly planted trees, Travis spoke to the decision making process that goes into choosing a specific tree species for a specific location. There was much discussion about the use of California native trees and trees native to the southwest as specimens needed to withstand the increasing effects of heat and drought in Sunnyvale.

The walk ended under the deep, sprawling shade of one of Sunnyvale's most iconic trees - the heritage coast live oak. Travis shared the importance of coast live oaks as a keystone species providing habitat for multitudes of insects, mammals, and birds. He also shared the ongoing efforts of the city trees department to keep this historic, 200+-year-old tree healthy.

If you would like see the trees at the Community Center on your own, SUFA has just finished updating our self-guided map of the park which can be found on our website:

<https://www.sunnyvaletrees.org/tree-walk-maps/>

For more about the heritage coast live oak and the new plantings at the Community Center, please see the Tree on the Street article below.



Tree on the Street Interview - The Heritage Coast Live Oak

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.

SUFA: Thank you for being willing to be interviewed by Sunnyvale Urban Forest Advocates. You're the first Sunnyvale Heritage Tree that we have interviewed, so I admit to being a bit nervous. But anyway, can I get your full name?

CLO: Sure. I'm *Quercus agrifolia*, commonly known as a coast live oak. And yes, I am indeed a designated Sunnyvale Heritage Tree - considered to be about 200 plus years old and originally part of the Pavlina Ranch. And, no need to be nervous. I'm sure you know that being around trees is calming. One of our many superpowers.

SUFA: Thanks! So, in addition to being a Heritage Tree, you are much more importantly, a keystone species (a keystone species is one which has an extremely high impact on a particular ecosystem relative to its population).

CLO: So true! I am proud to say that coast live oak trees can be home to over 300 different species of mammals, plants, birds, and insects – not all at the same time, of course. That would be very noisy and itchy. But, yes, we are quite exceptional as a host to both native and migratory wildlife.

SUFA: Tell us, what makes coast live oaks such a great tree for the urban forest?

CLO: Well, ahem... not to brag but we sequester more carbon and absorb more storm runoff than many other street trees. We're longtime California natives so, of course, that makes us drought resistant. As I mentioned before, we are home to a tremendous amount of native wildlife and lastly, our canopy can get up to 70 feet wide which creates a lot of shade and cooling. But, hey, listen! Enough about me. I'd like to talk about some of the new kids on the block here at the Community Center.

SUFA: Our readers would love that! You have a great view of all the new plantings from up here on this rise. Please go ahead.

CLO: Let's start with the newbies by the waterfall pond. We have several **gingkos** or *Ginkgo biloba*.

SUFA: A very ancient tree, right?

CLO: Yes! They go back about 200 million years to the age of dinosaurs! They are all bachelors because only male trees are planted in Sunnyvale these days as the seeds from the female trees, ahem... smell bad, very bad... They can also live thousands of years. They are going to outlast me. But, male or female, they all have gorgeous lemon-yellow fall color.





CLO: Next, in the pollinator garden we have some true California natives - the **western redbud** or *Cercis occidentalis*. Their blossoms are pollinator magnets for bumblebees and hummingbirds.

SUFA: Interesting! And I understand their blossoms are unique in some way.

CLO: Indeed. Yes, the blossoms appear directly out of the woody part of the branches rather than new growth or shoots. It's known as cauliflory – not to be confused with cauliflower or Caulifornia.

CLO: And here we have the **palo verde** tree. I'm not sure what species it is so I can't tell you the Latin botanical name but palo verde means "green stick" in Spanish.

SUFA: I'm impressed with your translation!

CLO: Well, I spend part of my spare time brushing up on Spanish and Latin with Duolingo. Anyway, palo verdes are unique in that they are able to photosynthesize using their green bark. This allows them to continue to grow even when their leaves have been lost due to drought stress.



CLO: Well, next up would be the **desert willow** or *Chilopsis linearis* which have been planted all around the new playground. My understanding is that it's not a true willow but rather a member of the catalpa family. It is indeed willowy, though. It's native to the desert southwest including California. And whoa, like the redbud, those bright pink tubular flowers attract all kinds of pollinators - hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies.

CLO: And lastly, here we have the **Mexican blue oak** or *Quercus oblongifolia*. These guys are native to the desert southwest and the Mexican border of the U.S. and are tough cookies as far as resisting both drought and heat. As these youngsters grow they'll eventually provide much-needed year-round shade - like me, they're not deciduous - for the area with the cornhole games, chess and ping pong tables. The ping pong games are fun to watch! The chess games, less so....



SUFA: Thank you so much for the tour! You are a wealth of information. Do you have any last thoughts for our readers?

CLO: I do! I want to give a big shout out to the Sunnyvale Trees Department for taking such good care of me - bracing my limbs and giving me special fertilizer among other things. With their help I hope to be here for many, many more years. And, SUFA supporters, stop by and say, "Hi!".



Civic Center Tree Walk

SUFA held another successful tree walk on July 18th. Twenty people joined us for the walk around the Civic Center and enjoyed a beautiful day while learning about the urban forest surrounding the Library and City Hall. Participants discussed cork oaks, camphors, redwoods, ginkgos, and many other trees. If you missed the tree walk, visit the SUFA website to download the Civic Center Tree Walk Map at:

<https://www.sunnyvaletrees.org/tree-walk-maps/>



Bioblitzing at Baylands



On Saturday, July 25th, over 50 people of all ages gathered at Baylands Park in Sunnyvale for an official bioblitz.

A bioblitz is a communal effort to record as many species within a designated location and time period as possible. It's goal is to engage the public to connect to their environment while generating useful data for science and conservation. Plus, they're fun!

This event was sponsored by the Sustainability Department and the Sunnyvale Public Library. Jack Niggli, Sunnyvale's Sustainability Librarian, introduced the Baylands Bioblitz and explained how it would work. The Library had a table with information about bioblitzing and what wildlife to expect at Baylands. Several community environmental groups were also present to share their work. In addition to SUFA, Charles Street Gardens and Grassroots Ecology engaged with community members.

Following the introduction, participants split into four groups and began exploring and capturing with photos the flora and fauna of Baylands Park. Butterflies, birds, lizards, frogs, flowers - and let's not forget trees - were among the flora and fauna caught on camera and sent onto the iNaturalist website.

Keep your eyes open for the next Library-sponsored bioblitz coming soon to a natural area near you!

SUFA Tree Walks Going Dormant in October - Sign Up for One Now!

Looking for a fun and engaging way to explore the natural beauty of Sunnyvale? How about a no-cost, private tree walk with your friends or organization?

Schedule a private tree walk with a SUFA guide by contacting info@sunnyvioletrees.org. Gather at least ten people and contact SUFA to make arrangements. Tree Walk maps are also available online at <https://www.sunnyvioletrees.org/tree-walk-maps/>

Available Parks for Tree Walks

Ponderosa, Ortega, Serra, De Anza, Murphy, Lakewood, Washington, the Community Center and the Civic Center/Library.



Community Tree Planting - October 24th

The City of Sunnyvale and Our City Forest will host a community tree planting on Saturday, October 24th. Ten trees will be planted at the Civic Center and ten in the Fair Oaks neighborhood. The details of the event are not yet finalized. SUFA will send an email with more information about timing, location, and volunteering in October. The info will also be posted on the SUFA website when it is available.



Survey Results Are In!

We would like to thank everyone who responded to our recent survey.

The results indicate that people receive most of their information from the SUFA quarterly newsletter with a lower number who visit the website. Feedback showed an interest in more tree walks and information sessions about native trees and tree care. Respondents also indicated a willingness to advocate for trees by contacting city council.

We will let you know about upcoming events and tree-related issues that come before city council and hope that you will continue to advocate for Sunnyvale's urban forest. We encourage you to visit the SUFA website (sunnyvioletrees.org) which has the most up-to-date information about upcoming events and advocacy issues.

